

FRIDAY FOCUS

ROY BLINN
OVERHEAD DOORS
SALES • SERVICE • INSTALLATION

WE FIX GARAGE DOORS

Over 30 Years in Business
Residential & Commercial
24 Hour Emergency Service
AVAILABLE SATURDAYS

705-292-9315
www.royblinngaragedoors.ca



Two family gravestone mysteriously refreshed, thousands of miles apart

BY CRAIG GIBSON

It's the kind of day when one's just happy, cliché be damned, to be alive.

As the fishing rods and worms are stowed, the row boat is pushed off from the dock. For the boat's three occupants, the afternoon's possibilities are limitless. Sun, fun, and fish? Perhaps a dip?

It's a quintessential scene that plays out in waterside communities each and every summer across Canada.

But it's a century ago, Tuesday, June 27, 1916, and the trio works at the Burleigh Falls Hotel, 25 miles north of Peterborough.

And something is about to go horribly wrong.

“The river drivers,” explains the June 28, 1916 edition of the Peterborough Daily Review, “had taken out two stop logs so that the flow of water would be heavy enough to carry their drive of logs over the falls.”

Suddenly, even before the oars have even been wetted, a strong current propels the trio towards the falls.

Screams can be heard above the din of rushing water as the rowboat tumbles down the chute, spilling its terrified passengers into the churning waters below.

Luckily, there are witnesses.

A canoeist races to the scene, wades into the water, and dives deeply, extends an arm as far forward as possible, grabs a handful of hair and manhandles the girl attached to it to safety.

Meanwhile, Mrs. D'Arcy, the girls' employer, clings to a rock in the channel until a nine-link human chain comes to her rescue.

My future grandmother, at the time 16-year-old

Violet Smith, who has been saved by her flowing locks as well as Jack Blewett's bravery, is shaken by the ordeal, but soon recovers back at the Hotel.

Her 13-year-old sister Lillian has disappeared.

The news spreads like wildfire, according to a front page story in 'Peterborough's Oldest Newspaper.'

The girls' mother, Rhoda Ann (Annie) Smith, has six younger children, with another on the way. Her husband, Pte. Edward Samuel Smith, is serving in the war trenches overseas. As she is rushed to the scene from Peterborough, she is already regretting her decision to find summer work and lodging for her two oldest children.

“The lumbermen have laid off work today,” reports the Daily Review, “and are busy searching for the body of the unfortunate girl.”

In the days that follow, the lumbermen, joined by employees of Trent Canal, scour Perry's Creek and vicinity. Dynamite is set off in Stoney Lake where it's likely the current carried the body, while, on June 30, stop logs, the removal of which caused the tragedy in the first place, are replaced in an effort to lower the water level below Burleigh Falls.

It is not until Sunday, July 2, however, that a canoeist spots Lillian's body.

In the tragedy's aftermath, the community closes ranks. The lumbermen collect \$40 for Mrs. Smith. The owner of the Burleigh Falls Hotel, H. W. D'Arcy, pays funeral expenses. The local 'relief association of the Patriotic Fund has passed a grant of \$10 a month for the family,' topping up the separation allowance provided by Smith's overseas service.

Continued on Page 23



Craig Gibson (above) returns to the scene of the tragedy in Burleigh Falls in March 2016. He also discovered Lillian's gravestone (below) in Little Lake Cemetery.

PETERBOROUGH APPLIANCES

Your Appliance Superstore
We Service What We Sell!

www.PeterboroughAppliances.com

2849 Lakefield Road, Peterborough

1-866-680-6220 or 705-748-9781 FOLLOW US ON

OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK



JENN-AIR®



Appetite for Perfection

July 1 to September 30, 2016

Purchase 2 eligible* Jenn-Air® appliances and receive
10%
INSTANT SAVINGS*

Purchase 3 or more eligible* Jenn-Air® appliances and receive
15%
INSTANT SAVINGS**

PLUS when you purchase 4 or more select eligible* appliances
RECEIVE UPTO
\$1,600 BONUS
IN INSTANT SAVINGS***



See In-store Sales Associate for available qualifying models and applicable instant savings amounts.

jennair.ca

'It felt like the Smith family had come home'

Continued from Page 22

Ottawa is less sympathetic. When Pte. Smith, a recent English immigrant and a bookkeeper with the Quaker Oats Co., applies for home leave, he is denied.

