

GOWER REMEMBERS

Lieutenant Charles Frederick Garland

(1893-1965)



“I beg to inform you that the Record Office of the First Newfoundland Regiment, London to-day reports that No. 182, Sergt. Charles F. Garland, who was previously reported at Wandsworth Hospital July 8th wounded Left Arm and Left Leg, is now reported at the same Hospital suffering from Gunshot Wounds Arm and Leg.”

(Letter to Garland’s mother, July 27, 1916)

Charles Frederick Garland was born in St. John's in February 1893, the son of Annie Driscoll and Stephen Garland. His father, a merchandise clerk for the St. John's retail establishment Marshall Brothers, died in 1908, when Garland was only 15. Two years later, after completing his schooling at the Methodist College, he went to work as a printer's devil with *The Evening Telegram*. In this position he performed many duties but was mainly occupied with mixing ink for the printers and fetching type for the compositors. He eventually moved to *The Daily News*, operated by Robinson & Company, as a printer.

Garland would probably have continued in the printing trade if war had not broken out in the late summer of 1914. One of the first to join up, he enlisted on September 3, 1914, receiving regimental number 182. His leadership potential was recognized immediately, and he was made Lance Corporal just 18 days later on September 21.

Less than two weeks after this promotion, he was part of the famous First Five Hundred that sailed out of St. John's harbor on October 4, 1914, on board the SS *Florizel*, for the journey across the Atlantic to England and the war. He spent the fall of 1914 and the winter and spring of 1915 in training, first at Pond Camp on Salisbury Plain and then in Fort George, Edinburgh Castle and Stobs Camp in Scotland, before relocating to Aldershot, England, on August 2, 1915. Before leaving Scotland, he had been promoted to Corporal, on June 7, 1915.

At Aldershot the Newfoundland Regiment received its first battle orders. It was to proceed to the eastern Mediterranean to engage the enemy on Turkey's Gallipoli Peninsula. Garland, along with more than 1,000 fellow members of the Regiment left Devonport, England, on August 20, aboard SS *Megantic*, sailed down the west coast of Europe, through the Strait of Gibraltar and across the Mediterranean to Alexandria, Egypt, arriving there on September 1. After approximately two weeks of acclimatization, they sailed north to the Gallipoli Peninsula, where they landed at Suvla Bay on the night of September 19-20th, to heavy shellfire from the Turks.

The Newfoundland Regiment spent almost four months at Suvla Bay, during which time some 30 of its members were killed by the enemy and another 150 were the victims of frostbite and pulmonary ailments, a result of an incredibly cold winter in the eastern Mediterranean. Garland survived the enemy bullets and shells and the weather and was with the main body of the Regiment when it wended its way back across the Mediterranean in March of 1916, after spending much of the previous eight weeks in Egypt resting and recuperating from the Gallipoli campaign. While in Gallipoli he had been promoted to Sergeant on October 28.

On March 22, 1916, the transport ship *Alauria* carrying the Regiment landed at Marseilles, France. From there, they travelled north, arriving at Pont Remy, on the Somme River in Picardie on March 25. The Newfoundlanders would spend the next three months in this general area preparing for a major attack on enemy positions, which was expected in late June or early July. That offensive, the Battle of the Somme,

began on the morning of July 1, 1916. The Newfoundland Regiment was part of the third wave near the French villages of Beaumont and Hamel.

What happened to the 801 members of the Regiment that morning is one of the greatest tragedies in the annals of Newfoundland's history. When the final tally was added up, 233 of the enlisted men were reported dead, 386 injured and another 91 missing. All 23 officers were either killed or wounded. Only 68 men answered the subsequent roll call, although it appears a number of others had survived but were not present to answer when their names were called. In all, almost 20,000 British soldiers were killed and almost 40,000 wounded that day. Garland was one of the wounded, with gunshot wounds to his left arm and leg, and was evacuated to England arriving at the 3rd General Hospital at Wandsworth in London on July 6. There he underwent treatment and a period of recuperation for several months, not being cleared to return to duty until November.

