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**Reuben Parsons
World War I
Royal Newfoundland Regiment
Regimental No. 1632**

Reuben was born to parents Richards (Sr) and Mary Parsons of Bay Roberts in January 1892.

Reuben travelled to St. John's on June 15th, 1915, with the sole intention of enlisting in the Royal Newfoundland Regiment. His enlistment papers of that date show a young man who is 23 years old, a fisherman by occupation, Church of England by faith and well educated, being able to sign the papers himself.

His service record provides a timeline of events beginning on the 15th of June 1915 and ending on 16th of September 1918.

The record reads as follows:

1. Embarked St. John's by train for Quebec 27 Oct 1915.
2. Embarked for the BEF (British Expeditionary Force) 28 March 1916
3. Joined the battalion on 15th of April 1916
4. Wounded 1 July 1916
5. Admitted to field hospital 2 July 1916
6. Moved to general hospital Etretat, France 7 July 1916.

7. Sent to hospital in Bristol 9 July 1916
8. Moved to military hospital Wandsworth 9 October 1916
9. Furloughed then attached to depot 2 February 1917
10. Transported to Newfoundland 23 March 1917
11. Arrived in Newfoundland for discharge April 1917
12. Re-attested for home defence Bay Roberts 19 September 1917
13. Assigned special duty 10 October 1917
14. Struck off strength 16 September 1918.

The injury received by Reuben on 1 July severely damaged his left leg and left shoulder, limiting his movement even when healed. His injury was the result of severe GSW (Gun Shot Wound).

An excerpt from a report of Lance Corporal Parsons reads:

“This man is likely unfit for service with the Expeditionary Force for six months on account of gsw to left leg and left shoulder. Recommend he be posted to the depot at St. John's, Newfoundland. 19-12-17.”

Following his service, the 1921 Census finds Reuben at home with his mom who is now widowed.

Reuben died on April 4th 1960, and is buried in St. Matthews Anglican Cemetery in Bay Roberts. His wife Elizabeth passed in 1958.

Below is a clipping from The Bay Roberts Guardian dated 04 Aug 1916 containing a letter that Reuben wrote to his mother while he was in hospital recovering from his wounds. His obituary from The Daily News dated 12 Apr 1960 is on page 3.

Reuben Parsons

Twice Wounded

Writes to His Mother

2nd Southern General Hospital,
Southmead, Bristol, Eng.,

July 12th, 1916.

Dear Mother,—No doubt before this you have heard of the Great Franco-British offensive and the part our Regiment played in it. Well, mother, I must say it was an awful time. Our heavy guns bombarded the German lines for 3 or 4 days before we attacked. We had guns of the greatest calibre, from 15 inches down, and hundreds of them. The ground trembled for miles around. It was enough to shake your nerves.

About one hour before the attack we exploded a mine which we had dug under the German village, and, I can tell you, it was quite a sight to see houses, wagons, horses, Germans and everything else going up in the air.

We stood to all night in the trench, and about 8 in the morning, July 1st, we left the trench and went over to pay Billy German a visit. But he did not seem a bit surprised. He was fully prepared to receive us. Two other Regiments went over before us and got mowed down.

We went and they received us the same. They turned their machine guns on us as soon as we left the trench, and our boys began to fall. There were bulks of dead on the ground. We had to jump over the fallen, and the cries of the wounded were enough to pierce you; but we kept on. Our boys were falling fast and it soon came to my turn, I got hit in the shoulder and fell.

The shells were bursting around there then, and the Germans were sweeping the ground, killing the wounded, with their machine guns, so I thought if I wanted to live that was no place for me. My legs were all right then, so I got up and started for our trench, I just had time to reach the top, when I got a bullet in the leg sending me head over heels to the bottom of the trench on top of five, more that were already there. That's where I stayed.

I thought I was done for. I couldn't bandage my wounds, and I was bleeding fast and getting very weak. One of our boys, who was also wounded, came along shortly after, and he bandaged my leg with my field dressing, but he couldn't bandage my shoulder.

I began to get very weak from loss of blood. I couldn't move hand or foot then, and there was no one to bring you in. One of the five in the trench with me died there, and the other four were, like myself, helpless.

It was almost dark when relief came. A party was sent out to bring in the wounded. They took me in a rubber sheet and carried me in to the dressing station. After getting dressed I was sent to a hospital I had an operation there on my shoulder, and the piece of shell was taken out. I was then sent on to another hospital, and after staying there 2 days I was put on a Red Cross train and sent to Le Havre where I joined the boat and crossed over to England, landing in Southampton. I was put on a train and sent here.

There is every comfort riding on those hospital trains and ships, and the work is perfect. I would like to have a picture of the train as she pulled in at Bristol station. Thousands of people were there throwing cigarettes, and candy and flowers at us, as we passed out on the stretchers, the Red Cross nurses lined up on the stand in soldier like manner, and the long stream of ambulances, was a sight worth seeing. There were 700 wounded on the boat with me and they are coming in every day. The hospitals are blocked.

There are some Canadians in this ward with me. One of them is Spracklin

belonging to Brigus. He has been in Toronto 6 years. He knows the Parsons' and Dawe's belonging to Bay Roberts. His father fished at Indian Harbor, Labrador, but now he is living in Toronto. They used to carry on for Dawe. Perhaps father knows them.

Don't be uneasy about me, I will be all right again, and will yet have another smack at the Huns. I went under an operation this morning and had the bullet taken out of my leg. I got it for a souvenir.

When I get out of hospital I will get 10 days leave and then I will visit London and see the sights. It will be some time before I go to France again; I will be sent to the Depot first. Remember me to all friends.

I think our Regiment was entirely cut up; a wonderful bad shot for us. But they died like men. Nothing could stop them. They advanced till they were mowed down.

This is all for now. I am writing this in bed, and I am not very well able to write, as my strength has not fully returned. I lost a lot of blood, and it will take a long time to pick up again, good by,

From your soldier boy.

REUBEN.

From The Bay Roberts Guardian
04 August 1916

Obituary

MR. RUEBEN PARSONS

BAY ROBERTS — Another of our great War Veterans answered the last roll call on Monday, April 4th., when after a long illness, inflicted by the ravages of war, Mr. Rueben Parsons of Bay Roberts East, entered into the great beyond at the age of 68 years.

The late Mr. Parsons was born at this town, when the call came for volunteers he enlisted in the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, under the regimental number 1633. It was during the Memorial July Drive that he was wounded, from which came his honourable discharge on Aug. 1st., 1917.

After his return to his home, he joined "H" Co. C.L.B. holding the rank of Sergt. Major, until, through illness, he was obliged to retire. A devout member of the Anglican faith, he was a familiar figure at all services up to about two years ago. He was also a member of the S.U.F. and R.B.P. No. 458. His wife predeceased him two years ago.

Funeral services which were attended by members of S.U.F. and R.B.P. and a large circle of friends were held on Wednesday, April 6, to St. Matthew's Church and Cemetery. Rev. Isaac Butler officiated.