

The Canadian Engineer

A Weekly Paper for Civil Engineers and Contractors

Three Bridges in Palestine Built by Canadians

At Request of British War Office, Company of 254 Picked Volunteers from Corps of Canadian Railway Troops Joined Egyptian Expeditionary Force October 1st, 1918, and Replaced Railway Bridges Destroyed by Turks

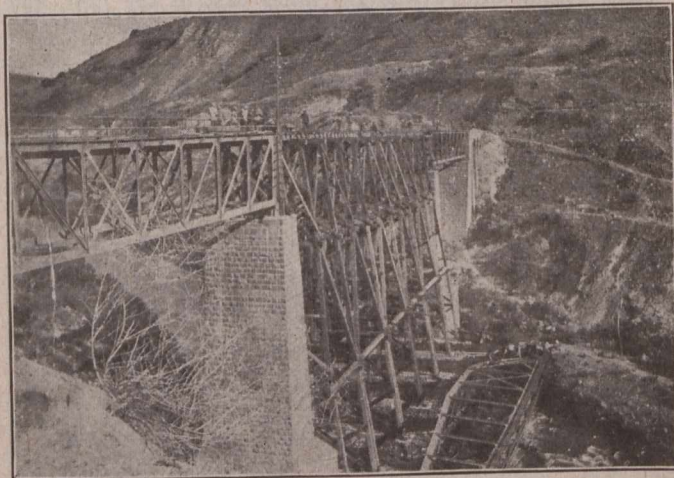
By MAJOR A. P. LINTON, O.B.E.

Bridge Engineer, Department of Highways, Province of Saskatchewan

IN August, 1918, the War Office asked Brig.-Gen. (now Maj.-Gen.) J. W. Stewart, C.B., C.M.G., G.O.C. of the corps of Canadian Railway Troops, to select a Canadian bridging company from units under his command in France for service with the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. The writer was selected for the command, and the other officers were Capt. E. P. Muntz and Lieuts. M. Helyer, M.C., Price, Johnstone and Sanderson.

The corps of Canadian Railway Troops consisted at the time of thirteen battalions, the C.O.R.C.C. and several companies engaged on special work. Each C.O. of the various C.R.T. units was asked to send volunteers, picked for their experience in bridge work, to the mobilization centre chosen. Some 320 were men sent, and from these were chosen the 248 other ranks called for in the establishment. The men chosen were of a splendid type; every essential trade was well represented. Most of the men had worked for years on bridge construction on the various Canadian transcontinental railways. The N.C.O.'s were nearly all bridge foremen of wide experience, and were chosen from volunteer N.C.O.'s

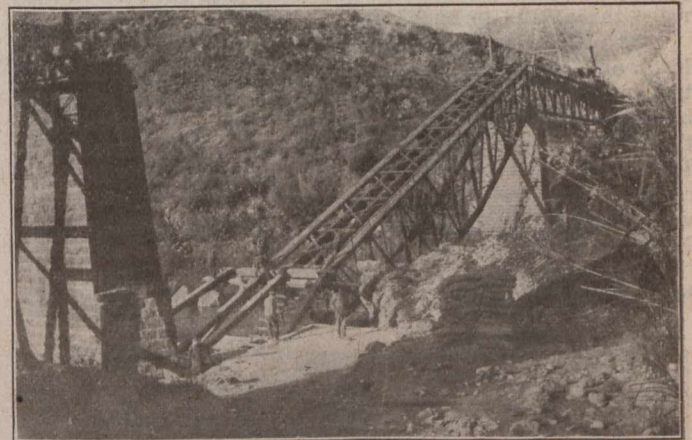
Mobilization was completed in two weeks and the company entrained for Marseilles, where three weeks were spent waiting for a boat. An uneventful trip of nine days across the Mediterranean landed the company at Kantara, on the Suez Canal, on the last day of September, 1918. Only one day was spent there, and a night on the train took the company to Ludd, advanced H.Q., Railway Services, Egyptian Expeditionary Force. There orders were received and work assigned the company. The orders were, briefly:—



YARMUK BRIDGE NO. 1.—NOTE DESTROYED TRUSS IN RIVER BED

who were all required to revert. The ones chosen were given acting rank, with promise of confirmation if they "made good."

Such distinctly Canadian equipment as the army does not stock was taken along. This included cross-cut saws of American pattern, peavies, dollies, two hoisting engines and iron parts for two pile drivers. Transport consisted of one Ford car, two three-ton lorries, two motor cycles, one horse and cart and one saddle-horse.



YARMUK BRIDGE NO. 2

"The Turks have blown up two bridges near Semakh. See them. Tell us what material is required, and get the line through."

It took two days for the company to reach Semakh, and it at once proceeded to the work, some three miles east. The company was accompanied by two companies of the Indian army, who stayed with it and relieved it of all duties in connection with guarding the camp. Machine guns were posted on each of two high hills overlooking the camp, and no trouble was caused by the hostile Arabs.

The first bridge crossed the Yarmuk river about two miles from where it enters the Jordan, of which it is the principal tributary, and the camp was about five miles from the sea of Galilee. The crossing consisted of a 50-metre bow-string truss with a 30-metre lattice girder at either end, all on stone piers and abutments. The middle 50-metre truss had been destroyed by the charge and had fallen clear of the east pier. The west end had fallen about half way down the pier and had there remained fixed. It was evident the steel was beyond repair, and it was decided to scrap it and trestle across the break.