

Private Charles W. Brown
Regimental Number: 2245742
50th Canadian Battalion

born: between 1896 and 1900 - died: 15 November 1918

Charles W. Brown was the son of Charles W. and Cora Brown.¹ He was a young American – a lumberjack² – who chose to serve with the Canadian army in World War I.³ His date of birth is unclear. According to the records of United States' citizens serving in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, he was born on 9 November 1896.⁴ His attestation paper for the CEF indicates that he was born on 9 November 1898 in Bangor, Maine.⁵ The Commonwealth War Graves Commission record of his death indicates that he was born in 1900.⁶ Theoretically he should have been at least 18 years old when he signed his attestation paper for the CEF on 19 October 1917 in Levis, Quebec. This means that he must have been born, at the latest, in the autumn of 1898 – the date that is, in fact, shown on his attestation. A birth record was found for Charles W. Brown, son of Charles W. Brown and Cora B. Sabine, born in Bangor, Maine on 9 October 1900.⁷ If this is his birth record, he would have been only 16 and 11 months old when he enlisted. Many young men lied about their age in order to enlist.

When he enlisted he was 5' 6½" tall, had a fair complexion, brown hair and brown eyes and was in good physical condition.⁸ He was a Methodist. His father had died (probably in 1915).⁹ His mother, the former Cora Sabine, born in 1883 in Great Pond, Maine, was living in the sanatorium in Fairfield, Maine.¹⁰ In a will, Charles made on 20 October 1917, he bequeathed his personal estate to his mother.¹¹ However, his mother did not outlive him. She died of pulmonary tuberculosis on 28 May 1918,¹² just six months before her son.

He first joined the Forestry Depot No. 5 and left for England just over a month after enlisting, arriving in Liverpool on 14 December 1917.¹³ On 15 May 1918, he transferred to the 21st Canadian Battalion. He went to France on 29 August 1918 with the 50th Canadian Battalion. The 50th Battalion was mobilized in Calgary in November 1914 and the first officers and men left for England in June 1915 and arrived in France in early 1916.¹⁴ In November 1918, the Battalion was engaged in training near Valenciennes when the Armistice was signed.¹⁵ On 11 November, the men went to the Square to hear massed bands of the 10th Brigade playing the national anthems of the Allies. The men were requested to "maintain the strictest discipline and have no fraternizing with the enemy."¹⁶

Charles likely did not hear those anthems. His time serving on the front was short, ending just over two months after he arrived in France, On 9 November, he was admitted to the 13th Canadian Field Ambulance with influenza. From there, he possibly went to the 42nd Canadian Casualty Clearing Station. He was admitted to the 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station on 11 November with influenza.¹⁷ When he was admitted, he was described as "dangerously ill."¹⁸

In spite of the Armistice, on 11 November, the 1st CCCS was "Receiving steadily and overflowing into neighbouring buildings. Very busy. Many Flu cases and Broncho Pneumonia. The war was not over so far as we were concerned. On patient claimed to be wounded at 11.10 A.M." ¹⁹ He died four days later, 15 November – the day that his Battalion left Valenciennes to march to Montreuil, the first stop on the way to Koblenz, Germany. This march was made difficult by the number of soldiers suffering from influenza.

Influenza accounted for most deaths at the 1st CCCS after the Armistice. In spite of the horrific number of soldiers killed in World War I, the influenza pandemic, which affected the whole world and scourged Europe in 1918-1919, killed more people than the war itself.²⁰

Charles was buried in the Auberchicourt British Military Cemetery on 15 November, with the chaplain, W. O'Neill Fisher presiding. Charles was a Presbyterian. Auberchicourt, a village about 30 kilometres from Valenciennes, was occupied by Commonwealth troops in October 1918.²¹ The Auberchicourt British Cemetery, which is just west of the village, was set up at the end of October and was used until February 1919 while the 6th, 23rd and 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Stations were located nearby.

Charles' medals and documents were sent to his brother, Walter E. Brown in Bangor, Maine.²² He was eligible for the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).

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¹ "Commonwealth War Graves Commission," (www.cwgc.org; accessed 12 March 2015), entry for Brown, Charles W., Service No: 2245742

² "Canada, Soldiers of the First World War, 1914-1918," entry for Charles Brown

³ "U.S., Residents Serving in Canadian Expeditionary Forces, 1917-1918," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 12 March 2015), entry for Charles W Brown, Serial Number: 10138

⁴ "Canada, Soldiers of the First World War, 1914-1918," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 12 March 2015), entry for Charles Brown

⁵ "Canada, Soldiers of the First World War, 1914-1918," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 12 March 2015), entry for Charles Brown

⁶ "Commonwealth War Graves Commission," entry for Brown, Charles W.

⁷ "Maine, Birth Records, 1621-1922," *Ancestry*, (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 12 March 2015), entry for Charles W. Brown

⁸ "Canada, Soldiers of the First World War, 1914-1918," entry for Charles Brown

⁹ "Maine, Death Records, 1617-1922," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 13 April 2015), entry for Chas W Brown

¹⁰ "Canada, Soldiers of the First World War, 1914-1918," entry for Charles Brown

¹¹ "Service Files of the First World War, 1914-1918 – CEF," Library and Archives Canada (<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/first-world-war-1914-1918-cef/Pages/search.aspx>; accessed 12 April 2015) entry for Charles Brown, Reference: RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 1127 - 38

¹² "Maine, Death Records, 1617-1922," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 13 April 2015), entry for Cora Brown

¹³ "Service Files of the First World War, 1914-1918 – CEF," entry for Charles Brown

¹⁴ "The King's Own Calgary Regiment," (<http://www.kingsown.ca/about.htm>; accessed 13 March 2015)

¹⁵ "Canada at War: 50th Canadian Infantry Battalion, War Diaries,"

(<http://www.canadaatwar.ca/forums/showthread.php?t=2760>; accessed 13 March 2015), entries for 8 – 11 November 1918.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, entry for 11 November 1918

¹⁷ "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 - 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," Library and Archives Canada, (records accessed 2013 & 2015), Record Group 9, series IIC10, volume 4556, Record number 712

¹⁸ "Service Files of the First World War, 1914-1918 – CEF," entry for Charles Brown

¹⁹ "War Diaries of the First World War: 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station 1914/08/13-1919/03/31," *Library and Archives Canada* (http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=casualty+clearing&s13=&s12=&l=20&s9=RG9&s7=9-52&Sect1=IMAGE&Sect2=THESOFF&Sect4=AND&Sect5=WARDPEN&Sect6=HITOFF&d=FINDD&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G)

²⁰ "The Influenza Pandemic of 1918," (<https://virus.stanford.edu/uda/>: accessed 3 February 2015)

²¹ "Auberchicourt British Cemetery," Commonwealth War Graves Commission (<http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/59509/AUBERCHICOURT%20BRITISH%20CEMETERY>: accessed 3 February 2015)

²² "Service Files of the First World War, 1914-1918 – CEF," entry for Charles Brown