

Private George Wilbert Cameron©
Regimental number: 907866
5th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force

born: 23 April 1887 – died: 13 January 1919

Private George Wilbert Cameron was born in Roseneath, Ontario, on 23 April 1887.¹ His name on his birth certificate is George Allen Cameron,² but all his army service records and one census record show him as George W. or George Wilbert. His parents, James and Mary Jane (nee Edington) Cameron were married on 20 March 1873 in Haldimand in southern Ontario.³ His father James, a farmer, was born in about 1844 in Scotland and his mother Mary Jane in about 1848 in Ontario.⁴ George was the youngest of their five children: Sarah Effens (known as Effie) (born in 1876),⁵ William James (born in 1879),⁶ Laura I. (born in 1882),⁷ Albert James (born in 1884)⁸ and George.

In 1891, the family was living in Alnwick in Northumberland County in Ontario.⁹ Mary Jane's mother, Effie Ayer Edington, was living with the family. Sadly, George's father died later that year, when George was only four. He died on 1 September 1891 of "phthisis pulmonalis" (tuberculosis).¹⁰ Ten years later, Mary Jane was still living in Alnwick with her children.¹¹ However, her daughter Laura, a store clerk, is also shown as living with her uncle, James Edington—Mary Jane's brother¹²—also in Alnwick.¹³ Tuberculosis took its toll on the Cameron family—George's mother died on 27 March 1904 after being ill with consumption for two and half years.¹⁴

After the death of their mother, the children appear to have moved to Saskatchewan. In 1911, Effie, who had married Frank Harper, was living in Moose Jaw¹⁵ and William and his wife and two children were living in Regina.¹⁶ In 1916, Laura was living with her sister Effie in Maple Creek. (She moved to the United States the following year and married Samuel H. Irwin in Toledo, Ohio, on 17 July 1917.¹⁷ Effie and Frank Harper were witnesses at this marriage.) Albert probably also moved to Saskatchewan and was living in Regina in 1921.¹⁸

George also moved west. He enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force in Regina on 21 April 1916.¹⁹ Like his father, he was a farmer, and he was living at 2125 Robinson Street, Regina, when he enlisted. He was 5' 7½" tall and had a fair complexion, blue eyes and brown hair. Shortly after enlisting, while with the 195th Battalion at Camp Hughes—a Canadian army training camp in Manitoba—he was diagnosed with neuralgia. He was discharged to his unit eight days later on 30 June 1916.

Before leaving Canada, George signed a will leaving everything to his sister Laura. While still in Canada he had two incidents of being absent without leave—one in July 1916 and the other in October. On 1 November 1916 he sailed from Halifax on SS *Empress of Britain*, arriving in Liverpool on 11 November. In January 1917, he transferred to the 15th Reserve Battalion and then, on 25 April 1917, he went to France with the 5th Battalion.

His time on the front was punctuated by a number of illnesses. In August 1917 he was admitted to the 1st Canadian Field Ambulance with trench fever. He rejoined his unit later that month. On 29 October 1917 he was hospitalized, but then returned to duty the same day. He was readmitted on 31 October with dermatitis. He was discharged on 17 November. In January 1918 he had two weeks leave in the United Kingdom. He had only been back on the front for four months when he was again hospitalized with trench fever and myalgia. He appears to have been in various medical facilities until 28 August when he was discharged to the Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp,

awaiting transfer to his unit. He rejoined his unit on 8 September. Less than a month later, he was hospitalized with a gunshot wound to his lip and neck. He did not rejoin his unit until 2 November—just before the signing of the Armistice.

On 8 January 1919, he was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station, which was then stationed in Bonn, Germany.²⁰ This time he would not survive. The next day he was described as “dangerously ill” with trench fever. He died four days later of influenza and was buried on 15 January in Poppelsdorfer Cemetery (Grave 12, Plot 1, Row B). with the Canadian chaplain Captain A. D. Reid presiding.

