

The Great War officially ended on Nov. 11, 1918. But not for Lawrence Styles.

The 19-year-old was among 5,000 Canadians who were sent to Siberia to fight the Bolsheviks, after the armistice was signed in Europe.

Styles had signed up for the Canadian Expeditionary Force on July 30, 1917, but never made it to Europe. So on Nov. 9, 1918, he volunteered for Siberia.

He kept a diary of his Siberian adventure, which now belongs to his granddaughter Beth Kemppi, who works at The Vancouver Sun and Province. She recently brought it into the newsroom, along with a satchel of his First World War artifacts.

It's the kind of thing you usually see only in a museum.

Styles was born in Morrisburg, Ont., and was working as a postal clerk in nearby Prescott when he signed up. In October 1917 he was dispatched to a 21-day "bayonet fighting and physical training" course in Kingston, Ont. The cache includes an "attendance certificate" from the course where his "standard of efficiency" was rated "fair."

His archive also includes a couple of tiny booklets of prayers and hymns for use by soldiers "On Active Service for God and King." The booklets were issued by four churches — Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist and Congregational — and came in a sleeve to protect the contents in the field.

The coolest document is his discharge certificate from the army on June 11, 1919. You'd never know it from reproductions you can find online, but it's written on thin, paper-like canvas that has a lovely patina and feel.

Styles also kept a small mirror he'd taken overseas. He wrote SERGT. L. STYLES in capital letters on its canvas case.

He became a sergeant in Siberia. Before he left Canada he identified himself in his diary as "L/Cpl. L. M. Styles, 'A' coy. 259th Bn., C.R., C.E.F. (S), Victoria B.C."

On the opposite page, he wrote "If anything should happen to me will the person kindly send this book and my identification disc to my father, Mr. Chas. A. Styles, Orillia, Ontario, Canada."

The first page of the diary is filled with the names and addresses of three young women he was apparently keen on: Miss Laura Bird, Miss Florence Wilkins and Miss Vera Blaind.

"I have no idea who they are," says Kemppi. "And my grandmother is not listed among them."

The service part of the diary runs from back to front, and has 55 pages of entries in tiny script, beginning with "Volunteered for Siberia on Sat. Nov. 9/18."

"Nobody writes like that anymore," Kemppi notes with a smile. "It's code, nobody can read it. It's also very small, and some of it is in pencil, which is hard to read. But for the most part, it's pretty good. He got to Victoria, and got drunk before he left. I loved that."

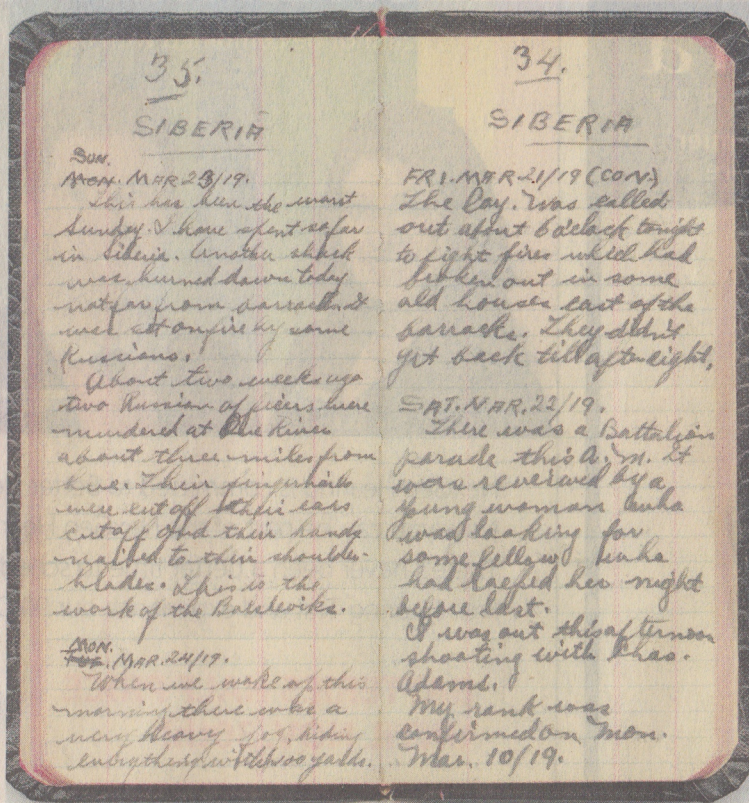
That would be the entry from Nov. 23, 1918, when he spent the night in Vancouver before disembarking for Vancouver Island.

