

feature

A Day of Remem

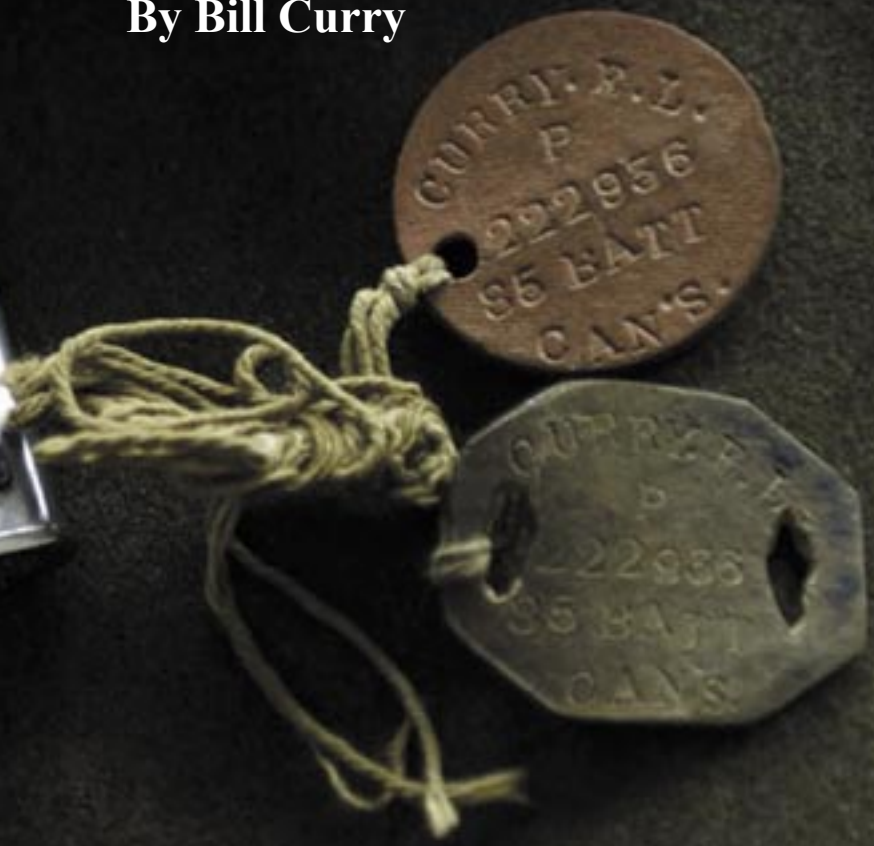


Emerson Curry in 1916



embrance

By Bill Curry



The young soldier's training kicked in the instant he saw what had happened to his comrade in arms. A moment before, the two friends had been weaving, running and trying to gain ground across the muddy, uneven, broken field in the face of fire coming from the trenches opposite a hundred or so yards away. As the two men crested a slight rise, they saw mortar rounds being prepared for firing, and they dove quickly into the nearest cover – a series of small trenches. “I hope there’s no mustard gas in the low spot” thought Emerson, as he threw his body into the hole. The next instant Bob heard the thunderous roar of the shell exploding next to him, precisely where Emerson had been. Recovering from the shock, Bob quickly looked to his right to see where Emerson was, and what he witnessed sent shivers down his spine – the trench Emerson had been heading toward was now a level mass of mud.



Graduation from Acadia Divinity 1925

The 85th Highlanders had seen this kind of action months before at Vimy Ridge, but Bob had never been this close to such an event. Looking carefully, Bob noticed something that sent his heart racing – what was that sticking up out of the ground? Keeping low to avoid drawing attention, he quickly scurried to the spot and saw the item was a crop, a leather stick carried by the soldiers. Working furiously, Bob started digging through the mud, quickly aided by nearby comrades. In a matter of minutes, the group had unearthed a wounded but still breathing Emerson from under the earth.

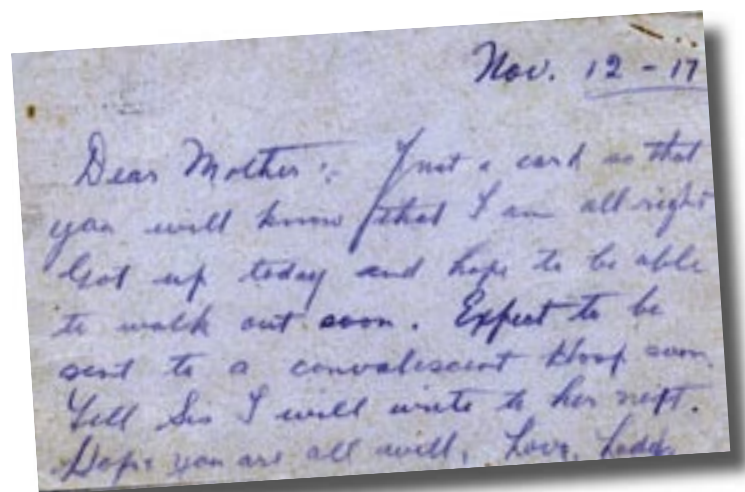
Emerson Ladd Curry had survived being buried alive at the 2nd battle of Passchendaele.

