



Private Ernest Simms (Regimental Number 5580) is interred in Hermitage, in St. Saviour's Anglican Church Cemetery.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a fisherman, Ernest Simms presented himself for medical examination at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury**, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, on July 1, 1918. It was a procedure which found him...*Fit for Foreign Service.*

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****The building was to serve as the Regimental Headquarters in Newfoundland for the duration of the conflict.***

It was to be on the day of that medical assessment, July 1, and at the same venue, that Ernest Simms was now to be enlisted. He was engaged...*for the duration of the war**...at the daily private soldier's rate of a single dollar to which was to be appended a ten-cent per diem Field Allowance.

****At the outset of the War, perhaps because it was felt by the authorities that it would be a conflict of short duration, the recruits enlisted for only a single year. As the War progressed, however, this was obviously going to cause problems and the men were encouraged to re-enlist. Later recruits – as of or about May of 1916 - signed on for the 'Duration' at the time of their original enlistment.***

Only a further few hours were then to go by before there came to pass, while still at the *CLB Armoury* on Harvey Road, the final formality of his enlistment: attestation. On that same first day of that July* he pledged his allegiance to the reigning monarch, George V, whereupon, at that moment, Ernest Simms officially entered the service of the King.

****It had been two months prior to this that the Newfoundland Military Service Act (conscription had come into effect. From May 11 through to the end of the Great War, the Department of Militia was to call a total of 1,470 men into active service. No evidence found among his documents suggests that Charles McCarthy was or was not one of those to be conscripted.***

Following his enlistment and attestation he surely reported to quarters in St. John's**, these likely in the *Prince's Skating Rink* in the eastern end of the city. Some of his fellow recruits were to be granted a period of home leave, but the brevity of his stay in barracks was to preclude any such possibility.

(Right: *This photograph of the Prince's Rink in St. John's with military personnel, apparently attired in uniforms of Great War vintage, on parade is from the Ice Hockey Wiki web-site. There appears to be no further information a propos.)*



Only a week after his enlistment, on June 8, Private Simms was admitted into the Barracks Hospital in St. John's. Two days later again, on the 10th, he was transferred from there to the General Hospital where a diagnosis of *influenza, toxæmia* (blood poisoning) and *bronchial pneumonia* was confirmed.

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On June 13 the medical staff was to consider him to be...*dangerously ill*.

The son of John Simms, fisherman, and of Maria-Ann Simms (née *Skinner**) of Richard's Harbour (close to Hermitage Cove but in the *District of Burgeo and La Poile*) and later, by the time of the 1921 Census, of Hermitage, he was also brother to Maria-Ann, Frederick-Charles, William-James, Dorothy, Arthur and to George.

**The couple had married in the community of Hermitage on September 9 of 1993.*

Private Simms was reported as having...*died of sickness – heart failure due to pneumonia...*- in hospital in St. John's on June 14, 1918.

His remains embalmed and placed in a coffin by Mr. J. C. Oke, undertaker, the funeral cortege of Private Simms was apparently not to proceed to the railway station in St. John's until June 24, ten days after his death, for the first stage of the journey back home on the express train, as far as Placentia*.



The remainder of the passage was made on the SS *Fogota*.

**It had originally been intended to send his body home to Hermitage via Port aux Basques on June 16, but apparently this had not proved to be feasible and thus the route to be taken via Placentia.*

(Right above: *The image of the ship 'Fogota' is from the 'For Posterity's Sake', a Royal Canadian Navy project to which it has been contributed by Donald (Bud) Rose. The vessel, having served in Newfoundland waters prior to the Great War as a coastal steamer, was requisitioned for service as a patrol vessel by the Royal Navy, transferred to the Royal Canadian Navy in 1915, before returning to private service in 1918.*)

Ernest Simms had enlisted at the *declared* age of eighteen years. The exact date of his birth, likely in Richard's Harbour – although a second source has Hermitage - has thus far proved to be elusive.

The Commonwealth War Graves head-stone was not to be forwarded to Hermitage until November of 1925.

The above dossier has been researched, compiled and produced by Alistair Rice. Please email any suggested amendments or content revisions if desired to criceadam@yahoo.ca. Last updated – January 30, 2023.