"I had one wild night last night," Styles wrote. "I got drunk as a bat and didn't get into barracks until the wee small hours. This morning I got up with a swelled head and had to carry my kit about half a mile to the boat for Victoria."

In Victoria, the force was assigned to Camp Willows. Many of the troops there were Quebecers who had been drafted, and didn't want to fight in Asia when the war in Europe had ended. Some of the Quebec soldiers mutinied, which led to some being arrested and others being forced onto ships at gunpoint.

But there is no mention of a mutiny in Styles' diary, which portrays camp life in Victoria as mundane. On Boxing Day, he boarded the ocean liner Proteus for Siberia, arriving near Vladivostok on Jan. 15, 1919.

He had a close call on March 25 when the Canadians were prac-



Lawrence Styles' diary about his time with the Canadian Expeditionary Force in Siberia in 1919 contains a gruesome story.

tising "throwing bombs" and the shrapnel from a bomb hit him in the helmet. But he doesn't seem to have gone into battle.

Still, there were communist sympathizers nearby. On March 23, he wrote "about two weeks ago two (White) Russian officers were murdered at the river about three miles from here. Their fingernails were cut off, their ears

cut off and their hands nailed to their shoulder blades. This is the work of the Bolsheviks."

Most of his time in Siberia was spent outside Vladivostok, but on April 6 his company marched to a new barracks in the city. Two days later he "was uptown on pass ... had several drinks and felt pretty good. Had a fine time and saw all the sights."

CANADIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE Discharge Certificate

This is to Certify that No. 2582321 (Rank) Corporal
Name (in full) STYLES, Lawrence Mathews enlisted in
the 1st Regiment C.D.F.
CANADIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE at Brussels, Ont. on the 30th
day of July 1917.
HE served in Canada, and Siberia
and is now discharged from the service by reason of In accordance with R.O. 1420
Demobilization Authority 3MD-3-9-965 D/10-6-19

THE DESCRIPTION OF THIS SOLDIER on the DATE below is as follows:—
Age 20 yrs. 2 months Marks or Scars Mole left groin.
Height 5 ft. 8 ins.
Complexion Fair
Eyes Hazel
Hair Light Brown
L.M. Styles Signature of Soldier
R. C. [Signature] Issuing Officer
for C.D.F. Discharge Section
3rd District, Bank St.
Date of Discharge 11-6-19 Appointment
Signed at Kingston, Ont. this 11th day of June 1919
in Military District No. 3
File Reference No. 3MD-3-9-965

N.B.—As no duplicate of this Certificate will be issued, any person finding same is requested to forward it in an unstamped envelope to the Secretary, Militia Council, Ottawa, Canada.

M. P. W. 50
8000—235
H.Q. 1772-34-437

Lawrence Styles' June 11, 1919 discharge certificate from the Canadian Expeditionary Force is written on thin, paper-like canvas.

On May 19, he boarded the Empress of Russia for the return trip home, arriving in Victoria on May 28.

After the war he became a watchmaker and jeweller in Ottawa and Renfrew, Ont.

He married Doris Ellis and had a son, John, and a daughter, Barbara. He died on Oct. 2, 1970 at 71.

"I don't remember him ever talking about (the war)," said his granddaughter Barb Young. "He was a quiet man, very quiet. They lived in an apartment building on Carling Avenue (in Ottawa) and he loved to sit outside on his little balcony. They didn't do very much, never travelled or anything, they were quiet people." jmackie@postmedia.com



Cpl. Lawrence Styles arrived near Vladivostok on Jan. 15, 1919, but did not see battle against the Bolsheviks. PHOTOS: BETH KEMPPY COLLECTION