

# GOWER REMEMBERS

**2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Harold Wesley Janes**  
(1891-1971)



*In consideration of having been granted leave of absence for the purpose of taking up civil employment, I agree to free the Royal Newfoundland Regiment from all claims and responsibilities (except as mentioned hereafter) on my behalf from this date, and during the period of such civil employment until I receive my regular discharge from the Regiment, subject to receiving during the said period the ordinary pay of my present rank on the understanding that I forfeit field subsistence and Separation Allowances, payable from this date.*

(document signed by Harold Janes, January 28, 1919)

Harold Wesley Janes was born in St. John's on June 27, 1891, the son of Emily Milley and Henry Janes, and was baptized at Gower Street Methodist Church on August 6 of that year. His father worked for Bowring Brothers Ltd. as a fish culler. Very little is known of Harold's early life, although it is safe to assume that he received a fair degree of schooling, as his signature is quite bold and in full script on documents in his personnel file during his time with the Newfoundland Regiment and it is obvious that he can read and write.

An interesting story from Janes's childhood is preserved in the pages of *The Evening Telegram* for January 25, 1902, when he was just ten years old. It was reported there that 23 boys and girls, one of whom was Janes, had been charged by the police with sliding or skating in public streets, contrary to city regulations and were brought before Judge James G. Conroy. Despite various arguments from those charged or their legal counsel, including the cavalier attitude of the police in only enforcing the regulations occasionally, all were convicted. Some being fined one dollar plus court costs, while others, Janes among them, were only required to pay costs.

It may have been his experience before the court, or perhaps it was his middle name, Wesley, that helped Janes to take up a more law-abiding and respectful past-time; the Methodist Sunday School. According to a report in a local paper on June 30, 1913, he was one of the speakers at a Sunday School missionary meeting held at Cochrane Street Methodist Church a few days previous.

That year was also the first time that Janes appeared in St. John's business directories, which means he could have entered the workforce any time between that date and the publication of

the previous directory in 1908-1909. In 1913 he was working as a tailor although there is no indication where. In any event his time there was not long, since on September 4, 1914 he enlisted in the Newfoundland Regiment. As such, he was the fourth member of the Gower Street congregation to join the Regiment, the first three being Charles W. Field, Harold Lidstone and Charles F. Garland.

Janes was assigned regimental number 197. According to his attestation paper completed at the time of enlistment, he was 5 feet, 7½ inches tall, weighed 120 pounds, with a dark complexion, black hair and grey eyes. He recorded that his occupation was ladies tailor. He listed his next of kin as Henry Janes, his father, who resided at Carter's Hill. Sometime later Mrs. E. Squires, 85 New Gower Street, was written in next to his father's name as next of kin. That poses an interesting question. According to the 1913 city directory, he was boarding at the New Gower Street address at that time, and it is also the address he listed on his attestation paper as his place of residence. On a subsequent document in his personnel file, he authorized that 60 cents from his daily allotment be paid to Mrs. E. Squires, 85 New Gower Street, who is identified as "Friend". Yet, in a letter dated June 19, 1918, from Lieutenant William V. Warren to Mrs. Squires at that same address, he writes "I am forwarding you one KIT BAG which belongs to your son #197 Pte. H. W. Janes, of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment."

Janes went overseas with the First Five Hundred of the Regiment, leaving St. John's aboard the SS *Florizel* on October 4, 1914, and arriving at Plymouth Sound, England, on October 14. It was almost a week later, on October 20, before they disembarked the ship. Then it was off to Pond Camp Farm and later Bustard Camp on England's Salisbury Plain, where they were besieged by rain and mud for the next seven weeks before

they were transferred to Fort George in Scotland in early December. His story for the nine months that followed is the same for most of his fellow soldiers. Training in Scotland, first at Fort George and later at Stobs Camp, with a brief respite as the guard force at Edinburgh Castle. They were the first colonial troops awarded that honour.

