



Private Harry (Henry) Hubert Parsons (Regimental Number 5999) lies in Plymouth (Efford) Cemetery: Grave reference, Number 4358, Class C., Common Ground.

His occupation prior to enlistment recorded up until that time as that of a teacher in the community of Trout River, Bonne Bay, earning a weekly four dollars working for Dr. Blackall of the Church of England education authority, Harry Hubert Parsons was a recruit of the 15th(?)Draft. Having taken the train from Bay Roberts to St. John's on the day before – a First Class ticket for two dollars, fifty-five cents, paid for by the Newfoundland taxpayer – he presented himself for medical examination at the *Church Lads Brigade*

Armoury*, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, on August 13, 1918. It was a procedure which found him...*Fit for Foreign Service.*

**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, August 13, and at the same venue, that Harry Hubert Parsons 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 thirteenth day of that month of August* he pledged his allegiance to the reigning monarch, George V, whereupon, at that moment, Harry Hubert Parsons became...*a soldier of the King.*

**It had been three 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 Harry Hubert Parsons was or was not one of those to be conscripted.*

Many of the recruits during this period are recorded as having been granted several days of a final furlough before departure for *overseas service*. Private Parsons, Number 5999, was to be one of those to receive these several days of leave, his records showing that following some initial training he was granted home leave to the Conception Bay community of Bay Roberts (*East*) from September 5 until 14 before returning to St. John's and accordingly reporting...*to duty...* in the 3rd Battalion quarters, these likely in the St. John's curling rink and the *Prince's Skating Rink* in the eastern end of the city to where he may have also been ordered after his enlistment .

(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.)*



A week and a day following his return from home, on September 22 Private Parsons was one of the 24th Draft from Newfoundland which took the train from St. John's to Québec (his files say Halifax but – if the date of September 22 is correct - other information makes Québec almost certain – he likely travelled *via* Halifax). There in Québec the troops embarked onto His Majesty's Transport *Huntsend* and sailed for the United Kingdom on the 28th.



The three troopships in the convoy – *Victoria* and *City of Cairo* the two others - were infected with influenza: about one hundred men in all would die at sea and more were to expire after having arrived in England.

(Right above: *The former German ship Lützow, seized by the British in 1914 and re-named Huntsend.* – from *Old Ship Photos*)

On October 8 Private Parsons was admitted into the ship's hospital on board *Huntsend*. The medical report of that day reads as follows:

Complaints: Headache, Dizziness & General Malaise

Present Condition: Anxious and pinched expression, somewhat emaciated. Reported sick this a.m..

Lips Cyanotic (bluish in colour) and dry. Herpes (cold sores), chest negative except for coarse rales (bubbling noises) over the left sub-clavicular region. Abdomen negative.

Diagnosis: Influenza

At the time of his discharge on October 11 Private Parsons was still in hospital although the report of that day suggests that his condition had been...*improving*. He was nonetheless thereupon taken to the nearby Military Hospital in Devonport for treatment for pneumonia. The medical staff there deemed his condition on October 17 as being ...*serious*.

All his effects were burned.

The son of Abraham Parsons (former fisherman who was to pass away from tuberculosis on March 16 of 1910) and of Annie Parsons (née *Mercer**) – to whom he allotted a daily sixty cents from his pay – by 1919 of 21, High Street, Grand Falls, and by 1821, of 51, Botwood Road, also Grand Falls, his place of birth was cited as having been Bay Roberts (East). He* had apparently had five siblings: Frederica-Elliott, Delphine, Gilford, Maxwell and Arthur.

****The couple had married in Bay Roberts on May 8 of 1891.***



(Right above: *The sacrifice of Private Parsons is honoured on the War Memorial in Bay Roberts.* – photograph from 2010)

****Some two years prior to this time Harry Hubert Parsons had apparently been married in a registry office in the United States, the name of the lady in question not, however, appearing among his documents. They were to be separated six months later, she subsequently returning the United States and the couple thereupon losing all contact with each other.***

Private Parsons was reported as having...*died of sickness...of cardiac failure...as a consequence of...influenza...followed by...pneumonia* - at hospital in Devonport at six o'clock in the evening of October 19, 1918, and was buried some forty-eight hours afterwards in nearby Plymouth.

Harry Hubert Parsons had enlisted at the *declared* age of twenty-two years: date of birth in Bay Roberts, Newfoundland, October 7, 1895 (from the Newfoundland Birth Register).

Private Harry Hubert Parsons was entitled to the British War Medal for his overseas service.



Note: The Wikipedia web-site has the ship carrying six-hundred forty-nine Canadians and continues to claim the following...five percent of the Canadians died before the troopship disembarked on October 11, 1918. Some, if not all, of these men were buried at Beaumont-Hamel Newfoundland Memorial, a memorial site...

Much of this is blatantly incorrect, of course: Firstly - any Newfoundlanders on board the ship were not Canadians; secondly – of those who died on board ship during the passage (such as the above Private Leonard Hynes and also Private Charles McCarthy) at least some, likely all of them, given the contagious and lethal nature of the disease, were buried at sea; thirdly – those sick while on board but who died after having disembarked were quickly buried for the same reason*.

Their clothing and bed-linen was usually burned as soon as possible.

****The vessel docked in Plymouth, England, while Beaumont-Hamel is, of course, in France. The memorial does, however, commemorate those whose bodies were committed to the waves.***

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.