



The River Round Up

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Fabian Richard-Veteran



Fabian (Fabie) Joseph Richard was a member of the Merchant Marines during WWII. In 1943 he sailed on the *Clyde Valley* to Haiti and Puerto Rico. On these trips fish was delivered and they returned with raw sugar and rum. Unfortunately on his first trip he came down with malaria. After being treated he was given tours of sugar plantations. On the trip back home a hurricane hit and disabled the ship and they drifted for days. The men took 4-hour shifts being tied to the ships wheel to steer the ship. The captain of this ship was Fabian's uncle and godfather Ernest Landry. Fabian also sailed on the *Point Pelee Park*, which joined convoys outside Sydney. This ship was an oil tanker that sailed to Cartgina, Curauso and Aruba in South America. He also sailed on the *Mount Bruce Park*, *Canadian Constructor*, *SS Marchport*, *SS Fort Panmure* and *Mont Alta*.

After working on the ships, during 1950-51 Fabian took a bricklayers course in North Sydney. He received the first award as the best trainee to graduate bricklaying from the North Sydney Centre. Fabian then moved to Halifax to work in his trade.

Fabian met Casilda Samson at Alfred Burke's store and they were married on August 21, 1952 in a double ceremony with his sister Monica & Joe Stone. They have three children David, Theresa & Paul, seven grandchildren and a great grandson. Casilda passed away in 2004. Fabian worked in Halifax until 1986 when he retired and moved to RB in 1987.

Fabian continues to keep busy with woodworking projects, the seniors club and the legion. *Theresa Owens (daughter)*

River Bourgeois Men Remembered - Our Cenotaph Lives On

In memory of John L. Landry & Joseph D. Pate



Some historians have referred to Canada's role in WWI as the defining moment of nationhood. This may be so, but for the more than 66,500 Canadian soldiers who died, it was a very expensive price to pay. For some 21,800 of these brave souls, there are no marked graves and another 7,500 have inscribed on their headstone "*Soldier of the Great War - Known unto God*".

For some time now I have held an interest in the men of River Bourgeois whose names are compiled on our Cenotaph. In WWI records indicate that fifty-three of our finest young men enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force of which eleven were wounded and three would make the supreme sacrifice for the freedoms we enjoy today.

During the past five years this interest has compelled me to search the Internet, speak with veterans, with family members, along with anyone else whom I thought would have information on my research. All those I've had contact with eagerly shared their knowledge. But even with all of this information there was still something missing, so last winter I said to Therese, "You know that the 60th

Anniversary of the Liberation of Holland is taking place this May!" With this she looked at me and said, "I hope you don't think that I am going to traipse around cemeteries all day" It was then that I knew if I could find something of interest for her, it would be easier than I thought to get her to Europe. So with passports and camera in hand in April of this year (not May, in order to avoid the many thousands of people who gathered to partake in the celebrations), we headed for Holland for what proved to be one of the most enjoyable trips of our lifetime.

Following are some of the pieces of our lost men's history, which I discovered. The first casualty from our community in WWI was on Jan. 12/17 when Fred A. & Margaret (Boyd) Burke were informed of the loss of their son, Douglas Donald (*Trenches De Meckness Cemetery France*), at age 22. That same year on Oct. 27, 25-year-old Charles Herman McNeil (*Thetford Communal Cemetery Norfolk U.K.*) son of Malcolm & Martha (Bissett) MacNeil would be the community's second loss. The following year on Oct. 30/18, Daniel U. & Fanny (Doucette) Sampson received word of the loss of their son Joseph Sampson, age 22 (*Denain Communal Cemetery France*). It is important also to note here that a fourth member of our community, John Hubert (Bert) Thibeau (*St John The Baptist Parish Cemetery*) at 21 years of age died Aug. 14/21, as a result of mustard gas poisoning. He was the son of Peter J. & Justine (Larade) Thibeau.

