

Frank Leslie Hotson

1894 - 1918



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Almost sixty-five thousand Canadians died in service to Great Britain during World War I. Frank Leslie Hotson, only son of John Alexander Hotson and Emma Veitch was among this number. According to his birth record, Frank was born 10 Dec. 1894 in Leamington, Essex County, Ontario. His military records, however, indicate the year of birth as 1895.

Frank, the youngest of six children, grew up in a small home at 85 Chapel St. in Woodstock, Ontario, where his father was employed as a carriage maker.

As a second confirmation of his birth date, the 1901 Census of Ontario shows Frank as age 6, and lists 10 Dec., 1894 as his date of birth.

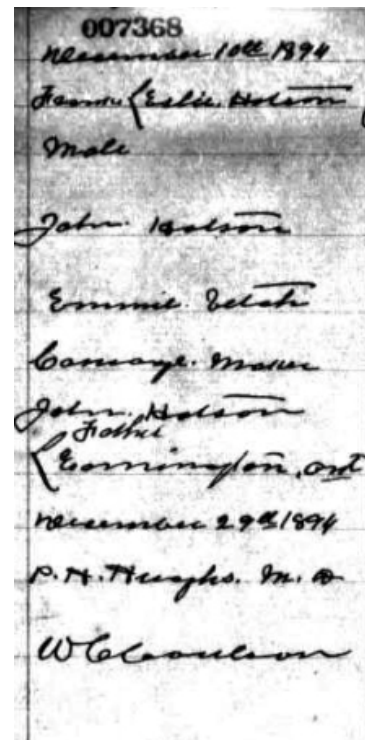
In the photo below, Frank is most likely about 13 years old. His eldest sister, Helen, to his left, was married at this time, but was still living in Woodstock.

It is not known how long Frank continued his schooling; his sisters Phoebe and Hazel completed 4 years of high school, although sister Ada left high school after one year.



*Family of John and Emma Hotson, ca. 1907
(front: Emma, John, Frank, Helen (Nell); back row:
Ada, Phoebe, Hazel. Not pictured: Lena, living at
that time in an institution at Chatham, On.)*

*Birth Certificate, Oxford
Co., Ont. Dec. 10, 1894*



By the time of the 1911 Census, Frank, age 16, had apparently left school, as his occupation is shown as “driver, grocery.” His birth date is listed in this census as November, 1894, which is probably an indication that the family did not pay much attention to birthdays, and is probably why Frank gave the incorrect year of his birth when registering for military service.

As a Dominion of Great Britain, and unlike the United States, Canada was involved in World War I from its inception in 1914. Perhaps Frank was considered too young to enlist with the first battalions assembled from western Ontario, or perhaps as an only son, he was not encouraged, by his family, or by the government, to sign up. But the first two years of the war were more costly in terms of fatalities than anticipated, and it became clear that the struggle would be a long, protracted one. The Canadian Expeditionary Force, as the Canadian Army was called, was maintained with volunteers until the Military Service Act of August 1917 introduced conscription, so perhaps Frank enlisted in 1916 knowing that he would soon be drafted.

Frank signed his Attestation Paper for the Canadian Expeditionary Forces on January 29, 1916, indicating his willingness to serve. He passed a medical exam on February 5, and his enlistment paper was signed by the 168th Battalion commanding officer, Lt. Colonel W. K. McMullen.

ORIGINAL
No. 675401

ATTESTATION PAPER.
Folio.

