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Langsdale Library
Special Collections Department
1420 Maryland Avenue
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Montreal, Que., Canada
Dec 5, 1917

Dear John:—

When I arrived in N.Y. I was told that the enlistments in the R.A.C. were closed and that I was counted out. I was therefore transferred to the Inland Water Transport Service of the Royal Engineers and on Tuesday night at 7:45 three others and myself left for Montreal.

We arrived here at 7:20 this morning, were brought to the tank and given breakfast. We were given a brief job and a spoon apiece also a towel and then after having “fallen in” several times to receive instructions.
we had dinner, both meals were satisfactory.

The commanding officer told us that if we showed up satisfactorily we would go over with the next shift which goes sometime next week. This is a pretty good bunch of mechanics, but a bum bunch of soldiers. We have a large number of men ranging from 35 to 55 years old and to see some of them still is amazing.

The fellows in this bunch of the service are sent over as soon as possible. Some are stationed on cattle
boats and get $20 extra for the trip. Several fellows came from Boston yesterday morning; they were given their equipment and then drilled for the rest of the day. Today they left for duty on board a ship going over.

While in NY, I went to see Jack O'Toole and enjoyed it very much. Give my love to Marge and write to me.

As ever,

Sapper Fred Bachman
9 W.T. Royal Engineers
Aug 17, Berwick
Montreal, Canada
Montreal Canada
Dec. 7, 1917

Dear John:

Just a line to let you know that we are going over if the present plans are carried out.

We were drawn up in parade this morning and about 25 fellows were picked out; I was among the number. We were then told that we were to go over the early part of next week on a shore boat.

I am going to send home some clothes in the bag before I leave.

I am an "regular" soldier now; I have a swagger stick. You can't get out of the trenches unless you

Some explosion in Halifax! Even up here in Montreal, it is impossible to get any definite information, so I guess it must be pretty bad.

Everything is OK with me. Food is good and also plentiful and sleeping quarters are fine.

Here's something that will interest you. When we were shown up this morning, theajor major told us that in the first expedition there were 5,000 men who had some kind of venereal disease when they reached the other side, and many had to be sent back. They couldn't "carry on" as the Sargt-major put it.
After leaving the problem to deal with for 2 years they decided to face it in this way. Every man who has had intercourse with a woman must immediately upon his return to barracks report to the medical officer who is on duty for that purpose. All might, for an injection of an antiseptic, the man's name is kept in a book. If the man fails to report to the M.O. and is later found to be diseased, she in court to the hospital and docked all his pay while there and may even have some other punishment meted out to him. There goes the call for supper so I'll close with love.

Fred.
Montreal
Dec. 10, 1917

Dear Mother:

I just received your letter also letters and the small cap from Mr. Smitz. In order to put away any cause for anxiety that you might have about my equipment I am going to try and give you a list of the things I received from the Quartermaster. Cap:

- Cap with ear loops, twill, twinning pattern
- Shoes, 3 pairs
- Work boots, 2
- Socks, 2 pairs
- Underwear, 2 pairs
- Suspender, toothbrush, hairbrush, shoe brush
- Shoe duster, brush, pruning shears
- Pipes, 2
- Matches, 4
- Handkerchiefs, 3
- Anti-mosquito collar, 1
- Razor, shaving
- Belt, 1
- Gloves, 1 pair
- Heavy sweater, one coat and probably...
some other things that I have forgotten.

As I understand it the FMZ is to build bridges, locks, and harbors and operate tugs and gasoline boats on inland waters in England, France, and Egypt. They enlist seamen, firemen, stoking machinists, men to build bridges, lay cribs and drive piles.

To enlist a man must know at least one of these trades. After arriving at these quarters each man is separately questioned about his trade to make sure he knows something about it. I was classified as both hand. We are not sent near the firing line; this I have heard from several sources, but I wouldn't
mind getting into a good fight once in a while. I wasn't keen on trenches to dig. The wood sawyer was carried over from the regular Royal Engineers who go to the front and correspond with headquarters. I haven't heard anything more about going over, although we are expecting to get orders to move any day. I shall be glad to go; it will be a fine experience. We will probably sail from Halifax so I will most likely see the destruction that was done by explosion.

I shall try and get my picture taken before I leave. Let me know how to spell Joe We last name. I will write to him.

In our larder room we have a piano; one of the fellows has a fiddle and another has a fango several cam
singing pretty good and any of the wild Irishmen that we have can jig better than that chorus in Eileen. But this isn't like a college frat house by any means, we have got to some pretty hard guys in the gang, but there is a lot of good in the worst Jims and we all get along pretty good.

While I was in N.Y. I saw Jack O'Connell it was fine, I also strolled around the Battery and Wall St.

It has been snowing for three days and it is very cold but with all this woolen clothing, it is easy to keep warm. All our drilling is inside, we get his drill today.

As I have said before our food
in good; we can come back for a second helping and we have dessert twice a day. All our food is of the kind that has high food value or calories.

Don't bother sending me that State College paper. I didn't write Julie but 9 sent a card to Father O.; the French Canadians made think of him and some of the French he used to speak.

I think one of two things must have happened to France, either he has the mumps or she he has been sent to France.

Thank Mrs. Katz from me, for the cap, it is fine. Perhaps I had better write her? My hat tag is so
full that I can hardly close it.
I have given my suit, shoes hat and
some others things to a sergent here who
is sending those things to Halifax.
a lot of clothing has been given by
recruit.

Well I guess I have reached the
finish. This is some letter for me
love to John T. James

Anna

P.S. When writing to me address
envelope as follows

# 2063 copper St. Back
9x 6 ft Royal Engineers
544 St. Bernacks
Montreal
Canada.
Montreal
Dec. 12, 1917

Dear John:

I am still at the docks. We have heard nothing new about leaving; I doubt if we will go this week. I think that explosion in Halifax has something to do with the delay because it is from that port that almost all the ships leave.

The river is closed now because of the ice and all loading of troops and horses takes place at Halifax. A party of fellows from here started to take a tug boat up the river to Halifax but they didn't get very far because of the ice.
It is very cold here; last night it was about 8 degrees below zero. I haven't received the wash yet, but they may come later in the day.

This is a very queer town; I believe there are more French Canadians than English. They are very numerous and easily picked out by their dark complexions and their slight difference of taste which manifests itself in their dress. The girls look much like the dark-haired, rosy-cheeked Italian girls of South Philadelphia. The men are harder to pick out; many of them look like Jews.

French is spoken as much if not more than English.
Any one trying to get a job in the Post Office or Telephone exchange etc.
must be able to speak both languages.
The town would certainly interest a sociologist.

I havn't sent my civilian clothes yet because we were told by the people to wait until we had received definite orders that we were going over. I will send only the tags, overcoat and my eye lotion.

I havn't had occasion to use the lotion as yet so I think I will send it home because it takes up so much room in my last bag.

Well I'll close... Love to Mary and Jose

Ever Fred
Montreal  
Dec 13, 1917

Dear Maize,

We have received the orders. We leave tonight for a spot "somewhere in the U.S." where we will board a house boat.

I received a letter from Julie this morning. He said mother had knitted a pair of trousers for me but they would not be sent until they had heard from me. I haven't received the pair from Mrs. Hugo yet. Julie wanted to know if I needed anything but of course I have almost
more than I need now.

Well I guess it will be quite a while before you hear from me again but remember no news is good news. I'll try and keep someone of a diary on the trip over then I'll send it to you.

(I am going to have my picture taken today and I will have them sent to you; you can send me one when you know where I am.) I couldn't get pictures taken.

With love to you all.

As ever,

Fred.

P.S. Wristlets and cakes came just now. Cake one fine will take them with me tonight
48/18

Mr. J. J. Waldman
1247 10th St.,
Phila.
Pa.
U.S.A.
312744 L/Cpl. F. Backman
1st L.D. R.E.
Hut 20, Maig Camp
Kimbol
Kent,
Eng.
Dear John:

Still at the barracks but we are quite sure of leaving tonight. The fellows in the barracks are giving us a big send off. They raised $25 last night and it is to be spent for anything we want: cigarettes, tobacco, chocolate, chewing gum etc.

Last night we had an entertainment in which every body had to take part so I did my bit, I said:

"Fellows I am now going to sing you a song which I have sung..."
before all the crowned heads of Europe." After I had sung this for King George, he came up to me and said:

"I have never heard anything like it before and I hope to God I never will again." "I think you'll agree with George," then I struck a on the piano and sang "It's a big day to-night in the Irish." It wasn't very wonderful but it was better than some fellows did so I was satisfied.

All the A.E's are going to march down to the station with us tonight; we are also going to have the bugel corps of the 1st Worcee Infantry.
To morn the most important election Canada ever had will take place. The Unionists are trying to get all the soldier vote. So accommodations are going to be made for the soldiers of our draft to vote on the train tonight.

I, as a British soldier have a right to vote. I am going to cast my first vote for the Hon. E.C. Bulyea as the "win the war" candidate for Parliament from the district in which the St. Baradee are located. I never thought my first vote would be cast in a Canadian election. I am certainly having great experiences.
I had my picture taken at last and I am having them sent to you. I have paid for them - 6 doz. When you get my English address send me one. In the mean time if anybody down there wants one, hand them out. Keep one for yourself of course, Will & Gonna I have told you all the news as it come.

Love to Marge & James.

Fred.

2/1/91/21