After all, the British Empire is under siege. Dublin has erupted in insurrection. The Somme offensive is underway. The French are just hanging on at Verdun. The architect of Britain's war effort, Lord Kitchener, has been lost at sea.

Nothing, it seems, can stop a war that is devouring humanity's belief in itself.

Half a world away from Burleigh Falls, Second Canadian Division, to which Pte. Smith's 4th Machine Gun Company is attached, is ordered to take the Sugar Factory, a stronghold in the German Somme defences.

Scant weeks after Lillian's death, then, Smith goes over the top on Sept. 16, 1916, swept along by a current as powerful as that which has recently claimed his young daughter's life.

And it's just as deadly. Shrapnel, which accounted for 75 per cent of all deaths on the Western Front, including Pte. Smith's.

Annie is left a widow and her seven children, soon to be eight (she gives birth to a girl, Lillian - yes, another Lillian - in November 1916) are fatherless.

Again the Smiths make the Daily Review's front page on Oct. 7, 1916: 'Pte. Smith is Killed - Daughter Was Drowned at Burleigh Falls.'

After the war, in search of work but also looking for a fresh start, the Smiths move to North Toronto. But they are not yet free from the Great

War.

While Annie becomes a tireless advocate for veterans' welfare, joining the Women's Branch of The Royal Canadian Legion, my grandmother Violet marries a veteran, William Edward Gibson, who, already minus an arm lost at Fresnoy in May 1917, dies young in 1929, leaving her to raise two small boys, including my father, on her own.

She joins her mother in collecting a widow's pension.

...

If truth be told my interest in family history has generally wavered between indifference and mild interest, as an academic interest in the Western Front, not to mention a full-time job (as well as following the Jays full time), takes up much of my time.

However, when my sister, a native Torontonion like myself, and her husband bought a home in Lakefield in 2011, that all changed.

At a visceral level, it felt like the Smith family had come home, returning to its immigrant roots on the edge of the Canadian shield. Just being in geographic proximity to the area where tragedy had stricken my not-so- distant ancestors prompted me to spend a few hours trawling through the microfilm collection of Great War

era local newspapers held by Trent University as well as eventually to put fingers to keyboard.

Yet while research finally disentangled the narrative of the events at Burleigh Falls (and elsewhere) nearly a century ago from what had hitherto been the purview of family lore, another mystery emerged. My sister Kim, brother-in-

law Gunnar, and I paid a visit to Little Lake Cemetery, where, we'd been told (and the July 3, 1916 issue of the Daily Review confirms), Lillian was buried.

With a little help from the cemetery office, we soon located Lillian's modest grass marker. Surprisingly, it wasn't as weather-beaten and barely decipherable as we'd anticipated a

stone of a century's vintage to be, but rather a recent replacement.

The cemetery staff, as helpful as they were, could shed no light on the mystery, though they did suggest a search of invoices from recent years may yield a clue. A big job - no volunteers.

We let the matter drop.

Continued on Page 25



In this 1915 Smith family portrait, Lillian is in the top right hand corner, with glasses, and Violet, Craig Gibson's grandmother, is in the back row, second from left, in the light shirt, dark tie.



PHOTO: JENN AUSTIN-DRIVER PHOTOGRAPHY

Peterborough **THIS WEEK** metrolandmedia
WEDDING TRENDS
BRIDAL SHOW
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 16th, 2016
 6:30-10:00 pm at Trentwinds, Lansdowne St.
Fashions by The Bridal Studio and Tip Top Tailors
FIRST 75 BRIDES RECEIVE A TODAY'S BRIDE • DOOR PRIZES

BOOTHS AVAILABLE
CONTACT 705-749-3383
EXT 269

PHOTO: JULIE GAGNE PHOTOGRAPHY

'A genealogical rollercoaster ride through the centuries suddenly made utterly perfect sense'

Continued from Page 23

On Nov. 27, 2015. I'm in the middle of a three-month stint in Westouter, Belgium, grappling with a new study of memory, history and landscape during the Great War.

