

Percy Walter Peach

Lieutenant, 45th Battalion (Manitoba) Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF)

Percy Walter Peach was born in Sutton, Cambridgeshire, to Joseph Peach, a South African merchant, and his wife Elizabeth (née Haddock). The birth is recorded in the period July to September of 1884, but in his Attestation Paper Percy gave his date of birth as 20 November 1885. The couple already had two children, Edward and Edith, and after Percy they had Stanley, Harriett, Winifred, Dorothy and Nora.

In the 1891 Census the family was living at Airedale, 4 Dogsthorpe Road, Peterborough, where they had four servants, including a nurse and a cook. Percy was christened here on 21 September 1894. By 1901 they had moved to Cambridge and Elizabeth was now recorded as head of the family, Joseph having died on 7 July 1897, leaving effects valued at £3357 14s 9d. The 16-year-old Percy was living at home, but working as a bank clerk, as was his older brother, Edward. In 1911 Elizabeth was living in Pampisford, Cambridgeshire, with Winifred, Dorothy and Nora. She gave her occupation as 'private means' and Winifred's as governess. Percy was now living back in Sutton with his maternal grandfather, Benjamin Haddock, aged 84, a retired farmer, and was still working as a bank clerk.

On 7 March 1912, Percy Peach sailed from Liverpool on the *Corsican*, a steamship of the Allan line, bound for Halifax, Canada. His grandfather had died the previous year. He settled in Winnipeg, where he was employed as an accountant. Percy joined the Legion of Frontiersmen, a voluntary militia force, patterned after the British Army, and served with them until 1915. On 24 June he signed his attestation papers at Sewell Camp, Winnipeg, for the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force (CEF). He gave his mother, Elizabeth, as his next-of-kin, and her address as Eccleston, Parkfield Avenue, Amersham, Bucks. His own address was 459 Cumberland Avenue, Winnipeg. From his service papers we know that he was 5ft 9ins tall, weighed 172lb and had a 40ins chest when expanded. His complexion was dark, his hair black and his eyes brown.

Percy Peach enlisted in the 45th Battalion (Manitoba) of the CEF as a Provisional Lieutenant on 28 June 1915. On 5 November 1915 he was appointed Acting Signalling Officer, still based in Winnipeg. On 10 February 1916 he signed the Officer's Declaration Paper and was declared medically fit for service. In completing the section on

ATTESTATION PAPER.		No.
CANADIAN OVER-SEAS EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.		Folio.
QUESTIONS TO BE PUT BEFORE ATTESTATION. (ANSWERS.)		
1. What is your name?	Percy Walter Peach	
2. In what Town, Township or Parish, and in what Country were you born?	Sutton Cambridgeshire England	
3. What is the name of your next-of-kin?	Elizabeth Peach "Mother"	
4. What is the address of your next-of-kin?	Eccleston Bucks England	
5. What is the date of your birth?	Nov 20 th 1885	
6. What is your Trade or Calling?	Accountant	
7. Are you married?	No	
8. Are you willing to be vaccinated or re-vaccinated? AND INKING & DATED.	YES	
9. Do you now belong to the Active Militia?	YES	
10. Have you ever served in any Military Force? If so, state particulars of former Service.	Legion of Frontiersmen 3 years	
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	
		P. W. Peach (Signature of Man)
		R. A. Edwards (Signature of Witness)
DECLARATION TO BE MADE BY MAN ON ATTESTATION.		
I, Percy Walter Peach, do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions 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.		
		P. W. Peach (Signature of Recruit)
Date.	June 24 th 1915	R. A. Edwards (Signature of Witness)
OATH TO BE TAKEN BY MAN ON ATTESTATION.		
I, Percy Walter Peach, 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.		
		P. W. Peach (Signature of Recruit)
Date.	June 24 th 1915	R. A. Edwards (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 Sutton, this 24 th day of June 1915.		
I hereby certify that this is a true copy of the original Attestation paper signed by the recruit.		J. J. Clark JP (Signature of Justice)
I certify that the above is a true copy of the Attestation of the above-named Recruit.		J. J. Clark (Approving Officer)
M. P. W. 33. 200 M.-6-15. H. G. 1915-20-511.		

'Particulars of Family of an Officer or Man Enlisted in C.E.F.', he wrote that he was his mother's main support and that prior to enlistment he had been sending her 25 dollars per month. He had applied to the Paymaster of his unit for a Separation Allowance, but stated that this had not been allowed as his mother was in receipt of 12/6d per week from the British Government on account of his brother who was a trooper in the City of London Yeomanry.

Lt. Peach left Canada on 13 March 1916 on the S.S. *Lapland* and disembarked in England on 25 March. Following leave of absence, he reported for duty on 12 May with the 45th Battalion. This leave may have included a visit to his mother as he later informed the Paymaster that he had left his surplus baggage with her. On 6 April 1916 he was appointed Acting Assistant Adjutant at East Sandling Camp in Kent. On 6 July he was temporarily attached to the 11th Reserve Bn. at St. Martin's Plains, Kent, and on 29 August he proceeded overseas to France to join the 52nd Battalion (New Ontario) CEF, where his active service was to be lamentably short. This battalion had disembarked in France on 21 February 1916, where it fought as part of the 9th Infantry Brigade, 3rd Canadian Division, in France and Flanders until the end of the war. Percy joined his unit in the field on 9 September. Canadian activity at the Somme was centred on **Courcelette** at this time. In its first major operation on the Somme, the Canadian Corps had acquitted itself with credit, though the week's fighting had cost 7230 casualties. Among these was Lt. Peach, who received gunshot wounds to the abdomen and back while in action on 18 September.

