



*Harry Blaney,
son of Thomas
Blaney.*

help him get a post in England and then I asked at your son's request if they would transfer him to the motors. But I hear that he has been sent to the front on a draft of reinforcements. I am sorry I could get nothing done about the matter. You see that I have British Command only and have consequently less influence with the Canadians. I will keep my eye on him all the same and will let you know about him."

Steele reports to Blaney in a letter written May 10, 1917: "Your son is over in France. He wrote Mrs. Steele to say how he is. I hope he finds things satisfactory. He shall do well."

A tremendous benefit for Steele was having his family stationed with him in England. Unfortunately, Harry was wounded during battle. Steele writes June 28, 1918: "I just received your letter with reference to your son who is in hospital. Lady Steele has been keeping in touch with him and he's getting on first rate. The shrapnel wound is not serious. I think he will soon be fit to leave the hospital ... I have already written to his wife in Orillia, who by now must have received my letter and will be able to give you all the news."

In his book, *Samuel Steele: Lion of the Frontier*, Stewart relates that Steele was placed on the retirement list on July 1, 1918. After years of service, the Canadian authorities were forcing his retirement. The British desired that he would remain in his position, however, they did not want to upset an allied country. Though Steele had accomplished so many achievements, he was filled with bitter-

ness the way he felt he had been used. Stewart said, "It weighed on his mind and his health was affected."

The Steele family would move from their residence in Folkstone, England, to a home in the London suburb of Putney. Steele did not let his spirits keep him down for long. He was excited about the prospect of moving back to Western Canada.

Stewart said this was "the scene of his great happiness." He wrote a friend in Calgary asking him to find a home for his family.

In the early hours of January 30, 1919, Samuel Benfield Steele passed away.

Steele had left a request that he be buried in Winnipeg, where his career began. Today, Steele's grave can be viewed in St. John's Cemetery in Winnipeg.

Reading these letters has been fascinating. In a small way, the letters share the heart and soul of this legendary hero of Canadian history. That Steele would confide in Thomas Blaney reveals the character of this individual. No doubt he was a person who could be trusted, a friend who was loyal.

The Sir Samuel Steele Memorial Building on Peter Street in Orillia is not only an art gallery it also houses a local museum.

Because of the kind generosity of Sheelah Robertson, the letters of Samuel Steele will be on view to the public in the near future.



On July 13, an event commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Lord Strathcona Horse and its founding commander, Sir Samuel Steele, will take place in Purbrook, the original location of Steele's homestead just outside of Orillia. Members of the Lord Strathcona Horse, the RCMP and many other guests will take part in this occasion. ❖