One of our more notable servicemen was from Thibeauville. Sgt Moses William Thibeau DCM, son of Peter & Catherine (Fougere) Thibeau, received the *Distinguished Conduct Medal*. An excerpt from the *London Gazette 31299 17th November 1919*, reads: "The Distinguished Conduct Medal For Conspicuous Gallantry West Of Mons on 8th November 1918. While in charge of a patrol protecting the left flank of the company, when the company was enfiladed from that flank he rushed the machine gun post killing two Germans and capturing the gun, this prompt action saved many casualties". (*Enfiladed-Military term used to describe a fighting unit's exposure to enemy fire*).

In Belgium, we visited *Tyne Cot Cemetery*, the largest British Commonwealth War Cemetery in the world. Here lie the graves of 11,908 soldiers and a Memorial Wall inscribed with the names of 34,927 men never recovered or identified.

At the *Menin Gate Memorial* the panels record another 54,896 unknowns. Also at this memorial to further commemorate those unknown, the Last Post has been played every evening at eight o'clock since Nov. 11, 1929 (except while occupied during WWII). During that occupation the ceremony was carried on at Brookwood Memorial Cemetery, Surrey, England.

To this day the tradition at both cemeteries continues. Just as one tries to grasp the numbers of all who were lost, another piece of information appeared before me. In the *Ypre, Passchendale, Vimy Ridge* area of Belgium (an approximate 25 square kilometres area), both sides of the conflict would lose over 500,000 men. At *Essex Farm Cemetery* lies the grave of John MacRae, author of *In Flanders Fields*, along with the two youngest war graves recorded; one soldier aged 14, the other 15.

Later, in 1941 Canada would make its first entry into WWII in the defence of Hong Kong. A young farm boy from Manitoba, John Gray, would become the first Canadian infantryman to die in combat. During WWII more than 1.1 million Canadian men and women would enlist, of which some 45,000 would die and another 55,000 would be physically wounded. Not to be forgotten are also the many thousands who would be mentally and emotionally scared for life. By wars end our community would lose another eight young men, two of whom were in the Merchant Navy.

And yet again, some nine years later Canada lost another 316 loved ones in the Korean Conflict. We are grateful all four of our men, Hector Landry, Robert Yuille, Maurice Landry (presently RCL Br 47 President) & Daniel Sampson returned safely. Since WWII an additional 104 Canadian Peacekeepers have died in the cause of peace.

It is difficult to describe the feeling that overtook my body when I first entered these cemeteries. We will never experience, but can only try to imagine, what life was like for these young men and women, knowing that at any moment their lives may end and, unfortunately for many, it did.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission flawlessly maintains these cemeteries. I found it most interesting that in Holland, where all land occupied by Canadian graves and designated to be Canadian soil, Dutch students take great pride and respect in maintaining the lands where our lost soldiers were laid to rest.

A visit to *Jonkerbos Cemetery* was of special interest to me since I discovered during my research that my uncle Joe Pate was instrumental in its founding. Although much smaller in size to other cemeteries we visited, here lie the graves of 1629 British, Canadian, Australian, New Zealand, Polish, Belgian, Dutch and Russian soldiers as well as another 99 unidentified soldiers.

Below is a list of the other cemeteries we visited and specific graves at which we paid our respects: *Groesbeek, Holland* lies Augustine J. Burke, age 19 son of Maurice & Alice (Blanchard) Burke, *Holten, Holland* lies Edmund (Boob) Sampson, age 30 son of Paul & Isabella (Landry) Sampson, and also lies

Abraham B. Burke, age 25 son of Freeman & Margaret (Dugas) Burke, *Adagem, Belgium* lies Simon Amable (Sammie) Pate, age 31 son of Charles & Marie Alexina (LeBlanc) Pate. Unfortunately, we were unable to visit the following places: *Coriano Ridge, Italy* lies Walter C. Pottie, age 19 son of Victor & Blanche (Sampson) Pottie, *Brett-Ville-Sur Laize, France* lies Mark J. Sampson, age 32 brother of Edmund (above).

The loss of two of our Merchant Navy men is commemorated on the Halifax Memorial which is dedicated to all who died at sea during wartime; Martin J. Sampson 36, on the *MV Montrolite* Feb. 14/42, son of Elie & Adelaide (Fougere) Sampson and Simon F. Bouchie 52, on the *SS Williamsburg* Oct. 22/42, son of Ellie & Marie (Poirier) Bouchie. I would like to include the loss of Micheal C. Sampson 44, son of Urbain & Emma (Rheberg) Sampson, *St John The Baptist Parish Cemetery*, and of Patrick E. Morrison 53, *Trawler Ebb* lost at sea, son of Arichbald & Margaret (McNamara) Morrison.

I can now fully understand the words of Liberator Stewart MacDonald of St. George's Channel; "War is uncalled for no matter what. Anyone who goes to Flanders Fields or Ypers and sees all those names on the walls would realize how terrible it is."

Therese & I also both enjoyed a tour of Amsterdam, by boat and on foot, a visit to the North Sea beaches, the tulip fields & rose gardens, the tropical gardens & zoo, asparagus fields, Queen Julianna's castle and had a great time with Hank, Hun & Harold in an 1861 windmill that is still in operation. During all of this, our visit with our new found cousin was the highlight of it all.

**They shall grow not old,
as we that are left grow old;
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning,
We will remember them.** *Therese & Donnie Pottie*
Note: Stay tuned to Dec. issue of the RRU for more.

Willie Thibeau, DCM



Moses William Thibeau was born March 26, 1890, the oldest of six children born to Peter Thibeau (1858-1931) & Catherine Fougere (1867-1960).

Willie appears in the 1901 & 1911 Census. In the latter he was recorded as a labourer, the same occupation he had when he enlisted in January of 1916 in Truro with the 106th Battalion, the Nova Scotia Rifles¹. After a brief bout with tonsillitis in May, Willie and his unit sailed overseas from Halifax on the *SS Empress of Britain* on July 15, 1916 arriving in Liverpool ten days later. The 106th Battalion never fought as a unit as the men were used as reinforcements for the 25th and 26th Battalions. Although most of the men were transferred to the 25th, including Willie's friend Moses Cordeau with whom he had enlisted, for some reason Willie ended up in the 26th Battalion better known as the "New Brunswick's Fighting 26th".²

Willie arrived in France on September 28th, 1916 and joined the 26th Battalion just after the battle of Courcellette, one of the main battles of the Somme offensive. Over the next year little is known of his whereabouts. It can be presumed that he fought with the 26th in various engagements including Vimy Ridge, Lens and Hill 70. It was during the last of these engagements that he was promoted to Corporal on August 15th, 1917. During a lull in the action following Hill 70, Willie went on a course (Lewis Gun) on August 28th and rejoined his unit on Sept 8th in time for the battle of Passchendaele (November 3rd-7th, 1917). He took leave from November 24th to December 8th, during which time Canadian soldiers in the field voted in the Federal election. Fighting was light during the winter months until the Germans began their spring offensive. The 26th did not participate in any major engagements until the summer of 1918 when, the Allies began their counter offensive that would eventually end the war. The 26th participated in the battles of Amiens (August 1st-17th) and Arras (August 25th-29th). It was during this latter engagement that Willie was wounded slightly in the left arm. He rejoined his unit on September 22nd after being promoted to Lance Sergeant. He probably participated in the Canal du Nord battle around that time (September 19th-25th). He was on a course (Musketry School) from October 7th to November 3rd and did not participate in the battle of Cambrai (October 8th-11th). By the time he returned

¹ A copy of the form Willie completed upon enlistment (Attestation Paper) can be found at this location: <http://data2.archives.ca/cef/gpc016/631809a.gif> The military file containing additional information regarding his whereabouts during his period of service can be obtained at: Library and Archives Canada RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 9592 – 66. Much of the personal information that follows comes from this file.