Emerson's World War I story, including the reason for his enlistment and his subsequent action overseas, is one that was shared by thousands of Canadian men. Born in Port Maitland, Nova Scotia in 1896, Emerson Ladd Curry was the son of a sea captain, George Madison Curry, a man who proved to be a rather stern father. Capt. George had gone to sea himself as a teenager, and spent most of his life away from home circling the globe in sailing ships. Emerson grew up not knowing his father very well, but with a healthy respect for hard work and what it meant to be

part of a family and what needed to be done to keep that family going. Emerson graduated from Grade 11 in 1914 and found employment immediately as a school teacher in Springhaven, Nova Scotia for the 1914 to 1915 school year. Emerson's sister, Mattie, also taught school in the same area in Canaan. Instead of returning to teach in the fall of 1915, however, Emerson decided, as did many of his peers, that service to his country was paramount, and it seemed that it also might be a wonderful adventure; and so he enlisted in the 85th Highland brigade. Mattie also decided to serve overseas – she decided on service to her church, and was a missionary and ran a religious school for girls in India for over 30 years.

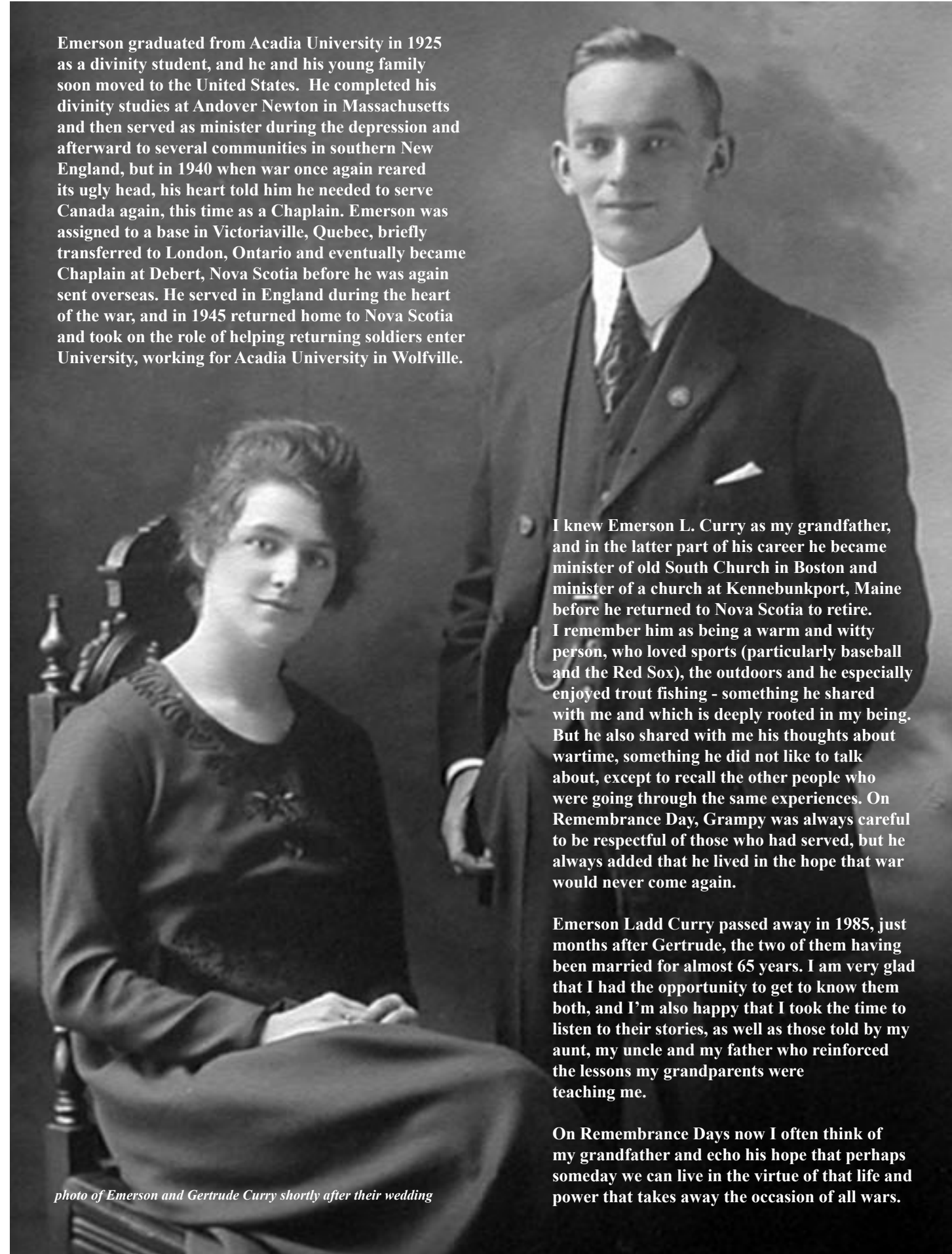
After being wounded at the battle of Passchendaele, Emerson was evacuated to a hospital in France and eventually was sent to recover at a military facility hospital in Cardiff, Wales and then to Bramshott, between Portsmouth and London, England. Young Gertrude Montgomery was serving tea and ox bouillon to the wounded soldiers in hospital, and the injured Canadian caught her eye. In January of 1919, Emerson was released from hospital and sent back home to Port Maitland. He soon learned that during his time overseas his father had passed away and his mother was talking about moving to the United States to live with one of her brothers. Emerson kept thinking of the pretty girl who served him tea and soup, and by June was on his way back to England. The two were married in July and by mid-August had arrived in Halifax on the ship Adriatic and were driven by relatives home to Port Maitland. One can only guess at what must have been going through the young woman's head on the long drive from Halifax to Emerson's home in Port Maitland, particularly since she had never been very far from her home in Peckham, right in the heart of the city of London.

