

Henry Norwest (Northwest). WWI Sniper (b.c. 1881- d.1918)

In nearly three years of service with the 50th Canadian Infantry Battalion during WWI, lance corporal Norwest achieved a documented sniping record of 115 fatal shots.

Norwest was born circa 1881-82 at Fort Saskatchewan, the son of Louis Northwest or Watson and Geneviève Boucher, both Métis. His father lived for a time with the Cree band led by Kiskaquin (Bobtail). Henry accepted Métis scrip in 1885.

Henry worked as a saddler and cowboy. After the start of the First World War in 1914, he joined the Canadian Expeditionary Force (January 1915) under the name Henry Louis and served with the 3rd Canadian Mounted Rifles. He was discharged for drunkenness and briefly worked for the Royal North West Mounted Police (RNWMP) before re-enlisting on September 8, 1915. On his attestation papers he listed his employment as a saddler working for the RNWMP. Two months later his unit, the 50th Canadian Infantry Battalion, left for England and they were in France by August of 1916.



Henry became the greatest sniper in both the Canadian and British forces and was officially credited with 115 observed hits, the highest ever recorded in the annals of the British army. It is possible that his total is much higher since he only counted hits confirmed by a second person. He was known to the German troops and feared by them. His marksmanship and camouflage skills were likely developed from a childhood spent hunting. He was one of only 90 men in the Canadian Expeditionary force/Canadian Corps to earn the Military Medal with Bar.

At night, he would cross enemy lines and wait for days with his rifle fitted with a telescopic lens, until he got just the right shot. He was awarded the Military Medal in 1917 and posthumously awarded a bar to this medal.

In August of 1918, prior to the attack on Amiens, Norwest volunteered to go to the front to disable machine gun positions and German snipers. On August 18th, a German sniper shot him in the head. His comrades placed the following inscription on his temporary grave; "It must have been a damned good sniper that got Norwest." He was

buried near Amiens in France. One of his sniper rifles is on exhibit at the Kings Own Calgary Regiment Museum in Calgary.

50TH CANADIAN BATTALION. WAR DIARY VOLUME XXI. Page 14. Army Form C. 2118.				
Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendix
FRONT LINE & STEWART CAMP, ROCLINCOURT. Ref Map vide 1-4-18	28th		Norwest's methods are peculiarly his own. "Wait until not a single Hun has a chance of seeing your rifle flash, then get your man", is his motto. On one occasion, he waited two days for two enemy snipers who had heard his rifle, as he accounted for another of their friends, knowing they were suspicious of his post. At last he caught them off their guard and one went down followed by the other in fifteen minutes. Very few men could display the patience employed by Norwest. His indifference to danger and his ability to negotiate practically open ground, makes it possible for him to use No Man's Land as a sniping ground to the fullest advantage. Advance parties from the 46th Battalion arrived this morning to take over stores and arrange for the relief. Our advance parties left at noon to take over the camp occupied by the 46th. The relief was carried out in the evening and was complete by 11.P.M. The shelling of "C" Company area necessitated some delay as it was necessary to take all precautions against Gas. One man became a casualty through Gas and was made a stretcher case as a precaution. All Officers reconnoitred the Tunnels at STEWART CAMP which are used in case of enemy shelling this area as the huts afford no protection. Casualties for the day - 1 Other Rank Gassed. "A" and "D" Companies are at AUBREY CAMP, West of Roclincourt.	Appendix 2 AWS.
STEWART CAMP, ROCLINCOURT. Ref Map vide 1-4-18	29th		Weather, fine, turning to heavy rain at 7. P.M. Wind, West. The men were given a rest today, the only parades being pay and clothing. HONOURS AND AWARDS. The following O.Rs. have been granted the decorations named. 2ND BAR TO MILITARY MEDAL. 434398 Sgt. A. A. Strang - "B" Coy. MILITARY MEDAL. 115979 Pte. Averill, A. " 624536 Pte. Stewart, W. " 231261 Pte. Ayers, E. G. " The congratulations of the Army, Corps, Divisional, Brigade and Battalion Commanders are conveyed to the recipients. There are still a large number of Officers and Other Ranks going sick with influenza. The camp was shelled for a short time this morning with overhead and Gas, but no casualties resulted. Warning order for relief of Canadian Corps received. Battalion to be ready to move immediately. Casualties NIL.	Appendix 2 AWS. AWS.

A5134 Wt. W4973/2607 750000 816 D. D. & L. Ltd. Form C. 2118/13.

Source:

James Dempsey, "Henry Norwest," in Ramsay Cook (General Editor): *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol. XIV (1911-1920). Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998: 786-787.

Cathy Littlejohn, *Métis Soldiers of Saskatchewan: 1914-1953*. Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2012: 22-23.

Northwest Family Scrip Applications:

Northwest, Thomas; address: Buffalo Lake; born: May, 1884 at Saddle Lake; father: Louis Northwest (Métis); mother: Genevieve Batoche (Métis); scrip issued for 240 acres; file ref. 789988; claim no. 3302.

Northwest, Joseph; address: Innisfail; born: 1877 at Fort Saskatchewan; father: Louis Northwest or Watson (Métis); mother: Genevieve Batoche (Métis); scrip cert.: form E, no. 2550; claim no. 3301.

Northwest, Henry; address: Buffalo Lake; born: 1881 or 1882 at Fort Saskatchewan; father: Louis Northwest (Métis); mother: Genevieve Batoche (Métis); scrip cert.: form C, no. 1740; claim no. 3303.



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