

## CHAPTER II.

### *THE 6th CANADIAN MOUNTED RIFLES.*

**T**HE 6th Canadian Mounted Rifles was recruited from the different Maritime Provinces Militia Cavalry Regiments—"A" Squadron from the 8th P.L.F. (headquarters Sackville, N.B.), and 36th P.E.I. Light Horse (headquarters Charlottetown, P.E.I.); "B" Squadron from the 28th N.B. Dragoon Guards (headquarters St. John, N.B.), and "C" Squadron from the 14th King's Canadian Hussars (headquarters Canning, Nova Scotia).

The establishment of officers and warrant officers consisted of the following:

O.C., Lieut.-Col. R. H. Ryan, South African, Russian-Japanese, American-Mexican Wars; 2nd I.C., Lieut.-Col. A. E. Ings, Militia Long Service Medal; Capt. and Adj., Capt. B. W. Roscoe (later Capt. J. W. Long); Q.M., Major R. A. March; O.M., Major Colin MacIntosh; Chaplain, Capt. G. A. Kuhring; M.O., Capt. F. A. R. Gow; Sig. Off., Capt. H. R. Emmerson; Asst. Adj., Lieut. E. M. Arnold; Vet. Off., Lieut. J. S. Roy; R.S.M., L. W. Long.

"A" Squadron—O.C., Major A. J. Markham; 2nd I.C., Capt. B. W. Roscoe; Lieut. A. T. Ganong, Lieut. G. N. D. Otty, Lieut. G. R. Barnes, Lieut. W. D. Atkinson, Sqd. Sgt.-Major N. Dawes.

"B" Squadron—Major C. H. McLean; 2nd I.C., Capt. M. A. Scovil; Lieut. E. J. Mooney, Lieut. E. A. Thomas, Lieut. H. S. Everitt, Lieut. Geo. Morrissey, Sqd. Sgt.-Major J. M. Lamb.

"C" Squadron—Major T. A. Lydiard; 2nd I.C., Capt. J. C. Gray; Lieut. H. H. Pineo, Lieut. J. P. Knowlton, Lieut. W. J. Brown, Lieut. H. L. Bowness, Lieut. B. M. Beckwith, Sqd. Sgt.-Major George Gill.

Colonel Ryan and many of the officers and other ranks had volunteered at the outbreak of the war but owing to the expected necessity for the employment of mounted troops in the Maritime

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Provinces (the 14th K.C.H. having actually received orders for mobilization) their services were not accepted. It was also intimated to Colonel Ryan, who was at Valcartier, when the First Division was mobilized, that in the event of the Maritime Province Cavalry not being mobilized as Militia Units for home service he would be permitted to raise a Cavalry Regiment from these Units and would be given command thereof, owing to his previous service and experience in the field.

Accordingly Colonel Ryan returned to Nova Scotia and in December, 1915, received orders to recruit the Regiment.

### AT AMHERST, N.S.

The Regiment was mobilized at Amherst, N.S., mobilization dating from March 17, 1915.

The period during which the Regiment was quartered at Amherst was spent in perfecting the organization, taking on recruits and training the latter, owing to restrictions being largely confined to setting-up exercises, arm drill and route marching with inspections by various Generals.

While at Amherst a draft of two hundred volunteers was sent as reinforcements to the Infantry Regiments in England to make up for the losses sustained by the Canadians in the Second Battle of Ypres. These were replaced by new recruits.

### AT VALCARTIER CAMP.

In May, 1915, the Regiment was moved to Valcartier, being brigaded with the 4th and 5th C.M.R.'s, under command of Colonel (later Brigadier-General) C. A. Smart.

Training at Valcartier was intensive and performed on foot, as horses had not been received, the Cavalry formation being however retained. Here the Unit received instruction in musketry and rather prided themselves in their ability in this line.

While at Valcartier and also when at Amherst they were asked if they would volunteer to serve as dismounted troops, and the answer was always that "we will serve in any way we are needed."

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### IN ENGLAND.