Then the main body of the Regiment spent part of the summer of 1915 at Aldershot, in the south of England, before receiving orders to board the *SS Megantic* at nearby Devonport for transport to the eastern Mediterranean and the war. *The Megantic* left Devonport on August 20 with 1020 members of the Newfoundland Regiment on board; it docked at Alexandria, Egypt, ten days later. Over the next three weeks they travelled by train to Cairo for a period of acclimatization, and then sailed north to the Greek island of Lemnos, from where on the night of September 19-20, they went ashore at Sulva Bay on Turkey's Gallipoli Peninsula. They were welcomed by the Turkish army with a barrage of shells and other small artillery fire.

The Newfoundlanders involved in the Gallipoli Campaign had not only enemy fire to contend with. They also had to endure severe weather conditions for much of the time they were there. As well, various debilitating diseases afflicted some of the men. One was Janes, whose stay on the peninsula lasted a little over two months, long enough for him to contract jaundice. He was transferred out and admitted to the No. 2 Australian Hospital at Mudros, on Lemnos, on November 29, where he spent the following three weeks undergoing treatment. From there he was transported back across the Mediterranean to a hospital at Malta, where he remained until early February of the following year.

Despite the medical treatment he received at these two hospitals, his health remained in a precarious state and on February 5, 1916 he was invalided to England aboard the Hospital Ship *Grantully Castle*. Upon arrival in England, he was admitted to Wandsworth Hospital in southwest London on February 18 and remained there until March 20. Upon release from Wandsworth, he was granted a ten-day furlough, following which he was attached to F Company of the Regiment. He was subsequently assigned to administrative work and saw no further action in the field during the remainder of the war.

After serving in the Newfoundland Regiment for almost four years, in the July of 1918 Janes was able to avail of Blue Puttee Leave, which had been instituted that summer to allow long-serving soldiers an opportunity to return to Newfoundland for a period of time. Arriving in St. John's on August 4, 1918, he enjoyed almost two months of leave before reporting to Regimental Headquarters in St. John's on October 1. It appears he spent the remainder of the war working out of the St. John's Headquarters, as he is listed in the 1919 city directory as soldier working for the Department of the Militia, which was in charge of the war effort. His demobilization from the Regiment was granted on February 1, 1919 and confirmed two weeks later on the 15<sup>th</sup>. His service to the Regiment lasted four years, 165 days.

Following the war, Janes returned to his pre-war occupation as a tailor. By 1924 and probably several years prior to that date, he was employed by the Newfoundland Clothing Company Ltd., which made woolen and oilskin clothing for the fishing industry. He remained there until he retired in the mid-1960s.

Janes married Theresa Ryall, daughter of Elizabeth and William Ryall of St. John's, on November 27, 1924, at the

Roman Catholic Cathedral of St. John the Baptist. They were the parents of six children: daughters Phyllis, Jean, Elizabeth, Bernice and Louise, and son Harold. Jean married Frank Noseworthy and Louise married Gordon Butler and both resided in St. John's. Bernice relocated to Corner Brook, while Phyllis and Elizabeth both emigrated to the United States. Harold took advantage of opportunities available in Labrador and went to live in Goose Bay.

Harold Janes died in St. John's on March 31, 1971, a couple of months shy of his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. His wife had predeceased him on November 26, 1964. He was buried at the General Protestant Cemetery, while Theresa was buried with her parents at Belvedere Roman Catholic Cemetery. He is an excellent example of a soldier who could probably have received a disability discharge after his release from Wandsworth, but had made a commitment to the Regiment for the duration of the war and was intent on seeing that commitment carried out. His headstone at the General Protestant Cemetery bears testimony to his war service. Under his name and birth and death dates is written "Royal Newfoundland Regiment Blue Puttee 197", so that all who see it may know that he did his part.

***On Sunday, November 16, 2014, Gower Street United Church initiated a program of commemoration that will last for approximately the next four years. On roughly every third Sunday from now through to 2018, a brief write-up on one of these individuals will appear as an insert in the Bulletin and there will be a reference to that person in the service. In this way we hope to recognize their contribution to the war effort, the many sacrifices they made, some with their very lives, and the debt of gratitude we owe to each of them.***

***We also hope to learn more about them from their descendants or other relatives, thereby fostering a link between our past and our present as we celebrate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this congregation. If you know of any relatives of these servicemen and woman please contact Bert Riggs at [briggs@mun.ca](mailto:briggs@mun.ca) 726-6169/864-8303***