

By Bill Stevens - Originally published in the March 2005 Newsletter

In front of the St. Catharines City Hall stands a war memorial with the name Watson prominently displayed across the front. Private Alexander Watson died during the Rebellion in the North West Territories in 1885. A plaque on the memorial lists soldiers who also died while serving in that conflict. However, there is an additional plaque unrelated to the Rebellion and that one is to memorialize four St. Catharines men who made the supreme sacrifice in the Boer War. The Boer War or South African War was fought from October 11, 1899 to May 31, 1902 when The Peace of Vereeniging ended the war and the British Empire declared victory. This war was the first time Canadians fought overseas in a war. More than 7000 Canadians were sent overseas in four separate contingents.

The plaque engraving is provided here, with additional information found about these men.

Major Henry M. Arnold / 90th Winnipeg Rifles / Capt. 2nd Special Services Battalion RC.R.L. / Died Feb 25th 1900 from wounds received in action at / Paardeburg Drift, South Africa, Feb. 18th 1900.

While the plaque reads Major, the Canadian War Memorial web site and other sources show Henry Mittleberger Arnold, as a Captain and that he died February 23rd. He was 40 years of age. He was the son of Charles Morgan Arnold. He was a member of the Royal Canadian Regiment of Infantry, 2nd Battalion and part of the First Contingent. Captain Arnold was shot in the head as he raised himself to scan the battlefield with his binoculars. He is buried in the Vendusiedrift Garden of Remembrance in Paardeberg. The cemetery is located 9.1 kilometres from the Paardeberg Museum, follow a dirt road and turn right at the Cannon sign, travel 600 metres, then turn and travel a further 200 metres. He is remembered on page 2 of the South African War Book of Remembrance on Parliament Hill. A photograph of his grave marker can be seen on the Canadian Virtual War Memorial web site (URL shown below).

Lieut. J. Edgar Burch / Adj. 2d Dragoons, attached to 1st Battalion C.M.R. / On special duty, killed in action near Pretoria / South Africa, July 16th 1900.

Lieutenant John Edgar Burch was a member of the Royal Canadian Dragoons and was part of the Second Contingent. He was 26 years old when killed and one of two Canadians killed during the battle of Pretoria. The Boers had attacked a detachment of Royal Irish Fusiliers who were in danger of being surrounded. Two troops of Canadians under Lieutenants Borden and Burch were sent to reinforce them. During their counterattack, they led their men in a forward attack and both lost their lives. John Reeves, the Colonel commanding the Royal Irish Fusiliers, wrote, "In the few words I spoke to you (Colonel Lessard) last night at the funeral of your two very gallant officers I am afraid I failed to convey the deep gratitude my regiment owes to the 1st Canadian Mounted Rifles for their gallantry in going so nobly and fearlessly to the succour of our beleaguered detachment at Witpoort yesterday. The counterattack your regiment made occurred at a most critical moment, and doubtless saved many of the lives of our detachment." Colonel Evans, who was commander of the 2nd Battalion at the time, wrote: "On our return from outpost duty on Tuesday night we buried two officers by lantern light. All Canadians, 1st and 2nd Battalions were there, and representatives from the New Zealanders and Mounted Infantry. The burial service was conducted by the Brigade chaplain, the Rev. Mr. Gardiner, and as the two gallant lads lay there, with a Canadian flag, which I picked up at Johannesburg, covering their bodies, and their Canadian comrades all about them, it was sad and most impressive scene, and I think all our hearts were turned toward the sorrowing ones in the dear old land we had left a few months ago."

He was the son of Major F.O. Burch and brother of A.L. Burch, Knox College, Toronto. He was the manager of the Knife Works. He is buried in the Braamfontein Garden of Remembrance in Johannesburg. The cemetery is located on Graaf Street, off Smit Street. Enter through the

gate, go 400 metres and turn right, and go 100 metres to find the Canadian graves on the right side.

He is remembered on page 6 of the South African War Book of Remembrance on Parliament Hill. His portrait and a photograph of his grave marker can be seen on the Canadian Virtual War Memorial web site (URL shown below).

Private Archibald Radcliffe / 1st Battalion C.M.R. 2d Troop, A Squadron / Field Force, South Africa / killed near Belfast, S.A. Sept 23rd 1900.

Private Archibald Radcliffe (listed as Ratcliff in the Canadian Virtual War Memorial) was killed in action when khaki-clad Boers lured him and three other dragoons into a trap killing two of them as they fought their way out. He was 21 years of age. He was a member of the Royal Canadian Regiment and part of the Second Contingent. He is buried in the Belfast Old Municipal Cemetery. The cemetery can be found by turning off the N4 towards Belfast, then going under the railroad bridge, turning left at fork (Spitskop Road), then right at Van Kraayenberg Street, then left onto Scheepers Street, which turns into a dirt road, then 150 metres to the cemetery, which is on the left and the Canadian graves are at the top centre.

He is remembered on page 34 of the South African War Book of Remembrance on Parliament Hill. A photograph of his grave marker can be seen on the Canadian Virtual War Memorial web site (URL shown below).

Corp. Robert Irwin / 19th St. Catharines Regt. / Wounded at Houtuck, South Africa May 1st, 1900 / died in Bloemfontein, S.A. July 1st, 1900.

Private (in the Canadian Virtual War Memorial) Robert Irwin, military service number 7204, died of enteric fever at age 19 years while serving in the Royal Canadian Regiment. He was part of the First Contingent. He was the son of Robert Irwin of St. Catharines. He had previously served with the 19th St. Catharines Battery. He is buried in the President

Brand Cemetery in Bloemfontein, located on the corner of Church and President streets, Johannesburg.

He is remembered on page 19 of the South African War Book of Remembrance on Parliament Hill. A photograph of his grave marker can be seen on the Canadian Virtual War Memorial web site (URL shown below).

< <http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca/general/sub.cfm?source=collections/virtualmem>>