Grappling with 'myalgia,' or muscle soreness, a condition for which he is hospitalized, Pte. Smith also spent time in this area of the Belgian province of West Flanders, in military parlance and popular memory better known as the Ypres Salient, as did tens of thousands of other members of the Canadian Corps 100 years ago.

Yet I find myself speeding southbound on the A1 motorway in northern France. If only for a day, writing has been superseded by a pilgrimage to Pte. Smith's final resting place, an act that seems all the more urgent in the wake of the

Paris terrorist attacks.

The trip also yields its own surprise.

While the doyen of First World War historians, Jay Winter, has dubbed places such as Pozières British Cemetery in the Somme, where Pte. Smith lies, a 'site of memory,' it is also a very tangible entity.

The overall effect of which has been likened to an Edwardian garden, but each with its own unique setting, architecture, landscaping, religious imagery, epitaphs, and guest and guide books.

And, lest we forget, headstones.

Originally quarried from rough-surfaced English Portland stone, across the surface of which I'd first run my fingertips in July 1993, Pte. Smith's headstone had been replaced in the interim by the Commonwealth War Graves

Commission, world-renown for the care it provides to such sites, with smoother, marble-like Italian Botticino stone, an ongoing process.

The whole darn fantastical genealogical rollercoaster ride that took the Smith family from the rapids at Burleigh Falls to the steel-swept killing fields of the Western Front a century ago and on to, finally, Lakefield, Westouter and the Somme in the present, all of a sudden made utterly perfect sense.

How could it not? New, unexpected (and inexplicable, in the case of Lillian's) grave markers found in both Peterborough and Pozières, separated by an ocean, completed a certain, fateful symmetry across a century.

And a tragic chapter in family history, with an improbable final twist, had finally been written.



Craig Gibson with Edward Samuel Smith's gravestone at Pozières British Cemetery, Somme, France in November 2015.

Tinnitus – Buzzing or ringing in the Ear

Researchers at McMaster University have developed a therapy that actually treats tinnitus. This treatment is customized for each patient and retrains the hearing system of the mind in order to treat tinnitus. To learn more contact the local provider of this therapy:

hear right canada

1600 Lansdowne St. W. Peterborough • 705.874.3333 • www.hearrightcanada.ca

RBC Dominion Securities Inc.

CONCERNED ABOUT MARKET VOLATILITY?



Stop worrying. A second opinion on your investments can help you assess your risk and explore your options. To arrange yours, contact:

JONATHAN MATTHEW (MATT) TEMPLE

Investment Advisor

705-743-4973

matthew.temple@rbc.com



RBC Wealth Management
Dominion Securities

There's Wealth in Our Approach.™

RBC Dominion Securities Inc.* and Royal Bank of Canada are separate corporate entities which are affiliated *Member-Canadian Investor Protection Fund. RBC Dominion Securities Inc. is a member company of RBC Wealth Management, a business segment of Royal Bank of Canada. ®Registered trademarks of Royal Bank of Canada. Used under licence. ©RBC Dominion Securities Inc. 2016. All rights reserved. 16_90511_FND_002

HOME OF THE FREE LIFETIME LUBE, OIL & FILTER*



KAWARTHACHRYSLER

CHRYSLER • DODGE • JEEP • RAM • FIAT

#1 Volume Dealer In The Kawarthas*

Kawartha Chrysler would like to

Congratulate

Tung Nguyen

As the SALES PERSON OF THE MONTH

You can contact Tung at **705-741-5766** to discuss your vehicle requirements.



www.kawarthachrysler.com



KAWARTHACHRYSLER

CHRYSLER • DODGE • JEEP • RAM • FIAT

Just A Stroll West of The Parkway
1515 Lansdowne Street West

*#1 volume dealer in the Kawarthas as of June 2013. Free lifetime lube, oil and filter on new vehicles only, excludes Diesel, SRT, Turbo.