The 6th C.M.R. left Valcartier early in July for England, embarking at Quebec on the slow South American cold storage boat *Herschel*. Naturally the accommodations were not of the best, as there were six hundred men and four hundred horses on a boat without practically any passenger accommodation. Their eleven days' voyage ended at Devonport, where they got a great reception. At Exeter they were met at the station by the good ladies of that town and given bags of food and fruit, and had their water bottles filled with hot coffee and tea. Many times since has this been spoken of in grateful words by the men, who were hungry and cold from the long train journey. On arrival at Camp in Dibgate they found themselves once more camping in the sand. As active service in Egypt had been spoken of, the Unit thought the authorities must be trying to accustom it to its future surroundings.

While at Dibgate the Unit received a draft of officers and men from the 8th C.M.R., under command of Lieut. T. D. Johnstone (later Capt. in Command of "B" Co., 5th C.M.R., wounded): second in command, Lieut. H. N. Bate (transferred to R.C.D.'s, when Regiment was broken up). Many of the men who had been sick, owing to the strenuous training, had been transferred to hospital, and when convalescent were sent to the Cavalry Reserve Depot. These had been replaced by the draft of men from the 8th.

### IN FRANCE—PLOEGSTEERTE—MESSINES.

The Regiment proceeded to France on October 24, 1915, the Brigade being attached to General Seely's Cavalry Division, operating as Corps Troops in the areas of Ploegsteerte and Messines.

The following officers and warrant officers went to France with the Regiment and saw service at Ploegsteerte and Messines during the fall and early winter months of 1915.

O.C., Lieut.-Colonel Shaw (later O.C. 1st C.M.R., killed in action June 2, 1916).

2nd I.C., Lieut.-Colonel Ings; Adjt., Capt. J. W. Long; Q.M., Major R. A. March (later to 4th C.M.R. Battalion); P.M., Major C. McIntosh (later to Can. Artillery); M.O., Capt. F. A. R. Gow (later to Can. Artillery); Sig. Officer, Capt. H. R. Emmerson (later

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Major 219th Infantry Battalion); Vet. Officer, Lieut. J. A. Roy (later to Fort Garry Horse).

"A" Squadron—Major A. J. Markham (later to Fort Garry Horse), Capt. B. W. Roscoe, Lieuts. A. T. Ganong, G. N. D. Otty, G. R. Barnes, T. D. Johnstone; Sqd. Sgt.-Major N. Dawes.

"B" Squadron—Major C. H. McLean, Capt. M. A. Scovil, Lieuts. E. J. Mooney, E. A. Thomas, H. S. Everett, George Morrissey; Sqd. Sgt.-Major J. M. Lamb (all later to 4th C.M.R. Regt.).

"C" Squadron—Major T. A. Lydiard (later to R.C. Dragoons), Capt. J. C. Gray, Lieuts. H. H. Pineo, J. P. Knowlton, B. M. Beckwith, H. N. Bate; Sqd. Sgt.-Major Geo. Gill, D.C.M., later R.S.M. 5th C.M.R.

Lieut.-Colonel Ryan transferred to the Artillery, in which he served with distinction to the end of the war being decorated for conspicuous gallantry in the field.

### REORGANIZED AS INFANTRY.

The Division was withdrawn from the trenches in December, 1915, and orders were subsequently received that the 1st and 2nd C.M.R. Brigade should be reorganized into the 8th Canadian Infantry Brigade, consisting of 1st, 2nd, 4th and 5th Battalions of Mounted Rifles. The junior Regiments in each Brigade, namely the 3rd and 6th C.M.R., were split up between the two senior Regiments, thus forming four Infantry Regiments.

The ostensible reason for this was the necessity of relieving infantry in trenches and the unsuitability of the cavalry formation for that purpose. The change in formation necessitated the transfer to England of officers of senior rank.

The command of the reorganized Brigade was assumed by Brig.-Gen. V. A. S. Williams on January 1, 1916, and training in infantry drill and tactics was gone at in dead earnest by all ranks.

This training continued both in the line and out and the Brigade occupied the Ploegsteerte area until March, 1916, when it was moved to the Ypres Sector as part of the newly-formed 3rd Division, commanded by General Mercer, and took over the Hooze-Hill 60 Sector.