Garland had lasting physical reminders of what happened to him at Beaumont Hamel. A medical report dated June 23, 1919, just before his discharge from the Regiment, indicates he had a "*scar along lower end of forearm and down over back on hand (left) healed. Thickening of wrist with ankylosis [stiffness of joints]. Can close fingers at second and third phalangeal joints, cannot move metacarpophalangeal joints. Cannot move wrist-joint. Not likely to improve.*"

After his release from hospital, he was assigned to the Regiment's Depot at Ayr, Scotland, beginning his duties there on November 10, 1916. Ten days previous he had received a commission as a 2nd Lieutenant. He remained at the Depot in various capacities until the end of the war. While there he received commission as a Lieutenant on May 1, 1918. He returned to Newfoundland in May of 1919 and was retired from the Regiment on July 5.

Once settled in St. John's, Garland returned to Robinson & Company and *The Daily News* as a printer. He worked there until 1927 when he accepted a full-time position as secretary-treasurer of the Great War Veterans Association. He had previously served three one-year terms as Vice-President of the GWVA and in 1925 was Vice-President for Newfoundland on the executive of the British Empire Service League, an association of veterans' organizations that existed throughout the empire. In that capacity, he, along with Herman W. Quinton, was one of two Newfoundland delegates at the League's conference held that year in Ottawa.

He served as secretary-treasurer of the GWVA for four years but in 1929 took on additional responsibilities as the Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod, the chief clerical position in the Legislative Council, the upper house (equivalent to the Canadian Senate) in Newfoundland's bicameral parliament as it existed from 1855 to 1934. Garland was the last person to occupy that office, as the

Legislative Council was dissolved with the suspension of Responsible Government in 1934 and was not re-instituted when the provincial system of governance was established in 1949.

After the dissolution of the Legislative Council in 1934, Garland spent the remainder of his working life as a commercial agent, operating out of a small office on Water Street. He had time to devote to other exploits, one of which was Joseph R. Smallwood's campaign for Newfoundland's Confederation with Canada. In an interview in 1982, Smallwood credits Garland with first suggesting the idea of Confederation with Canada to him as a future political option for Newfoundland. And when Smallwood was successful in having that option placed on the referendum ballot that would be placed before Newfoundlanders in 1948 asking them to choose the form of government that they favoured for their homeland, Garland was one of the first people that Smallwood enlisted in the cause.

The Newfoundland Confederate Association was formed in St. John's on February 21, 1948, with Gordon Bradley as President, Smallwood as Campaign Manager and Garland as Secretary-Treasurer. The vice-presidents of the organization, and there were many, came from all over the island. With the eventual success of the campaign for Confederation in the second referendum, held on July 3, 1948, the Newfoundland Confederate Association evolved into the Newfoundland Liberal Party, with Garland continuing in his role as Secretary-Treasurer, a position he

occupied until his retirement in 1960. Smallwood once lamented that he had not appointed Garland to the Senate or some other such sinecure for his service to the Confederation movement in Newfoundland.

While working at the Regiment's Depot in Ayr, Scotland, Garland met Mary Ethel Stevenson, who was usually referred to as Maisie. They were married in Ayr on May 3, 1917 and she accompanied him back to St. John's when he returned in May 1919. The Garlands lived in St. John's until 1960, when, following his retirement, they moved to California. They appear not to have adjusted to life in the southwestern United States, however, as within a short time they were back in St. John's. It was there that Garland died on March 5, 1965. Herb Wells, writing in his *Evening Telegram* column for veterans on March 12, commented that it was one of the largest funerals held in St. John's in many years, with over 100 veterans in attendance.

Maisie Garland survived her husband by three years but met a very sad end. On January 26, 1968 she was severely injured in a fire at her home at 11 Portugal Cove Road. She died as a result of these injuries at the General Hospital on February 21. The Garlands had no children.

A life-long member of Gower Street United Church, Charles Garland is one many unsung heroes of Newfoundland, whose life bears witness to a litany of accomplishments in a wide variety of fields: soldier, officer, printer, administrator, civil servant, commercial agent, political activist, political party official and so much more. Not bad for a printer's devil from Carter's Hill!

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, like this one, 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 200th anniversary of this congregation. If you know of any relatives of these servicemen and woman please contact Bert Riggs at briggs@mun.ca 726-6169/864-8303