The war, then, had had a profound effect on these two young people. Emerson, or Ladd to his family, had come through the action and as a result, decided to become a minister; as his close brush with death and his subsequent rescue by his friends made him determined to remember the war experience, pay proper thanks to God for getting through it (and for meeting his new wife), and also to make sure that future generations would never forget the horrors that he had witnessed firsthand on the battlefield. *



The postcard he wrote home after being injured in WWI

Emerson graduated from Acadia University in 1925 as a divinity student, and he and his young family soon moved to the United States. He completed his divinity studies at Andover Newton in Massachusetts and then served as minister during the depression and afterward to several communities in southern New England, but in 1940 when war once again reared its ugly head, his heart told him he needed to serve Canada again, this time as a Chaplain. Emerson was assigned to a base in Victoriaville, Quebec, briefly transferred to London, Ontario and eventually became Chaplain at Debert, Nova Scotia before he was again sent overseas. He served in England during the heart of the war, and in 1945 returned home to Nova Scotia and took on the role of helping returning soldiers enter University, working for Acadia University in Wolfville.



I knew Emerson L. Curry as my grandfather, and in the latter part of his career he became minister of old South Church in Boston and minister of a church at Kennebunkport, Maine before he returned to Nova Scotia to retire. I remember him as being a warm and witty person, who loved sports (particularly baseball and the Red Sox), the outdoors and he especially enjoyed trout fishing - something he shared with me and which is deeply rooted in my being. But he also shared with me his thoughts about wartime, something he did not like to talk about, except to recall the other people who were going through the same experiences. On Remembrance Day, Grampy was always careful to be respectful of those who had served, but he always added that he lived in the hope that war would never come again.

Emerson Ladd Curry passed away in 1985, just months after Gertrude, the two of them having been married for almost 65 years. I am very glad that I had the opportunity to get to know them both, and I'm also happy that I took the time to listen to their stories, as well as those told by my aunt, my uncle and my father who reinforced the lessons my grandparents were teaching me.

On Remembrance Days now I often think of my grandfather and echo his hope that perhaps someday we can live in the virtue of that life and power that takes away the occasion of all wars.

photo of Emerson and Gertrude Curry shortly after their wedding



Chaplain Emerson Curry speaks in WW2



Emerson Curry overseeing funerals for servicemen in WW2



Emerson Curry with trout in 1968



50th Wedding Anniversary

DAYTON — Rev. and Mrs. Emmerson Curry of Lakeside Drive, Yarmouth, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary at the Seafood Restaurant on Friday evening.

Rev. and Mrs. Curry were married in London, England, on July 4, 1919.

Rev. Curry was born in Port Maitland and Mrs. Curry was born in London.

Many relatives and friends were in attendance to extend congratulations and bring gifts. The family's gift was to look after expenses for a trip to Prince Edward Island for Rev. and Mrs. Curry.

Rev. and Mrs. Curry (the former Gertrude Montgomery) have three children, Phyllis (Mrs. Donald MacPherson), George M. and Robert B. and nine grandchildren.

Rev. Curry retired here in 1965. He was minister at Old South Church, Boston for 10 years and also served in various pastorates in the United States and in the Maritimes. He was with the 85th Canadian Highlanders in World War I and was a Chaplain in World War II.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Curry enjoy good health and are very active.

50TH ANNIVERSARY — Rev. and Mrs. Emmerson L. Curry celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary at the Seafood Restaurant in Dayton on July 4. (Charles Adams Photo)



Salmon fishing with his step brother-in-law

50th wedding announcement in Vanguard 1969



The 1915 inductees of the 85th Highlanders from Yarmouth NS (may include men from other counties)



A Yarmouth War rally parade 1916