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The disposal of the various Squadrons of the 6th C.M.R. was as follows :

"A" and "C" Squadrons were formed into "D" Company of the 5th C.M.R. Battalion, the company officers and warrant officers being :

Captain B. W. Roscoe (later Major, D.S.O., 2nd I.C. 5th C.M.R. Battalion, wounded June 3, 1916, at Sanctuary Wood) ; 2nd I.C., Captain H. H. Pineo (later killed in action at Mt. Sorrell, Ypres Sector, July, 1916) ; Lieuts. A. T. Ganong, G. N. D. Otty, G. R. Barnes ; Lieut. J. P. Knowlton (later to record office at Rouen, and received promotion there to Captain) ; C.S.M. George Gill (later R.S.M. 5th C.M.R. Battalion) ; "B" Squadron was formed into "D" Company of the 4th C.M.R. Battalion, the company officers and warrant officers being : Major C. H. McLean (later 2nd I.C. 4th C.M.R. Battalion) ; Capt. M. A. Scovil ; Lieut. George Morrissey.

### SANCTUARY WOOD.

The first serious engagement in which the Brigade was concerned was the Battle of Sanctuary Wood, which began June 2, 1916.

The disposition of the Brigade was : 1st and 4th C.M.R., front line and close support ; 5th C.M.R., Battalion H.Q. and three Companies in support at Maple Copse ; one Company in reserve at Zillebeke Bund ; 2nd C.M.R. in Brigade reserve near Poperinghe.

The morning of June 2nd was clear with good visibility. About 8 a.m. the Hun started a heavy bombardment, which grew in intensity, and information was received that an attack was in progress on the sector held by the 7th and 8th Brigades. The bombardment continued unabatingly, and about twelve o'clock mines were seen to be blown. The whole of the area held by the two Brigades was being systematically and furiously shelled, and communication with the forward area was impossible.

About 2 p.m. Captain Roscoe received orders to reinforce with his Company, the remainder of the Battalion at Maple Copse. There was no route specified, the officer conveying the order remarking that he hoped they would get through.



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The only other officer with the Company at this time was Lieut. G. N. D. Otty, but it developed that the N.C.O.'s had the requisite requirements of leadership and judgment. The Company, led by Captain Roscoe, advanced to the support of the remainder of the Battalion, and in full view of the enemy, through an extremely heavy barrage of fire, reached Maple Copse with few casualties, reporting to Lieut.-Colonel G. H. Baker, then commanding the Battalion.

Orders were then received to connect up with the 7th Brigade on the left, to dig in and hold the Copse to the last. Then it was that the N.C.O.'s showed those qualities of leadership and judgment, which later were to be recognized in a substantial manner.

C.S.M. George Gill, with twenty men was ordered to occupy and hold a strong point whose garrison had been killed. This he did with great bravery, showing much skill in defending the position. Sgts. George Chase, H. McGarry and T. W. Martin led detachments through the Copse and dug in on the edge next the enemy. Lieutenant Otty was absolutely fearless in assisting in the disposition of the Company, refusing to avail himself of anything that looked like shelter. He remarked to the Company Commander that if he was to be killed that would happen and that his men were his first consideration. Unfortunately he was hit and killed within a short time after arrival at the Copse.

The enemy made several ineffectual attempts to break through the line, and at each repulse his artillery fire became more severe. There was absolutely no shelter from his fire, and the Copse was like an inferno. The Company held the position, and were reinforced the next morning by the 2nd C.M.R.'s. After this things quieted down and the remnants of the Company marched out that night.

At the roll-call on relief only one officer (Lieutenant Barnes) and twenty men answered their names, the remainder of the Company which went into action 130 strong, having been either killed or wounded.

Captain Roscoe had been wounded on the morning of June 3rd, after the 2nd C.M.R.'s had arrived, and the command of the Company was taken over by Lieutenant Barnes, who was the Battalion Bombing Officer, and with his bombers had been active in the defence of the position. Lieutenant Barnes made several very daring

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patrols, practically between the posts of the enemy, who had attempted to push down hill in the long grass. It was through his efforts that the Unit was able to concentrate its rifle fire on the dangerous places and dislodge several machine guns. Lieutenant Barnes afterward got the M.C. for his work on this occasion.

