

MEMBER OF 52 ND. DIES OF PNEUMONIA

Private Omar Lafontaine became the first fatality of the newly mobilized 52nd New Ontario Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF), in Port Arthur. Private Lafontaine died of pneumonia of April 16, 1915. Lafontaine was given a military funeral two days later with thousands of Lakehead residents paying their respects.

With the Port Arthur City Band playing, members of the 52nd marched to St. Joseph's Hospital accompanied by a firing squad from the 96th Lake Superior Regiment. Days later, the Port Arthur News Chronicle reported that since the Lafontaine funeral, recruitment for the 52nd New Ontario Battalion noticeably increased.

Funeral Causes a Big Increase in Recruiting

A marked increase has been noticeable in the number of men offering as recruits for the Fifty-Second battalion since the military funeral of last Sunday which was viewed by thousands. Asked if he could explain it an officer of the battalion said, "I suppose the young men who saw the ceremonies came to the conclusion that there was no better way to die, as die they must some day, than in the service of their country."

The battalion still needs about 200 men to put it up to full strength.

THE SOLDIER'S BURIAL

Private Lafontaine, 52nd Battalion, Port Arthur, died April 16, 1915.

They buried a soldier yesterday,
One of our volunteers,
Who came at his Empire's urgent call
And offered his brightest years.
He was willing to fight for the dear old flag
Not knowing the reaper grim
Had set his seal, and life's young dream
Would soon be o'er for him.

They buried a soldier yesterday
With all the honor due;
His comrades marched to the martial strain
With feeling hearts and true.
The casket, wrapped in the Union Jack,
Was laid in the waiting grave
While the last salute and the bugle call
Earth's finest farewell gave.

They buried a soldier yesterday,
But ah, on that distant shore,
Perchance, without a flag or cheer.
They buried a thousand more.
So, with tear-dimmed eyes we laid our lad,
To sleep in his last long home,
Honoring him for our noble dead
Who have died for their King, alone.

—Gertrude Cornish Knight
Port Arthur, April 10, 1915.