



Ananias Jensen Mercer

Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force

Regimental No. 276252

World War I

Born: 09 Oct 1882

Died: 20 Sep 1949

Place of Birth: Shearstown, Bay Roberts, Newfoundland

Parents: Ananias and Joanna (nee Dawe) Mercer

According to official vital statistics of the day in Newfoundland, Ananias was baptised in the Anglican Church Bay Roberts on January 1st, 1883, and then christened 3 days later on January 4th.

The story of Rev. Ananias Mercer's enlistment, five (5) month military service and his subsequent discharge is a unique one.

Ananias gave his trade as a “minister of the Gospel” as noted when he enlisted in the CEF on April 15th, 1916. He was a long way from his home in Newfoundland on that day since his papers says he signed up at Broadview, Saskatchewan. Married and at thirty (30) years old and a preacher, it seemed like an extremely unusual thing at the time. Nonetheless, he did enlist and was described in his attestation papers as being 5’ 10” tall and having light brown hair with blue eyes. He was married and a Methodist Minister.

Ananias' medical that was an integral part of the enlistment process went well and he was declared fit for service, assigned to the 217th Battalion “C” Coy (Company) of the CEF. Yet just five (5) months later in October 1916, it was determined that he was “medically unfit” for service.

There is another entry in his file that notes Ananias was discharged on “compassionate grounds.” This entry and his official discharge in October 1916 took place at Camp Hughes, Manitoba.

Why Ananias signed up in the first place is unclear. He was not forced or conscripted (that act, the Military Service Act did not come into effect until 1917) and considering his age at the time, his attempt at enlisting was unusual but must have been voluntary on his part.

Ananias returned home and he and his wife, Violet, continued their work in Saskatchewan of preaching the gospel but for a short time he was a member of the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force, although he never did go overseas.

Ananias passed away on the 20th of September 1949 in Weyburn, Saskatchewan

and is buried in the Piapot Cemetery, Piapot Saskatchewan and that is a story of its own.

Piapot named after a Famous Cree Chief of the area, today is a community of less than 50 souls but it once was a thriving hamlet.

“Once a thriving community, it has seen a steady decline since the 1950s and in the present day it resembles a ghost town. The hotel and saloon closed in 2006 but reopened in May 2008, embracing western heritage and culture. The Piapot Saloon and Guesthouse offers an escape from everyday life in the spirit of the original settlers as well as a gift shop and old western saloon. The only other business that is open to the public is the post office.”

Piapot, Payipwât, or Payipwat (Hole in the Sioux or One Who Knows the Secrets of the Sioux), born as Kisikawasan (Flash in the Sky), known by his Assiniboine allies as Maḥpíya owáde hókši (Lightning In The Sky Boy) (c. 1816–April 1908) was a Native Canadian chief of the Cree-Assiniboine / Young Dogs Band, a mighty band and division of the *Downstream People* (*Māmihkiyiniwak*) of the Plains Cree. He was one of the five major leaders of the Plains Cree after 1860.

Along with his grandmother, Payipwat was kidnapped by the Sioux as a child. He grew up among his captors, learning their medicine. At fourteen, Payipwat was captured during a Cree raid and returned to his own people. He was given the name Payipwat, literally Hole in the Sioux, in recognition of the knowledge he had gained while living among the Sioux. His name is often translated as "One Who Knows the Secrets of the Sioux".