The Battalion, reduced to some 300 all ranks, moved into rest billets, and the losses were filled by a large draft of officers and other ranks from England.

In the reorganization of the Battalion Major D. C. Draper (later Brigadier-General Commanding the Brigade) became O.C. (Lieut.-Colonel Baker having been killed in the engagement); Captain Roscoe was promoted to be second in command, awarded the D.S.O. for his work on the occasion and mentioned in despatches. The command of "D" Company was taken over by Lieut. H. H. Pineo (later promoted Captain), with Lieutenant Barnes, 2nd I.C.

Sergt. Harold McGarry was promoted to C.S.M. in place of George Gill, who was awarded the D.C.M. and promoted to be Regtl. Sgt.-Major for his meritorious services and bravery evinced during the battle. Sergt. Geo. Chase, who was severely wounded, was awarded the Military Medal and slated for a commission.

The 4th C.M.R. Battalion also lost heavily in the battle, and "D" Company of that unit thereafter practically lost its identity as a Maritime Province Company, owing to the casualties suffered.

The command of the Brigade was taken over by Brig.-General J. H. Elmsley, D.S.O. (afterward Major-General), replacing General Williams, taken prisoner in the battle, while the command of the Division devolved upon Major-General Lipsett, D.S.O. (later killed in action), the Divisional Commander, General Mercer having been killed during the action.

The Brigade, and incidentally the Company, under the new command had another very strenuous period of training, and after an initiation trip for the new men the whole Company moved up again to take their place in the line. While in training they had the benefit of the advice of a C.S.M. from the Welsh Guards, which was a great help, especially to the N.C.O.'s. This training showed later on the Somme.

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### THE BLUFF—MOUNT SORELL LINE.

On the first trip in after the June fight, the Unit took over the line on Mount Sorell. The first night in, the Hun started his regular trench mortar strafe. One of the first of these landed on the signallers' dugout, next company headquarters, and buried the men on duty there. Captain Pineo and Lieutenant Barnes, together with some of the men, started in to dig them out. At that time they could still hear the men groaning. Almost immediately afterward the Hun threw over another trench mortar. The men saw it coming by the trail of sparks, and all scattered up and down the trench. Captain Pineo was struck and instantly killed. The work of rescuing the men who had been buried need not have been performed by him. It was his anxiety for his men that cost him his life. Lieutenant Barnes at once took over the command of the Company. Word was here received that the Hun had dug some mines under the trench occupied by the Company, and to be on the lookout. During the night a party who were digging out in front uncovered a mine sap and on pulling up some planks from the roof saw a man with a lighted candle passing under the lines. Explosives were immediately obtained and the sap blown. This evidently put the "wind up" the Hun for he blew the remaining mines, some of which were hardly clear of his wire.

### AT THE SOMME.

Shortly after this the Unit left for the Somme, arriving in Albert on September 1st, after a long, hard march, and severe training. They moved up in support and were selected as one of the two Companies to be first over the top. In this engagement, owing to previous officer casualties, the sergeants had to lead Platoons. The attack on September 15th between Moquet Farm and Courcellette was the first occasion in which the Tanks were used. The Unit had wonderful success on this day, losing very few men in the attack. Afterward, out of one hundred and twenty, forty were killed and sixty wounded, holding the trench. Lieutenant Barnes was awarded the bar to the M.C. and his majority



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for his work on this occasion. No one could speak too highly of the way in which he led his men, and it was largely due to his dash that the attack was so successful. Mention should be made here of Sergeant Lowther, who was left behind with a party of ten men to garrison the trench until relieved by incoming troops. He lost a leg and several of the men were killed and wounded before the relief was accomplished. Sergeant Lowther was awarded the M.M. Sergt.-Major McGarry, who had been recommended for a commission, was killed in this action.

