

"SIOL NA FEAR FEARAIL"

85th OVERSEAS BATTALION C.E.F.

"NOVA SCOTIA HIGHLANDERS"



URING THE FIRST YEAR of the war the Province of Nova Scotia had raised four Battalions, principally within her own border, viz.: the 17th, 25th, 40th, and 64th, besides several drafts from the 63rd, 66th, R.C.R., 1st C.A., Composite Battalion, and the 17th Sydney Field Battery—as a Unit—these all crossed overseas. Many of the Militia were also called out for garrison duty in various parts of the Province.

A distinctive Nova Scotia Highland Regiment, however, had not been raised. On Sept. 14th, 1915, the announcement was made that the 85th "Overseas" Battalion, C. E. F., "Nova Scotia Highlanders," was authorized, with Lieut.-Col. Allison H. Borden, one of the most popular and competent officers of the Canadian Permanent Force, in command. Known in almost every home in the Province, a trained soldier, he inspired confidence, and with great care, selected officers for his staff and for the various companies.

Col. Borden and Capt. E. C. Phinney, 63rd Rifles and 40th C. E. F., as Adjutant, opened Headquarters at Aldershot, N.S., September 23rd, and the work of recruiting began. It was all done in less than one month, and many were turned away, showing the eagerness of our young men to join the colors under such leadership, at a time when the situation was considered grave.

No profession, no trade, no walk of life, but is represented in the Battalion, and the proportion of educated men, men of former responsible positions with lucrative salaries, in the ranks, is remarkably high.

The honour to be first sworn in belongs to Michael J. Foley, Kilkenny, Ireland.

The recruiting meetings were enthusiastic. At one of the first of these, Col. Borden met a body of young business and professional men in Halifax, who had proposed forming a Field Battery, but finding that such a unit was not required, almost to a man signed up with the 85th. The fire of enthusiasm soon spread and day after day the recruiting officers were kept busy until the total number of men was beyond the required strength. Reports and lists of men came from all Counties of the Province showing that in every place the same enthusiasm existed and a desire evidenced by men to be in the ranks.

The Companies are made up from the following Counties:

"A" Company: Pictou, Cumberland, Colchester. "B" Company: Lunenburg, Queens, Shelburne, Yarmouth, Digby, Annapolis, Antigonish, Guysboro, Inverness. "C" Company: Halifax, Hants, Kings. "D" Company: Cape Breton Island.

The Battalion mobilized at the Armouries in Halifax, October 14th, 1915, two hundred over strength.

Profiting by the experience of previous occupants in the Armouries, in crowding men into close quarters, Lieut.-Col. Borden made representations to Ottawa that not more than one Company should be quartered therein, and asked that tents primarily, and subsequently huts, should be placed upon the Common to avoid overcrowding and the baneful effects upon the health of the men, and the same time providing accommodation for Lecture Rooms, offices and places for instruction. Thus, when the Battalion was mobilized, ample tentage was provided on the Common, which were occupied until November 22nd, and the drill work was done outside, while the Armouries were used for instructional work, and drill in inclement weather.

During this period the general health of the troops was excellent; except that four cases of Spinal Meningitis developed, but owing to stringent preventive measures being taken, did not assume an epidemic character.

Immediately following this, an epidemic of Measles and Diphtheria broke out, which is the natural result from bringing new recruits together from widely scattered points.

In going under cover, "A" Company was quartered in the Armouries, while "B," "C," and "D" Companies went into huts on the Common. These buildings were all self-contained, cheaply constructed, but nevertheless, commodious and comfortable, with ample facilities for heating and ventilating, large wash rooms, lavatories, closets and shower baths, two-decked double bunks, with a window between each tier, and ventilation in side and roof.

Four days after the Battalion mobilized, an Officers' and N.C.O.'s class was started, with an enrolment of two hundred and eighty (280). Other classes followed at stated intervals, and many of these became qualified officers, who subsequently obtained commissions in the new Battalions in the Brigade. During the winter entertainments of various kinds were given in the Armouries, from boxing bouts to amateur theatricals. The large recreation room was of great service, being used for reading, writing and various games, as well as providing a Lecture Room, capable of seating the entire Battalion. The idea was conceived by Col. Borden and Staff that with the material contained in the 85th Battalion, another Highland Regiment could be raised in

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