CANADIAN OVER-SEAS EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

QUESTIONS TO BE PUT BEFORE ATTESTATION.
(ANSWERS)

1. What is your surname?..... Horton
- 1a. What are your Christian names?..... Frank
- 1b. What is your present address?..... Woodstock Ontario
2. In what Town, Township or Parish, and in what Country were you born?..... Leamington Essex County
3. What is the name of your next-of-kin?..... Mrs Emma Horton
4. What is the address of your next-of-kin?..... 85 Chapel St. Ontario
- 4a. What is the relationship of your next-of-kin?..... mother
5. What is the date of your birth?..... Dec 18 1895
6. What is your Trade or Calling?..... Machanic
7. Are you married?..... No
8. Are you willing to be vaccinated or re-vaccinated and inoculated?..... Yes
9. Do you now belong to the Active Militia?..... No
10. Have you ever served in any Military Force?..... No
If so, state particulars of former Service.
11. Do you understand the nature and terms of your engagement?..... Yes
12. Are you willing to be attested to serve in the }
CANADIAN OVER-SEAS EXPEDITIONARY FORCE? }..... Yes

DECLARATION TO BE MADE BY MAN ON ATTESTATION.

I, Frank Horton, do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions and that they are true, and that I am willing to fulfil the engagements by me now made, and I hereby engage and agree to serve in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force, and to be attached to any arm of the service therein, for the term of one year, or during the war now existing between Great Britain and Germany should that war last longer than one year, and for six months after the termination of that war provided His Majesty should so long require my services, or until legally discharged.

Frank Horton (Signature of Recruit)

Date January 29 1916. J. C. Endall (Signature of Witness)

OATH TO BE TAKEN BY MAN ON ATTESTATION.

I, Frank Horton, do make Oath, that I will be faithful and bear true Allegiance to His Majesty King George the Fifth, His Heirs and Successors, and that I will as in duty bound honestly and faithfully defend His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, in Person, Crown and Dignity, against all enemies, and will observe and obey all orders of His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, and of all the Generals and Officers set over me. So help me God.

Frank Horton (Signature of Recruit)

Date January 29 1916. J. C. Endall (Signature of Witness)

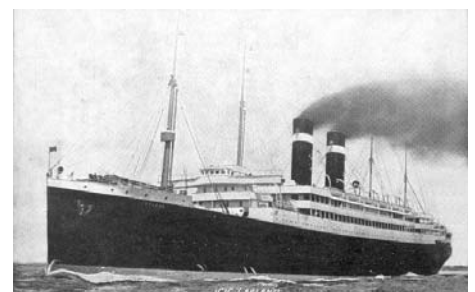
CERTIFICATE OF MAGISTRATE.

The Recruit above-named was cautioned by me that if he made any false answer to any of the above questions he would be liable to be punished as provided in the Army Act.

The above questions were then read to the Recruit in my presence.

I have taken care that he understands each question, and that his answer to each question has been duly entered as replied to, and the said Recruit has made and signed the declaration and taken the oath before me, at Woodstock this 7 day of February 1916.

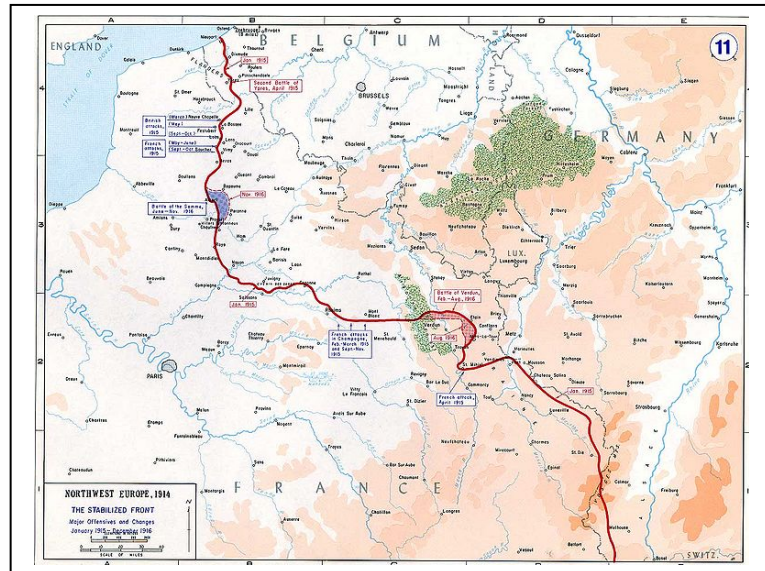
Frank signed a will on 23 Oct, 1916, in preparation for being shipped overseas. His unit travelled to England in November 16 on the SS Lapland, a passenger ship which was sailing under the British flag while under charter to Cunard Line. The Lapland had gained fame in 1912 when she was hired by the White Star Line to carry back surviving members of the Titanic crew after they had been detained in the U.S. for an investigation after the sinking.



