

**Rogers, Stanley Edward Private F91481
No. 13 Company
Canadian Forestry Corps**



**3rd row 22nd from left
Aug 1941 No 13 Coy CFC photo**

Third Row - left to right

Pte McColl D A

Pte Wentzell E T

Pte Pudsey H B

Pte Linkletter L G

Pte Kernahan J A

Pte Parker H B

Pte Hirtle C A

Pte Dickie J K

Pte Manuel F A

Pte Oliver E L

Pte Dexter E L

Pte Hill H M

Pte Zwicker G W

Pte McLellan B B

Pte Stevenson J R

Pte Rogers E S

Pte Gillis D A

Pte Potter L D

Pte Hill R N

Pte Stevens W F

Pte Helm P G



Stanley on leave at Millstream Jan 1944

http://raking-leaves.blogspot.ca/2012_05_01_archive.html

World War 2 put tremendous strains on supplies of natural resources of all types, but on wood in particular. In addition to civilian requirements, the military needed timber for road and bridge building in support of the front lines, soldiers' living quarters, rail lines, ships, coffins, gun stocks, crates to transport food, ammunition and equipment and countless other needs. Britain had plenty of logable forest, particularly in the north, but had neither adequate skilled personnel nor efficient equipment available to perform the task. In WW1 the British Government had turned to Canada to assist with such matters and so it was natural they would do so once again. In May 1940 Canada formed the Canadian Forestry Corps, recruiting from across the country and by 1942 deploying 7000 men in 30 Companies, mostly to the forests of Scotland. Among the first companies deployed was

Stanley Edward Rogers (1889-1982), who was soon joined by his sons Sheldon and Emerson. This was a job for which they had been training all their lives.

A Family Business



James Valentine Rogers with crew c.1905.

Stanley was born in Stellarton, Nova Scotia, second son of lumberman James Valentine Rogers (1845-1909). Lumber was a significant industry in the province in the 1800s (after the fishery, of course). The industry had thrived based on extensive timber resources and the close proximity of mills to tidewater. According to the Nova Scotia Lumber Assn. there were 1144 Sawmills in N.S. by 1871 and 1126 of those were water powered. Relatively new on the scene were portable steam powered sawmills that logging crews could take into the woods with them, initially pulled by a team of horses, later of a self-propelled tractor design. James V. owned his own mill and horses, doing his logging in winter and sawing when weather permitted moving the mill.



Portable steam sawmill of type similar to that used by Rogers crews.

When his father died in 1909 Stanley took over the business and operated it for the next forty years, joined at times by some of his brothers and later his own sons. With a portable mill, Stanley shifted locations often, the pattern reflected in the birthplaces of his children: Audrey and Emerson in Westchester (about 20 kilometres east of the family homestead at Windham Hill near Springfield), Sheldon in Little River (just north of Oxford), then after a break in the business for service in World War One, south to Great Village on the Bay of Fundy shore for Doug (Cobequid Bay), Emily and Al to the west along the shore in Bass River, and Prescott and Charles a little further west in Little Bass River. Over the next few years Stanley continued to move the mill about, south to Lakeview and east as far as Antigonish and Guysborough.



Rogers Mill crew, winter 1929-30 front: Willard Rogers,?, Clarence Rogers, Ken MacIntosh, Churchill Newton,?, Back: Grant Peppard, Laurie Cameron, Stanley Rogers, Bill Tanner, Roy Taylor, Ernest Harrison,?, Irwin Sutherland

Being essentially just large steam-boiler engines, the portable sawmills were a constant fire hazard, as their boiler tanks grew hot and fuel fires spit sparks onto surrounding ground that was usually dry brush and wood debris. Stanley's son Charles recalls how he and brother Prescott, when they were still too young to help with the actual logging and milling, would often be tasked with keeping watch over the mill site with fire-fighting equipment.



View of Mill from roof of Millstream house.

About 1934 Stanley shifted from portable operations, acquiring one of eastern Canada's oldest mill structures in Millstream, just south of Stellarton. It was here the family called home for the next ten years, interrupted by one year in nearby Hopewell so that Emily could attend school there. When World War 2 began brothers Emerson, Sheldon and Doug were first to join the armed forces, and were soon followed by Stanley, and later Al and Emily. By war's end Stanley and five of his children were in uniform.

War



1940 Doug, Emerson, Sheldon, 1st Field Company, R.C.E.



Heavy CFC log truck.

The heavy lumber lorries stained much of the local infrastructure. Road had to be graveled and some bridges reinforced. No 13 Company in particular had to significantly reinforce Garve Bridge (near their second camp) before moving wood from the area.



No. 13 Co. men with bridging material to repair Garve Bridge near Orrin Bridge



In June 1940, the 1st Field Combat Engineers with Stanley's sons Emerson, Sheldon and Doug went to France as part of the Second British Expeditionary Force (that will likely be the subject of a future blog post). They reached a point south of Laval before they were ordered back as part of the evacuation more widely famous for the withdrawal at Dunkirk. Back in Britain Sheldon and Emerson headed north to join their father with the 13th CFC. Doug stayed with his unit and eventually went with them to Sicily and Italy in 1943. For a while all three Rogers worked together in the Scottish forests. Sheldon then left them to join the 5th Field Combat Engineers with whom he participated in the D-Day invasion.



Co. 13 in Scotland, August 1941, Brechin
Emerson 4th row, far right?, Stanley, 3rd row ninth from right?

Highlights

Shortly after arriving 600 men (3 companies) of the Corps received a Royal Inspection by the King and Queen at Balmoral Castle on September 7, 1941, one of the highlights of the wartime experience for many of the CFC members.



His Majesty salutes the CFC.



Queen Inspecting CFC at Balmoral Castle.



Princesses Margaret and Elizabeth looking on.

As for “low”-lights, there was a brawl in Montrose New Year’s Eve 1942 between some members of No. 13 and some Polish soldiers. A CFC member suffered knife wounds. And in the summer of 1943 one member of the 13th was murdered by another.

A Welcome Presence

The CFC made their presence known in the Scottish highlands. The men at times assisted in local agricultural harvesting, for example No. 13 Company helping with the flax harvest in Mearns in Sept 1941. They participated in local parades, staged Christmas parties for local children and helped with various wartime causes. Some attended religious services in the local churches or joined local lodges such as the Grand Lodge of Scotland in St. Andrew’s. It has also been recounted that it was common practice for forestry workers to pilfer some of the vehicle fuel to give to local taxis in exchange for rides into the village to bars and dances, and that on occasion scrap wood would mysteriously fall from lorries beside homes in need of fuel.

With 7000 men socializing with local communities, it was natural that some of the young local women would find husbands among the CFC foresters. One of those lucky ones was Elizabeth (Betty) Kay Wemyss. In August of 1943, at the age of 21, she married Emerson Rogers (then age 28) in her home town of St. Andrew’s.

Winding Down and Moving On

In preparation for the 1944 Normandy invasion, some companies moved to Southampton to construct rafts to be towed across the channel. Some went with the invasion force, supporting front line operations, and even helping to hold the front line against the December 1944 Ardennes counter-offensive by the Germans. The 13th Company was one of the ones that remained in Scotland to continue their work.

No. 13 Company ceased operations in Scotland March 17, 1945. After shutting down the Orrin Bridge camp, Stanley and the rest of the Company headed for the train at Beaulieu on June 11 and began the journey home. The Company was officially disbanded August 31, 1945

During their four and a half years in the highlands, No.13 Company produced 19.7 million FBM of sawn lumber, or about 5% (1/20) of the total production of the CFC, a commendable accomplishment considering they were one of *thirty* CFC companies! In addition there were many tens of thousands of poles, tons of pulpwood and other products.

Back in Canada

After the war Emerson returned to Canada with Betty, settling in Sydney Forks, Nova Scotia to raise their family. Stanley moved the rest of the family from Millstream to Oxford, buying an electric sawmill in the south end of town and setting up business as S.E. Rogers & Sons.

Thursday Aug. 23, 1951 the Oxford Journal reported that “S.E. Rogers & Sons have sold their electric sawmill on *Lower Main Street* to J.B. Alcorn of Bear River, N.S. who moved the machinery away.”

After winding down his lumber operation Stanley set up an Insurance Business which he ran for almost twenty years before retiring at age 80 and passing the business off to son Sheldon.

The reinforced bridges and road extensions left behind in Scotland were an appreciated legacy of the CFC presence. And having brought the modern methods and equipment to Scotland, the CFC demonstrated more efficient cutting and clearing techniques that the Scottish forestry industry would adopt post war.

Steve Rogers is the son of Charles Rogers and grandson of Stanley E. Rogers

Sources

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Images

Portable Steam Powered Sawmill:

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Rogers mill crews, Millstream, Rogers brothers in Europe, Stanley in 1944:

Collection of Charles D. Rogers

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