The Unit's next attack was on October 2nd when "D" Company was in support. The objective was Regina Trench, strongly held by two divisions of German Marines, who had just been brought from Ostend to try and stop the Canadians. This was one of the stiffest hand-to-hand fights the Company ever had, and naturally the casualties were very heavy. Several times the Company managed to bomb several hundred yards of trench clear, but each time the Hun would come back with reinforcements. At daybreak, with bombs and ammunition completely exhausted, the few survivors were forced to withdraw to the jumping-off trench. Every officer engaged was either killed or wounded. Sergt.-Major Holmes, who led the Company on this occasion, after the officers were knocked out, was awarded the M.M. Captain Beckwith, who had been detailed as O.C. of the 8th L.T.M. Battery, and had joined the Company for this occasion was wounded in the face. His leadership and energy were of great assistance, and it was largely due to him and his battery who were carrying ammunition that the Company was able to hold on as long as it did.

The remainder of the time at the Somme was spent in relieving and holding front-line positions. The Battalion was complimented by the Army Commander for its fine work while at the Somme, a personal visit being paid by him to Battalion Headquarters for that purpose.

In addition to the decorations mentioned as being won here, many of the officers of the Battalion were cited for bravery and gallantry in the field. Sergeant T. W. Martin was awarded the M.M. and slated for a commission for a daring reconnaissance of the enemy line under artillery fire.

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### ON THE VIMY FRONT.

The Unit's next move was to the Vimy front, where it was soon apparent that preparations were being made for a terrific onslaught on the Hun. Some time was spent here in assisting in the work of preparation, after which the Unit was withdrawn with the rest of the Brigade for a period of intensive training in attack over a taped layout of the enemy trenches. The Unit was then moved up to its part of the line, being in close support to the 4th C.M.R. Battalion.

The Battle of Vimy Ridge will live in history as the great achievement of the war, owing to the position being considered impregnable and the fact that it was captured with inconsequential losses, mainly due to a well considered plan of attack, absolute co-operation between all branches of the service and thoroughness of preparation.

The Company carried on with the usual steadiness during the engagement and rendered valuable assistance, its losses being negligible.

### ON THE DOUAI PLAIN.

For some time after the capture of Vimy Ridge it was found impossible to bring up the artillery within range, as the Hun had retired to a line on the outskirts of Lens and Douai. The Company, with the rest of the Battalion, pushed over the Ridge and were in position as a sacrifice Battalion to fight to the last man, in the event of a counter attack being launched to retake the Ridge. Trenches were constructed, deepened and strengthened, but the expected did not happen, and finally the guns were able to get up within range, from which time ordinary trench routine was resumed.

During a tour in the trenches on this front a raid was attempted by the Hun on the Company front. It was unsuccessful, the enemy being repulsed with heavy loss.

Lieutenant Holmes was awarded the M.C. for his work on this occasion, displaying great coolness and gallantry in holding off single-handed, until reinforced, a party of Huns.

The Battalion at this time was under the command of Major Roscoe, D.S.O., who the day following the attempted raid received a message from the Divisional Commander complimenting the

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Battalion on their steadiness during the attack. A few days after the Brigade was withdrawn from this sector.

The Company, which up until now had been practically all Maritime Province men, under the new reinforcement scheme drew their men from Quebec, and for a while the Company was made up almost entirely of French-Canadians. After Passchendaele, during which the Company gave its usual assistance to the Battalion, the wounded men began to come back as well as some of the N.C.O.'s who had been granted commissions, and once again it became a Maritime Province Company. It was at Passchendaele that Capt. L. C. Eaton was killed, just before going over the top.

In the winter of 1917 the Unit moved back to their old front at Vimy. In March, 1918, the Battalion put on a raid of 250 men. Lieutenants Gillis and Young of the old "D" Company took part in this, and were both awarded the M.C. for their work. Gillis in particular had done some very fine work during the second attack on the Somme. He had come back from hospital with an unhealed wound in his arm, and although it was too late for him to secure a rifle and the necessary equipment, he took a pick-axe handle and joined his Company in going over the top. He brought back the prisoners, sixty in all, taken on that occasion.

