

Temporary Captain Francis Joseph Airey (1889-1982)



Born on 5 July 1889 his father Albert had come out from Toronto the year before to help rebuild Vancouver after the Great Fire in 1888. His father was a builder, a founder of Christchurch and the first and for a time the only undertaker in Vancouver. Their home, which he shared with his parents and two sisters Lillian and Rosie was on Thurlow Street, between Pender Street and Melville Street.

Prior to joining 6 Field he was active in the boy scout movement and was registered as the first Canadian scoutmaster in 1910 with a troop of 73 scouts.

Francis Joseph Airey was working as a carpenter when he joined 6 Field Company CE in 1912. He rose rapidly, being promoted to Corporal in May 1913 and on 1 November 1913 qualified as a Sergeant. He was also the editor of the Engineer's Annual published by the NCOs of the Sixth Field Company Canadian Engineers in January 1914.

When the Great War started he was a sergeant. He left North Vancouver with the 7th overseas draft on 14 July 1915. By early December 1916 he was a lieutenant and on 16 July 1918 was the Assistant Adjutant of the 6th Engineer Battalion. After the Armistice, he was transferred to Brigade and became an Acting Captain and a staff officer.

After the war he moved to the Okanagan and spent four years in a Soldiers Settlement where he learned to farm. His father owned 6 acres of land on Bridgeport Road near No 5 Road where in 1932 they built four greenhouses. There they grew tomatoes and cucumbers and sold them to Vancouver wholesalers.

He remained active in the Boy Scout movement and maintained contact with many of his old army comrades including CSM Joseph Gill. He was also an avid square dancer, organized "The Tumbleweeds" square dancing group and dances in St Albans Church Hall and the St. Edwards Hall.

He married Margaret Dowie who was active in the Girl Guides, the president of the Women's Auxiliary of St Albans (Anglican) Church, the local Nursing Director of the St Johns Ambulance and during WWII was in charge of the Richmond Red Cross.

During WWII Frank re-enlisted and shutdown his Boy Scout troop for the duration.

After his second war he returned to his greenhouses and operated them until 1966. Then after they were damaged in a storm he tore them down. Frank Joseph Airey passed away on 14 September 1982 at the age of 93.