

Kamloops, who had served in the Canadian Contingent during the Boer War and had also seen service with the First Contingent in Flanders, whence he had returned wounded in the foot, was in command, and with him was associated Capt. A. T. Johnston, another South African veteran. Sgt. Harold Brown acted as local orderly room sergeant and assisting him were Ptes. F. Field and F. du Jardin. These five comprised what might be called Advanced Headquarters. At first lack of accommodation in Comox made it necessary to divide the men into two companies, one being stationed in Courtenay and the other in Comox, but this arrangement was found to be unsatisfactory and as soon as possible the Spit itself was made habitable and the larger portion of the men were housed under canvas, the balance being quartered in the Hotel Port Augusta, Comox, which was requisitioned as a sort of receiving station.

It is not easy to describe the hardships which these pioneers of the Spit camp had to undergo. A reference has already been made to the severity of the weather; the snowfall was phenomenal and on more than one occasion the men were called out of their beds to clear the roof before the weight of snow brought it down on their heads. Moreover, before the Spit could be used, it was necessary to lay a water pipe from a spring on the mainland across the shallow bay formed by the curve of the peninsula. To do this the men had to work up to their thighs in water, and that in December and January. Buildings had to be erected for mess-halls and recreation rooms; a bath-house had to be constructed, kitchens made and all the other appurtenances of a military camp. The first building erected for a mess-hall collapsed, partly owing to snow but more largely because the small body of Engineers on the spot who were responsible for its design were more competent in theory than in practice. Colonel Warden pleaded that his recruits, who were all practical, out-door men, be allowed to go ahead and make a camp for themselves, but Red Tape ruled that if the Government supplied the material, it should also supply the brains; unfortunately the Government was only in a position to supply heads. In addition to this kind of work the troops at Comox rendered enormous benefits to the people of the district in helping them to clear away the snow which in every locality was proving a very real menace to safety.

And so the winter passed. That it passed without any fatality from disease occurring was no credit to responsible authority; it was merely a striking evidence of the physical fitness and calibre of the men. That it passed without any outward sign of discontent was a tribute to the patriotism of the rank and file and the tact and sympathy of the officers on the spot. That Colonel Warden could frequently visit these men and receive a hearty welcome was in itself sufficient proof that they never blamed him for their straits, but realized that he was doing all he could to