Percy seems to have been admitted to both the No.8 Red Cross Hospital at Le Touquet and the No.2 Red Cross Hospital at Rouen, where he was reported as dangerously ill; but a week later he was returned to England to the 1st London General Hospital at Camberwell. He remained there for 18 days before dying from his wounds on the night of 12 October 1916.

Percy Walter Peach is remembered with Honour and is buried in the churchyard of St. Leonard's, Chesham Bois.



Photo: Anne Peters

His gravestone shows him to be an officer of the Manitoba Regiment of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) and this is recognised in the title at the head of this narrative, though at the time he was fatally wounded he was serving in the 52nd Battalion (New Ontario), CEF. Walter's mother was buried in the same grave when she died on 27 December 1946, aged 93 years.

Sources:

Soldiers of the First World War – CEF: Peach, Percy Walter (Service papers). Library and Archives Canada RG 150, Accession 1992-9P3/166, Box 7675-34

Nicholson, Col. G.W.L. *Canadian Expeditionary Force 1914-1919*. Ottawa, Queen's Printer & Controller of Stationery 1962

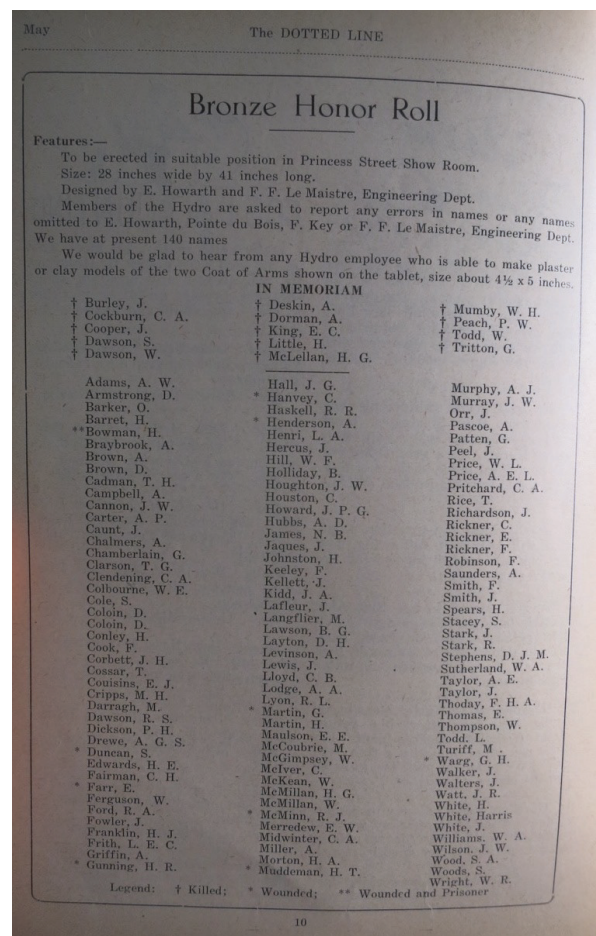
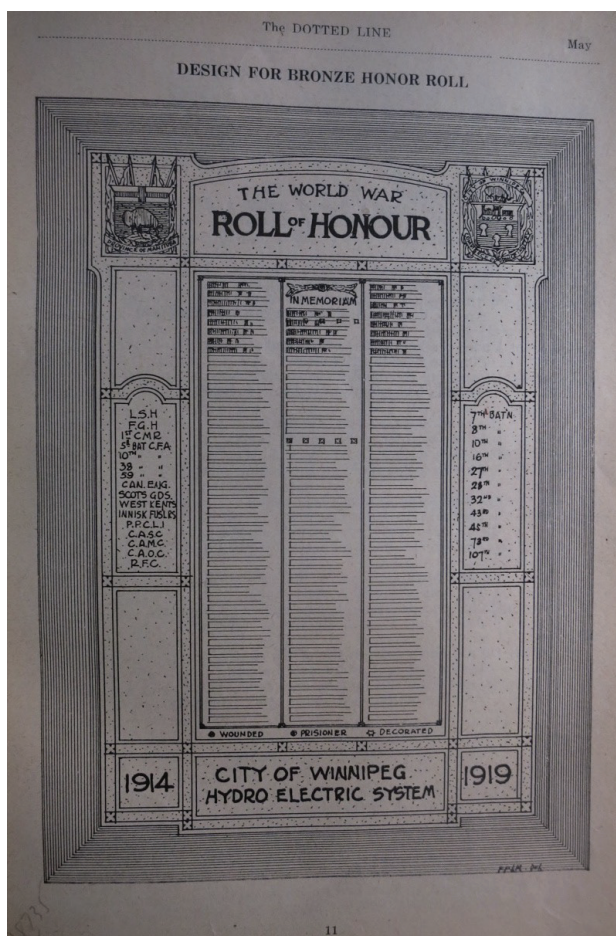
UK, Outward Passenger Lists, 1890-1960 (Ancestry)

England & Wales National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858-1966 (Ancestry)

ADDENDUM¹

Prior to enlisting with the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force, Percy Walter Peach was employed as a clerk by the City Light & Power Company of Winnipeg,² later known as the Winnipeg Hydro.

In the early 1920's there was a proposal to erect a "Bronze Honor Roll" in the Company's Princess Street Showroom, commemorating those employees who had served in the Great War and due to be unveiled in 1925. A list of names was produced and a sketch design created but it is not clear whether the project ever reached fruition.³



¹ We are grateful to Darryl R Toews, of the Manitoba Historical Society, for the additional information and for kindly making the photographs used on this page available to us.
² Henderson's Winnipeg City Directory 1915 p.1447. He does not appear in the 1916 directory.
³ The Dotted Line (Winnipeg Hydro Newsletter early 1920's).