

HERBERT HORACE NICHOLSON (1890-92)

The following is a fascinating article sent to me by Cameron Kennedy, the LIFE editor of Red Deer Advocate in Alberta, Canada. The article was published on 8 October 2008 :-

You name it, Rob Blondin (see picture) has found it at Rimbey's dump.

So when the garbageman came upon an old, rusty trunk one morning last month, naturally his curiosity got the better of him. Inside, he discovered a collection of historical treasures: letters, photographs, bank books, sheet music, clothing and newspapers that appeared to belong to one "Herbert Horace Nicholson of Lavesta near Rimbey." Some of the documents in the collection date back to 1891.

Blondin says he believes the trunk was buried in the dump's mountain of scrap metal, which was crushed and carted off to a smelter the previous day. As for the trunk's contents, he's uncertain what to do with them — or whether they're worth anything. "It's got to be worth something to somebody, but that's the problem: where does the trail go (from) here?" asks Blondin. Part of the trail led to Scotty Aitken, a local freelance photographer whom Blondin contacted about his find.



An "old treasure hunter" who likes a challenge, Aitken began digging into Nicholson's background. His research confirmed a man named H.H. Nicholson had lived in the Lavesta area in the early 1900s, and that he had been killed at Vimy Ridge. Then the trail went cold. Aitken says Nicholson wasn't well-known among the Rimbey area's old-timers. He believes the trunk was inherited by somebody who "didn't give a damn." He is doubtful anyone will step forward and admit they were the one who took the trunk to the dump. "That's going to remain a secret for a long time," says Aitken.

So who was Herbert Horace Nicholson? According to a brief family history penned by Nicholson's daughter Bella, Nicholson, then 33 or 34, immigrated to Canada from England with his wife and three children in 1910. The family first settled in Ontario, then moved to Alberta in 1911. They lived in a tent for five months while a cabin was built on the Nicholson homestead in the Iola area, about 100 km northwest of Red Deer. The Nicholson family moved several times within the Rimbey area until 1916, the year Nicholson enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force. He was killed in action in August 1917 at Vimy Ridge.

The trunk's documents fill in some of the gaps in Bella's history. One of them, a certificate from the University of Cambridge, shows Herbert Horace Nicholson, 15, son of Thomas Nicholson, passed his examinations in religious knowledge, English history of Shakespeare and French at Framlingham in December 1891. The Society of Old Framlinghamians' website confirms H.H. Nicholson attended Framlingham College in Suffolk from 1890-92. His name is among those of 136 boys and four masters inscribed on a memorial on the west wall of the college's chapel. It is dedicated to those who "gave their lives for Justice for the Liberty of the World and for their King and Country," during the First World War.

Another document that sheds light on Nicholson's life is a "letter of introduction." "This will serve to introduce Horace Nicholson who is seeking his fortune in your Dominion," it states. "He has been introduced by a friend of mine and any information you can give him will be esteemed." One of the more interesting documents is a handwritten letter dated July 15, 1910. It advises Nicholson about court case involving repairs to his parent's home at Clacton-on-Sea, a seaside resort in Essex, England. "Dear Mr. Nicholson, I was surprised lately to hear from your brother Mr. Arthur Nicholson that you had gone to Canada. I sincerely hope you find the change a wise one in every sense and that Mrs. Nicholson and you are well and find good prospects in the new country," opens the author.

The author's penmanship certainly impressed Blondin. "Holy smokes, that guy must have been practising! It's perfectly straight." Finally, there is a letter from a bank manager to Nicholson regarding a sum of \$1,260.10, about \$25,000 in today's dollars. The bank had been holding the money until it could locate Nicholson.

Nicholson's bank book from the Lacombe branch of the Union Bank of Canada shows he deposited \$1,260.10 on April 19, 1911. In the book's final entry, the balance is \$11.97.

The trunk also contained assorted pieces of clothing, pictures and a dozen copies of the *Daily Mirror*. They chronicle the death King George V in January 1936 to the abdication of King Edward VIII in December of that year. "This guy was going to whack the king," says Blondin, referring to a front-page story in the *Mirror* about the arrest of George Andrew McMahon. He had tried to shoot King Edward VIII on July 16, 1936. Later, he claimed a "foreign power" had paid him 150 pounds sterling to do it. "This is the true s---," adds Blondin about the history. "Nobody can lie about that. It's right there in black and white."

Among Blondin's other notable finds during the past 11 years were some Canadian military uniforms and helmets dating back to the First World War. He donated those to the Royal Canadian Legion in Rimbey.

Blondin says he's never made much money off the stuff he's found at the dump. He has high hopes for the contents of the trunk — perhaps bringing in enough to make a down payment on a house. "One guy's garbage is another guy's treasure," he says with a grin.

Here is a link the article on the newspaper's website

http://www.albertalocalnews.com/reddeeradvocate/lifestyles/Treasure_chest_left_at_the_dump.html