The chaplain notified his brother, William, who was living at 2125 Robinson Street in Regina, of his death.²¹ However, his sister, then Laura Irwin, was also identified as a next of kin. She was living at 128 Alcorn Avenue in Toronto.²²

In December 1919, the family was notified that his body had been exhumed and move to Brussels Town Cemetery (Grave Reference: Plot X, Row 2, Grave3).²³ Brussels Town Cemetery is located in the north east corner of Brussels, Belgium. Brussels was occupied by the Germans from August 1914 to the end of the Great War. There are only 54 Commonwealth Great War graves, which include the graves of 50 prisoners of war whose bodies were brought back from Germany by the Canadian Corps in April 1919.²⁴

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¹ “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 22 November 2016) entry for Cameron, George Wilbert, Reference: RG 150 Accession 1992-93/166, Box 1405A - 56, Item number: 83030, Digitized service file - PDF format: B1405A-S056

² “Ontario, Canada, Births, 1869–1913,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 22 November 2016), entry for George Allen Cameron

³ “Ontario, Canada, Marriages, 1801–1928,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 26 November 2016), entry for James Cameron

⁴ “1891 Census of Canada,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 22 November 2016), entry for George W. Cameron, Province: Ontario, District number: 99, District: Northumberland West, Sub-district: Alnwick

⁵ “Ontario, Canada, Births, 1869–1913,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 22 November 2016), entry for Sarah Effens Cameron

⁶ “Ontario, Canada, Births, 1869–1913,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 22 November 2016), entry for William James Cameron

⁷ “1891 Census of Canada,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 22 November 2016), entry for George W. Cameron

⁸ “Ontario, Canada, Births, 1869–1913,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 22 November 2016), entry for James Allen Cameron

⁹ “1891 Census of Canada,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 22 November 2016), entry for George W. Cameron

¹⁰ “Ontario, Canada, Deaths, 1869–1938 and Deaths Overseas, 1939–1947,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 22 November 2016), entry James Cameron

¹¹ “1901 Census of Canada,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 22 November 2016), entry for M Cameran [*sic*], Province: Ontario, District: Northumberland (west/ouest), District number: 976, Sub-district: Alnwick, Sub-district number: A-3

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- ¹² "1861 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 1 January 2017), entry for Mary Jane Edington, Film number: C-1054, Page: 13; "Ontario, Canada, Deaths, 1869–1938 and Deaths Overseas, 1939–1947," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 1 January 2017), entry James Robert Edington
- ¹³ "1901 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 1 January 2017), entry for Laura Cameson [*sic*]
- ¹⁴ "Ontario, Canada, Deaths, 1869–1938 and Deaths Overseas, 1939–1947," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 November 2016), entry Mary Jane Cameron
- ¹⁵ "1911 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 1 January 2017), entry for Effie Harper, Province: Saskatchewan, District: Moosejaw, District number: 211, Sub-district: 110, Sub-district number: 110
- ¹⁶ "1911 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 1 January 2017), entry for William Cameran [*sic*], Province: Saskatchewan, District: Regina, District number: 214, Sub-district: 72 - Regina, Sub-district number: 72
- ¹⁷ "Michigan, Marriage Records, 1867–1952," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 November 2016), entry for Laura Cameron, Record number: 150489, Film: 137, Film description: 1917 Wayne
- ¹⁸ "1921 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 1 January 2017), entry for Albert J Cameron, Province or territory: Saskatchewan, District: Regina, District number: 225, Sub-district: Regina (City), Sub-district number: 28, City, town or village: Regina
- ¹⁹ "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 22 November 2016) entry for Cameron, George Wilbert. Unless otherwise indicated, all information about his military career comes from this source.
- ²⁰ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 22 November 2016), entry for Cameron, G. W.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*
- ²² "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 22 November 2016) entry for Cameron, George Wilbert
- ²³ "Canada, War Graves Registers (Circumstances of Casualty), 1914–1948," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 November 2016), entry for George Wilbert Cameron, Service number: 907866
- ²⁴ "Brussels Town Cemetery," *Commonwealth War Grave Commission* (<http://www.cwgc.org/>: accessed 22 November 2016)