

Major Percy Ward (1882-1964)



He was the first commanding officer of the “BC Beavers” and was later known as BC’s “Mister Hospital”

Percy Ward was born in Yorkshire England. There he joined the South Staffordshire Volunteers. He then transferred to the 2nd Battalion of the Gloucester Regiment during the Boer War. The 2nd Gloucesters left England on 1st January 1900 and arrived in Capetown on the 21st. They then became part of the 13th Brigade which fought at Paardeberg. Percy served to the end of the South African war with both the 2nd Battalion and on the British Army staff at Bloemfontein. When the war was over, the 2nd Battalion remained in South Africa. On the 5th of June 1905 in Bloemfontein South Africa Percy married Zella Celestine Fitzmaurice and they left South Africa in 1909 when they moved to BC.

Along with his brother John he joined 6 Field Company as a lieutenant in 1911. At that time Percy was 28 and living in North Vancouver with his wife Zella 27, his daughter Nellie 2, his daughter Lilly 8 ½ and his younger brother Joseph 18. Percy was then working as a real estate agent in the firm of Ward Burmester and Von Gravenitz and his brother Joseph was working as a clerk. One of the real estate agents in their firm was William Henry Pratt who would later change his name, his occupation and go on to become famous as the horror movie actor Boris Karloff. Reportedly Pratt wasn’t a very good real estate agent.

When the war came Percy was promoted to Major and placed in command of the 19th overseas draft, which was known as the “B.C. Beavers”. This was the only draft from North Vancouver which was raised as a Field Company and on its arrival in England was numbered as the 12th. He handed over command of the 12th in England and became the Adjutant of the 4th Divisional Engineers in France in August 1916. On the 6th of March 1917 he transferred to the Canadian Engineer Training Depot and on the 21st of May 1918 transferred to 2nd Canadian Engineer Reinforcement Battalion where Lt Col JP Fell was CO of the Battalion. There he assumed command of “B” Company. The war ended and on the 14th of February 1919 he was taken off the strength of 2nd CERB and in March sailed back to Canada.

Back in Canada he became the manager of the Burrard Wood and Fuel Company and later the Secretary for the Burrard Inlet Tunnel and Bridge Company. In the 1930s Percy Ward was the Manager and Secretary-Treasurer of the North Vancouver General Hospital. In 1936 he joined the B.C Hospital Association and occupied a variety of positions with the organization including Assistant Advisor on Hospital Services, Inspector of Hospitals, Chief Inspector of Hospitals and finally Executive Secretary. He finally retired in 1958 but remained as the Honourary Secretary until his death on the 3rd of February 1964.

He was predeceased by his wife Zella in 1962 but survived by his three daughters, 12 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren.