

Chapter 1 The Founding of the Sixth -- LCol V.A. Larocque

In the early 1900s the British Empire was rebuilding its Armies. The Boer war had shown there to be numerous shortcomings in the British Army's organization, training and equipment. One of the lessons learned was that there was a serious shortage of engineers. That shortage had severely impacted the Army's mobility and that lesson was brought home to Canada by Canadian Boer War veterans. Change was in the air and interest in the Canadian military was running high.

In Canada the Federal Minister responsible for Canada's military, the flamboyant Sam Hughes, himself a Boer War veteran, led the movement to create a strong and viable Canadian Army. So, when some of North Vancouver's leading citizens petitioned him for a militia unit in June 1910, he gave it his full support.

That process had actually started a few years earlier and involved various North Vancouver community leaders and one of their sons.

In 1905, Billy Philips, the son of the North Vancouver municipal clerk Alexander Philips, had joined the 6th Duke of Connaught's Own Rifles (DCOR) as a private. Billy traveled twice-weekly from the North Shore, by ferry, to attend the DCOR drill sessions in downtown Vancouver.

Then a movement started to form an artillery unit on the North Shore. The plan first came to the public's attention in May 1908 when Councilor Tom Nye, another Boer War veteran, presided over a noisy meeting in the North Vancouver Municipal Hall to discuss the formation of a militia unit in the city. Also present at the meeting were such community leaders as W.H. Stoney, Alderman Alexander Smith, Charles E. Lawson and Mr. Martinson.

After the meeting Alexander Philip and his son Billy took the initial steps to form a militia artillery battery and used Alexander's office to meet with potential recruits. Two years later, at a subsequent June 1910 meeting Donald Cameron, then the District Engineer and an ex-Captain of the Royal Engineers gave a talk on the formation of a militia unit. Present were Chapman, Bill Elder, Billy Philip and others. Later Chapman, Elder and Philip were all to join the new unit.

After the meeting a petition was circulated. The required 50 recruit signatures were obtained and it was sent to Ottawa. But Victoria already had an artillery unit, and there were no Engineers in British Columbia. So, based on the lessons learned in South Africa, it was decided to form a militia Engineer unit in North Vancouver and attach it to the permanent force engineers in the Work Point Barracks in Victoria.

And so, the 6th Field Company Canadian Engineers was formed by order of Major W. Bethune Lindsey R.C.E. of Military District 11, in February 1911. In the spring of 1911, Lindsey made several trips from Victoria to North Vancouver to select the officers. He also met with the city to pick a site for the drill hall. And so, the movement to create the 6th proceeded apace. While initially reluctant James Pemberton Fell was finally prevailed upon and he agreed to become the first Commanding Officer. The pace then quickened.

By early 1912 Lindsey had selected five officers. Of the five, Percy and James E. Ward were brothers and had served in South Africa. While, Fell and Cosgrove had served with the British Territorials and Robertson with the Canadian Militia. On May 7th 1912, the first 30 men were sworn in at Larsons Pavilion in North Vancouver. The first sapper to join was Number 2 Henry Holland. Henry would later serve on the Western Front in the Great War, as would many of the others.



Lonsdale Avenue in North Vancouver 1910
(NVMA)

MILITIA FORCE AT NORTH VANCOUVER

Enthusiastic Meeting Held Last Night by Citizens Resolved to Do or Die and Ambitious City Will Possess Garrison.

North Vancouver, May 5.—(Special.) —At an enthusiastic meeting of North Vancouver's able-bodied citizens last night thirty young men decided to strike for their hearths and homes and become food for powder by joining a militia corps.

Colonel Boulton of the Sixth Regiment was invited to attend the meeting, which was held in the Municipal Hall, and Councilor Tom Nye, a South African veteran, presided, being supported by Mr. Alex. Phillip, clerk of the municipality.

There was a difference of opinion as to what arm of the service the new company should identify itself with. A number of old gunners wanted to see a section of light artillery established, pointing out the good work it could do and the excellent opportunities for firing at sea targets from the surrounding hills.

Another section wished for a "foot-pad," or infantry, company, and eventually Messrs. Nye, Stoney, Smith, Lawson and Martinson were appointed a committee to take the matter up with Colonel Holmes and upon his recommendation will the branch of the service be decided. There will be no difficulty in getting the men, and quite fifty per cent. of those present at last night's meeting had seen service for various periods, going from a long service medal to a one-year recruit. This will give the new company good stiffening and North Vancouver's defenders should turn out a very smart and efficient little force.

The Daily Province
May 5 1908

N. V. Corps of Field Engineers

Hearty Co-Operation of City's Young Men Required

As announced in yesterday's issue, a meeting of obvious importance will take place in the city hall on Tuesday night for the purpose of taking the initial step towards organizing a local corps of Field Engineers. The idea, according to an interview with Mr. J. P. Fell, a little time ago, owes its inception to a suggestion made by Mr. Donald Cameron, a former officer in the Volunteer Engineers of England. Organization was authorized by the militia department some two years ago, but had hung fire through lack of someone willing to take command. Mr. Fell declined for some time to undertake the work, expressing the hope that someone with more time to devote to it would do so. Having now been prevailed upon to rescind that decision, he has stated his determination to leave no stone unturned to make the local corps a company second to none in Canada in smartness and efficiency. "All I require is the hearty co-operation

of the young men of North Vancouver and Vancouver who have a taste for field engineering and desire to fit themselves to defend their country in time of need." This was Mr. Fell's own utterance and on Tuesday night it is hoped and expected, the young men of the city will rise to the occasion and give him the co-operation he is seeking.

Mr. Fell was particularly anxious at the outset that it should be generally understood that the corps was not to be organized for decorative purposes. "We intend to learn our work," he said "from A to Z, from bridge building to bayonet fighting, from wireless telegraphy to the building of fortifications, from aeroplane flying to submarine mining, so far as the militia department gives us facilities."

The total strength of the company will be one major, one captain, four lieutenants, a medical officer, and about 180 non-commissioned officers and men. Recruiting will in all probability be commenced immediately after the meeting on Tuesday night.

The Express May 2 1912

The Express

NORTH VANCOUVER, B.C., SATURDAY, MAY 18, 1912.

No. 6 Corps Field Engineers

TEMPORARY DRILL HALL SECURED

FIRST DRILL WEDNESDAY NEXT

Major James P. Fell states that arrangements have been made for Larson's pavilion for drill hall purposes,

until such time as the government has completed the drill hall to be constructed on Mañon Park. The first drill will take place on Wednesday evening, the 22nd inst., when the officers desire that there shall be a full muster of recruits for the purpose of medical examination and preliminary instructions.

The Fathers of the 6th

Alexander Philip (1849-1929)



Alexander Philip was born in Elgin Scotland in 1849. In 1872, Mr. Philip commenced the study of law in Edinburgh and in 1877 was admitted to practice as a solicitor. In 1891 he left Scotland and arrived with his wife and children in New Westminster. In November of that year, he accepted the position of Municipal Clerk for the newly formed District of Coquitlam. Over the next few years, he was in turn the Municipal Clerk for Burnaby and in private practice. In 1902 he became North Vancouver's Municipal Clerk. He was their only full-time employee.

In 1908 he became involved in the formation of what was to become the 6th Field Company Canadian Engineers and, with Donald Cameron, is one of its founding fathers.

In 1910 Mr. Philip was appointed president of the North Vancouver Board of Trade and served for two terms. He held the office of magistrate in the District for a number of years and was prominent in many of the communities' organizations. And he was active in the organization of the North Vancouver Choral Society.

Alexander Philip, pioneer resident of the North Shore, passed away at the age of 80 on August 29th 1929. He had suffered illness over a two-year period and died at the residence of his son Billy, at what was the family home at 259 Keith Road West. In recognition of services rendered to the District of North Vancouver and in private life, Philip Avenue was named after him.

Donald Cameron (1852-1931)



Born in Appin, Argylshire Scotland he was educated at Anderson's Technical College (later the Royal Technical College) and Glasgow University. He then served a civil engineering apprenticeship with David Smith and Ritchie Rodger of Glasgow and for six years was an engineer on road, bridge, sewer and waterworks projects.

For nearly 25 years he served in a position equivalent to a City Engineer for Exeter in England. It was during this time that he inventing and developing the septic tank. He also served with a number of volunteer military units including the Devon and Somerset Royal Engineer Volunteers. He retired as a Captain with a long service medal.

In 1887 he was awarded the "Testimonial" of the Royal Society of the Protection of Life from Fire. He received it for conspicuous gallantry in rescue work during the fire at the Theater Royal, Exeter in which 186 people died.

In 1907 he moved to Canada and became the Municipal Engineer for the District of North Vancouver. He then entered into partnership with Mr. E.A. Cleveland to form Cleveland and Cameron, an engineering firm working on local pre-war construction projects. In 1911 he was asked to be the first Commanding Officer of the 6th. He was 59 years old.

Although he accepted, it was later decided a new unit needed a younger man for its first CO. As such James Pemberton Fell, who was then only 39, was appointed in his place.

Donald Cameron was a marksman, a Mason and spoke fluent Gaelic. He passed away on July 26, 1931 and was survived by his wife, six sons, two daughters and eleven grandchildren.

Lonsdale and 1st Avenue in North Vancouver
1908 (NVMA)



Orders by Major James P. Fell – Commanding

North Vancouver, July 5, 1912

1. Authorization –

G.O. 18, February 1911, item 3, M.D. No. 11 Canadian Engineers. The organization of a field company at North Vancouver, to be designated “6th Field Company” is authorized. H.Q. 32-1-113

2. Appointments –

The following extracts from General Orders are promulgated.

Sixth Field Company Canadian Engineers –

To be provisional major on organization, James Pemberton Fell, Esquire. General Order 202, dated December 5th 1911.

To be provisional captain on organization, Lieutenant J. E. Ward, transferred from Sixth Regiment “Duke of Connaught’s Own Rifles” 29th September 1911. G. O. No 45, 12th March, 1912.

To be lieutenant on organization, Lieutenant N. R. Robertson, transferred from 2nd Field Company Canadian Engineers 29th September 1911. G. O. No 45, 12th March, 1912.

To be provisional lieutenant on organization, Percy Ward, gentleman, 3rd October 1911. G.O. No 45, 12th March, 1912.

To be provisional lieutenant on organization, John Robert Cosgrove, gentleman, 5th December 1911. G.O. No 18, 23rd January, 1912.

3. Duty –

To be acting adjutant lieutenant, N. R. Robertson

4. Parade –

The company will parade at the Drill Hall, North Vancouver, on Tuesday evenings of each week, at 8 p.m., until further notice. Dress, Drill Order

5. Establishment –

The following having been duly attested are hereby taken on the strength:

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|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 2. Sapper H. Holland | 27. Sapper A. H. Martinson |
| 3. Sapper C. H. Rawson | 28. Sapper G. S. Jenkins |
| 4. Sapper W. P. Fleming | 29. Sapper H. Smith |
| 5. Sapper J. Williams | 30. Sapper W. H. Stoney |
| 6. Sapper B. Oughton | 31. Sapper J. S. Stoney |
| 7. Sapper J. Ward | 32. Sapper W. G. Fletcher |
| 8. Sapper H. C. Edwards | 33. Sapper J. R. Hamilton |
| 9. Sapper L. C. Booth | 34. Sapper R. B. Smith |
| 10. Sapper T. Baxter | 35. Sapper J. Varnes |
| 11. Sapper W. Wootten | 36. Sapper G. Curblishy |
| 12. Sapper A. V. Graves | 37. Sapper W. Olson |
| 13. Sapper C.D. Morris | 38. Sapper R. Olson |
| 14. Sapper W. Bulpit | 39. Sapper J. C. Burniston Sr |
| 15. Sapper E. C. Jackson | 40. Sapper J. J. McLean |
| 16. Sapper R. Dickenson | 41. Sapper G. W. McGurk |
| 17. Sapper C. D. P. Stern | 42. Sapper W.R. Bonacker |
| 18. Sapper F. J. Jackson | 43. Sapper A. Hoedt |
| 19. Sapper W. T. Read | 44. Sapper J. S. Harvey |
| 20. Sapper E. Fletcher | 45. Sapper T. Prime |
| 21. Sapper G. B. Hardy | 46. Sapper S. A. Schofield |
| 22. Sapper E. H. B. Girard | 47. Sapper R. J. Stoney |
| 23. Sapper E. A. Hugh | 48. Sapper O. Peers |
| 24. Sapper H. H. Bower | 49. Sapper W. Booth |
| 25. Sapper E. H. Sharp | 50. Sapper D. Nelson |
| 26. Sapper G. D. Sherry | 51. Sapper C.A. McDowell |

JAMES P. FELL, Major
Commanding
Sixth Field Company, C. E.

BYLAW NO. 197

A bylaw to provide for the disposal of a portion of Mahon Park to the King in the right of the Dominion of Canada for the purpose of allowing an armory and Drill Hall to be constructed there on and for Military purposes.

WHEREAS it is proposed to organize a Company of Militia Field Engineers with headquarters at the City of North Vancouver:

AND WHEREAS the Government of the Dominion of Canada have sanctioned such organization and are prepared to construct an Armory and Drill Hall for the accommodation thereof on condition that the City of North Vancouver will supply a suitable site therefore;

AND WHEREAS the most suitable and central site available is the south east corner of Mahon Park as hereinafter described, same being a portion of said Park not required for park or other corporate purposes;

AND WHEREAS the grantors of Mahon Park to the City of North Vancouver are desirous that the city should dispose of its right in the proposed site to the King in the right of the Dominion of Canada for the purposes above mentioned;

AND WHEREAS it is advisable in the interest of the City that such disposal should be made;
NOW THEREFORE the Municipal Council of the City of North Vancouver with the assent of the Electors of the City of North Vancouver and the approval of the Lieutenant Governor-in Council enacts as follows:

1. The City of North Vancouver hereby agrees to grant to the King in the right of the Dominion of Canada the following described lands and premises situate, lying and being in the City of North Vancouver and being more particularly known and described as that portion of Mahon Park so called bounded and described as follows, that is to say:

Commencing at the intersection of the northerly boundary of Fifteenth street with the westerly boundary of Forbes Avenue thence westerly along said northerly boundary of Fifteenth Street two hundred (200) feet, thence northerly and parallel to said westerly boundary of Forbes Avenue three hundred and eighty (380) feet more or less to the westerly production of the northerly boundary of Sixteenth Street, one hundred and fifty (150) feet, thence northerly at right angles to said northerly boundary of Sixteenth Street two hundred and fifty (250) feet, thence easterly and parallel to said northerly boundary of Sixteenth Street two hundred and fifty (250) feet, thence southerly two hundred and fifty (250) foot to the point on the said northerly boundary of Sixteenth Street distant easterly thereon, two hundred (200) feet from the intersection of said northerly boundary of Sixteenth Street with the westerly boundary of Forbes Avenue, thence westward along said northerly boundary of Sixteenth Street, two hundred (200) feet to the westerly boundary of Forbes Avenue, thence southerly along said westerly boundary of Forbes Avenue, three hundred and eighty (380) feet more or less to the point of commencement containing by admeasurement three and eighteen one hundredths (3.18) acres be the same more or less to be used by the King in the right of the Dominion of Canada for the construction of an Armory and Drill Hall and for Militia and military purposes.

2. The Mayor and City Clerk are hereby authorized and directed to make, execute and deliver a conveyance on behalf of and in the name of the City of North Vancouver to the King in the right of the Dominion of Canada of all the right, title and interest of the said City of North Vancouver in and to the said premises and to attach the Seal of the said City of North Vancouver to the said conveyance.

3. This Bylaw shall come in force on receiving the assent of the Electors in manner provided by the Municipal Clauses Act and on approval by the Lieutenant Governor in Council and on registration in due course as provided bylaw.

4. This Bylaw may be cited as the "Drill Hall Site Conveyance Bylaw, 1911."

Passed by the Council on the 29th day of December, 1911.

Received the assent of the Electors of the City of North Vancouver on the 11th day of January 1912.

Reconsidered, adopted and finally passed by the Council, signed by the Mayor and City Clark and sealed with the Corporate Seal on the 15th day of January, 1912.