² Much of the information that follows about the unit in which he served comes from, MacGowan, S. Douglas, *New Brunswick's "Fighting 26th": a history of the 26th New Brunswick Battalion, 1914-1919*. Saint John, N.B., Neptune Publishing Co., 1994.

the enemy was falling back across the front and the action was very fluid. The 26th was once again in the thick of the advance in the last week of the war when Willie performed with such bravery that he was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

“For conspicuous gallantry west of Mons on 8th November, 1918, in charge of a patrol protecting the left flank of the company. When the company was enfiladed from that flank, he rushed the machine gun post, killing two gunners and capturing the gun. His prompt action saved many casualties.”

After the war ended on November 11th it took some months for the troops to return to Canada. It was during this time that Willie took sick and was in hospital when the 26th Battalion left England on May 10th, 1919. Willie remained in hospital and did not return until August.

Little is known of his whereabouts after he returned. My mother recalled a story of him carrying her on his shoulders while tending his rabbit snares one winter. She was very young at the time (perhaps about 4 years old). It is not known exactly when Willie left to work on the Welland Canal but his accidental death after falling from a great height on May 29th, 1922 was recorded in the Toronto newspaper. He had just turned 32 in March.

The final note on his military file shows a letter from his father Peter Thibeau requesting a military headstone after his death in 1922. The military responded that since his death was not a result of the war they could not pay for a headstone. *Paul Touesnard*

Friends of Renee



“Friends of Renee” would like to thank everyone who supported our bikini car wash helping us raise the funds to be able to participate in the “Walk For The Cure” that took place on Oct.2. It was definitely a great success and an experience everyone should seek. We would also like to thank Bucky & Ann, Bernard Burke and Bobby Cotton for all their help. Come and join “Friends Of Renee” for a funfilled afternoon with great Christmas ideas, tea, coffee & goodies from Home & Gift Collection. Bring a friend along with your Christmas List Nov. 5th from 2-4 p.m. at the Seniors Building. If you can't make it

and are interested in seeing the catalogues you can contact Daunette Timmons at 625-5130.

Births

Allan: Riley John, 9lbs 2oz, was born Oct. 17th to Jimmy & Sarah of Halifax, Congratulations to grand parents John and Sylvia Allan.

Deaths

Burke: Mary “Unice”, 78 years, of Sydney passed away Oct. 11. Our condolences to her daughters Martha, Delrosa & Marilyn, her sisters Cecile & Marie, brothers Edgar & Bernard and their families.

Digout: Margaret Cecelia, “Margaret Tatoo”, 82, passed away Oct. 25th. Our condolences to daughters Jeannette & Lucy, sons Arthur & Leon, brother Vincent Bourque and all the extended families.

Robertson: Gerald Edward Charles Matthew, 35 years, of Fall River passed away on Sept. 30th. Our condolences to his parents Gerald & Sharon, son Luke, sisters Giselle & Jill, and grandmothers Muriel Ferguson & Mary Ann Robertson and their families.

Bits and Bites:

- **Seniors Meeting** Nov. 4th at 1:30.
- **Seniors Xmas Toy Bingo** Nov. 6th TLC 2pm.
- **CWL meeting** Nov 8th at 7 pm.
- **Seniors Mini Bingo** Nov. 9th at 1:30.
- **RBCSS meeting** Nov 23rd Senior's Bldg. at 7
- **45 Card game Seniors** Bldg Sundays at 7pm.
- **Cribbage Seniors** Bldg Mondays at 7pm.
- **Congratulations** to Patrick Bourque on his Hole in One at Dundee Golf Resort.
- The CAP site is open to the public from 2-4 pm and 6-8 pm from Monday to Thursday and 2-4 pm on Fridays. On weekends an appointment may be made by calling Ann (2376) or Sharon (3516). CAP phone # is 535-3251
- A reminder that anyone wishing to book the Tara Lynne Center should call Ann Clow at 535-2726. People requiring use of the Funeral Home should call Marie & Conrad Fougere at 535-2621. Call Georgie or Harold Landry at 535-2939 to open the church for any special functions such as weddings, baptisms or funerals.
- The Round Up is available at Bucky's Garage, RB Post Office or East Coast Credit Union. Subscriptions are available for \$15.00 delivered in RB, \$20.00 within Canada and \$25.00 internationally per year.

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