After a pleasant spring spent in reinforcing different parts of the line, in August the Unit once again took the road south for Amiens. The work done by the Company during this attack was spectacular. One of their accomplishments was the capture of a 5.9 Battery in action at point-blank range. One of the old 6th men was awarded the D.C.M. for his work on this occasion and Lieutenant Barnstead was awarded the Croix de Guerre for his leadership.

Lieutenant Smith was very seriously wounded during the next scrap in front of Arras, called the Second Battle of Arras. He had been a stretcher-bearer-Sergeant with the old Company and was awarded a commission in the spring of 1917. He was given the M.C. for his work at Arras in the taking of Monchy. He afterwards died of wounds in London. His work all the time he had been with the Battalion had been exceptional and the award of his M.C. was very popular.

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The next fight was for Cambrai, which as far as this Company was concerned consisted of a hunt for Huns through the ruins, collecting souvenirs by the way. The Company had a brush with the Bosche on the other side of the town, but they were merely scouts left behind and pulled out as soon as fired upon. The Company was sitting down having dinner when the English troops came



CAPT. L. C. EATON.



CAPT. H. H. PINEO.



LIEUT. G. N. D. OTTY.



LIEUT. GEO. MORRISEY.

through. As there had been no barrage they did not know that the town had been taken. From here the Company went to Valenciennes and then on to Mons. Lieutenant Gillis was wounded at Valenciennes and invalided to England.

The following other ranks of the 6th C.M.R. Regiment, who went to "D" Company of the 5th, obtained commissions with the



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Battalion for gallantry and devotion to duty on the field: J. W. Lewis, M.C. (later Capt. 8th Bgd. Light Trench Mortars); L. C. Eaton (later Capt. O. C. "D" Company, killed at Passchendaele); A. C. Wiswell, wounded June 2, 1916 (later Div. Bombing Officer, Bramshott); W. O. Barnstead, Croix de Guerre; C. G. Dunham, M.C., wounded June 2, 1916; H. A. Smith, M.C., died of wounds received at Monchy, Aug. 28, 1918; L. J. Young, M.C., wounded June 2, 1916, and at Monchy, Aug. 28, 1918; A. E. Gillis, M.C., wounded three times; A. H. Weldon, wounded June 2, 1916; T. W. Martin, M.M., wounded Aug. 9th at Vimy; W. J. Holmes, M.C., M.M., wounded at Lens, 1916; F. I. Andrews, M.M., wounded June 2, 1916, and November, 1918; Gordon Campbell, wounded twice; C. W. McArthur, M.M., wounded twice; A. H. Whidden, wounded June, 1916; A. Desbrisay, wounded June, 1916, died since returning home.

Cadets undergoing training when Armistice was signed: Duncan Chisholm, Campbell McLellan, Wm. H. Graham, M.M., J. A. Cameron, D.C.M., Walter Anderson, D.C.M.

The following were gazetted to other Regiments: A. Rogers, N. Rogers, D. B. Holman, Stuart Roy, B. Elliott, Geo. Morrison.

"B" Squadron and Headquarters, 6th C.M.R.'s, went to the 4th C.M.R. Battalion and formed "D" Company of that Battalion under the command of Major C. H. McLean, D.S.O (later 2nd i/c 4th C.M.R.'s; Capt. M. A. Scovil, 2nd i/c (seriously wounded and taken prisoner June 2, 1916). Lieut. H. S. Everett, bombing officer 4th C.M.R., was wounded at Sanctuary Wood, May, 1916. Lieut. E. A. Thomas was killed in action at Sanctuary Wood. Lieut. Geo. Morrissey, Intelligence Officer of 4th C.M.R., was killed in action June 2nd, 1916, while attempting to save a comrade's life.

The following N.C.O.'s received commissions from the 4th for gallantry and devotion in the field: C. W. Hicks, wounded June 2, 1916 (afterwards bombing officer, 34th Reserve, Seaford). J. H. Craigie, gazetted to the Imperial Infantry; N. McKenzie, commission with the 85th N.S. Highlanders; J. O. Spinney, commission with the 52nd Battalion; H. B. Fenis, Lieutenant R.A.F.; J. J. Rowland, 4th C.M.R.; J. H. Harris, Depot Battalion, St John; W. C. Wetmore, 236th Battalion.