

Last fall while doing research about Dr. Reginald Stipe's clinic I realized he had served overseas during WW1. Then another discovery as Dr. Munroe did likewise but in a different area. So it seemed like a good idea to write about their war efforts, firstly because November is the time to remember the struggles and efforts made by so many men and women to preserve our way of life and also because these men had personal connections with Manitou Beach. This week is about Dr. Reginald Stipe who, as many of you know, had a medical practice in Watrous and later a medical clinic at Manitou Beach as well as owning property here. He was also a Member of the Legislature and during that tenure was very instrumental in the development of the Provincial Park, now Camp Easter Seal.

In April 1916 Dr. Stipe left Watrous to join the Royal Army Medical Corp. (RAMC) and was commissioned with the temporary rank of captain April 29 1917. At some point he served in Mesopotamia* but just when is unknown, perhaps before going to Egypt

If he went to Mesopotamia in the summer of 1916, thankfully for us, he missed the horrendous 147 day siege of Kut-al-Amara, which ended April 29 1916, whereby the garrison was surrendered to the Turks. The captured British and Indian troops were brutally treated en route to Turkish prisoner of war camps.

March 1917 the garrison was recaptured by British and Indian forces under General Frederick Maude. Our

esteemed Dr. Stipe may well have treated casualties during the attempts to recapture Kut-al-Amara.

During the four years of fighting in Mesopotamia more than 31,000 officers and men died from combat wounds or diseases, e.g. typhoid and cholera.

Generally in the Mesopotamian Campaign the RAMC was insufficient and poorly run, especially up to 1916.

Remember there were no antibiotics to treat infections and getting adequate supplies to the region must have been very difficult due to the very long and tenuous supply route. I was surprised to discover that a shipment of sphagnum moss was sent over to the battlefields of Europe in 1918 for dressing wounds instead of cotton.

For his service in Egypt, which began December 1917, Dr. Stipe was awarded a medal. The British and Allies were anxious to protect the Suez Canal and keep it open. The British Egyptian Expeditionary Force, formed March 1916, evolved from defending Egypt to invading and capturing Jerusalem in December 1917. Early in 1918 most of its British and Egyptian troops were sent to the Western Front to help defend against the German army.

Just where Dr. Stipe was during all this I really do not know but unfortunately the records of temporarily commissioned doctors (serving in WW1 only) were destroyed in the early 1920's! Without those records we do not know all the details of where and when Dr. Stipe plied his craft to battle torn and weary men with drugs and equipment vastly inferior to those available nowadays.

We are glad he came home safe and sound to resume his medical practice and community work.

*Mesopotamia is the land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers and encompasses present day Iraq and parts of Iran, Turkey and Syria.

Sources: The Watrous Signal, Royal Army Medical Corp, Assorted web sites covering WW1 battles etc.