S.S. Lapland

It is likely that Frank wrote home at least occasionally while stationed overseas, but no correspondence has survived. His sister, Phoebe, was in possession of a cache of family letters at the time of her death, but no letters from Frank were included. Would a grieving mother have destroyed letters after his death? Perhaps. For this reason, it is necessary to look to historical accounts to attempt to account for Frank's experience in the war.

During the time Frank was in training in Canada and England, the Battle of the Somme was taking place in France. The battle took place between July and November of 1916, fought on both sides of the River Somme, and with dead and wounded numbering over one million, it was one of history's bloodiest battles. It is also noted for the importance of air power and the first use of the tank. The battle was made more difficult for the Allies, since French troops had



been diverted months earlier to counter the German offensive at Verdun. The French military was severely demoralized by their huge losses, and mutiny among the French troops became widespread. This fact was not publicly acknowledged until 1967, with publication of a book by Guy Pedroncini, which was made possible by the opening of military archives 50 years after the event, in conformity with French War Ministry procedure.¹

It is not known exactly which battles Frank's battalion participated in after their arrival in France in 1917, but the Canadian 1st Division joined the British forces which were attempting to hold the Germans behind the line in the map above. The Canadians participated in the Battle of Vimy Ridge, April 9 – 14; the Battle of Arleux, April 28-29, Third Battle of the Scarpe, May 3-4, and the Second Battle of Passchendaele, Oct. 26 – November 10. A note on Ancestry.com states, "the Canadian Expeditionary Force...was so respected and had such combat efficiency that the Germans nicknamed them Stormtroopers."

1918, the 1st Canadian was involved the campaign known as the Hundred Days Offensive, which finally pushed the Germans out of France, and resulted in the Armistice which was signed "the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month" of 1918.

Frank Leslie Hotson's last battle came on Aug. 30, 1918. The Battle of the Scarpe took place between August 26th and 30th. An account of the battle from Wikipedia mentions heavy rains during the night of Aug. 26-27, which resulted in slippery ground and difficulty in assembling troops. On Aug. 30, according to the same account, "soldiers from the Canadian Corps cleared portions of the Fresnes-Rouvray trench

¹ Meyer, G. J. (2007). *A World Undone: The Story of the Great War, 1914 to 1918*. Delta. ISBN 0-553-38240-3.

system, including Upton Wood. After holding all day under heavy fire, they drove off a German counterattack, capturing 50 prisoners and five machine guns in the process.”

Sadly, over 200 Canadians died at Upton Wood (a name given to the area by the British), near the town of Hendicourt-les-Caignicourt, Pas de Calais, France. The Upton Wood Cemetery was made immediately afterwards. The cemetery is surrounded by a low brick wall, and includes a monument to the unidentified soldiers buried there. In July, 1921, Frank’s mother Emma and sisters Phoebe and Ada traveled to France to visit Frank’s burial site.



Photos of Battle
of the Scarpe,
August 1918



Below are photos taken of the cemetery by Sandra Ritchie. Ian Ritchie, whose great-grandfather was a half brother of Frank's father, can be seen in the photo at left with his hand on Frank's gravestone.





In Memory of
Private
Frank Leslie Hotson

675401, "A" Coy. 1st Bn., Canadian Infantry who died on 30 August 1918 Age 23

Only son of John A. and Emma Hotson, of Woodstock, Ontario.

Remembered with Honour
Upton Wood Cemetery, Hendecourt-Les-Cagnicourt





Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission