

Former summer resident Dr. H.E. Munroe certainly missed Christmas at home during WW1. Why write about Dr Munroe you ask? Because he had a summer cottage on MacLachlan Avenue, overlooking the park east of our tennis courts, from 1910 until the summer of 1943 when it was razed (destroyed) by fire. I do not know if or when he had it rebuilt but he and his wife Myrtle and two children certainly had many summer vacations here in our Village. In 1904 Dr. Munroe moved to Saskatoon and 1908-1914 he was Chairman of the Board of Governors of the City Hospital and he also became Medical Officer to Saskatchewan Light and Horse in 1908.

War was declared in 1914 and Dr. Munroe, with the 105th Saskatoon Fusiliers sailed to England. After a stint on Salisbury Plain (home to Stonehenge) he proceeded to France with the No. 1 Canadian stationary Hospital and a few months later the unit was posted to Mudros, on the Greek isle of Lemnos, for six months. Here the medics treated wounded men from the infamous Gallipoli* campaign and experienced awful hardships.

Sanitary conditions were horrendous, food and water supply poor to dreadful, scurvy was common, and gastro-enteritis was rampant amongst staff and patients. The tents used at the hospital were replaced by huts because of autumn flooding. In November there were 400 cases of frostbite to add to the misery. Remember there were no antibiotics available to treat necrotic wounds and other infections caused by such squalid conditions.

In 1915 Captain Munroe was invalided back to Canada and raised to the rank of Major. The next year he became

Lieutenant Colonel and Commanding Officer of No. 8 Canadian Stationary Hospital.

In 1916 the No. 8 sailed to England on the “Adriatic” which was accompanied by H.M.S. “Baltic” and “Empress of Britain”. For a time the unit was based in southern England in Hastings and that hospital had 600 beds for urino-genital conditions, i.e. sexually transmitted diseases. The soldiers had been busy boys!

In 1917 the No. 8 moved to Camiers camp in France and here Dr. Munroe and his team would have treated trauma victims as well as those conditions caused by trench warfare, e.g. fevers, fractures, burns, gunshot and shrapnel wounds. Facilities would have been like those of the M.A.S.H. 4077 unit but much more primitive, worse weather, fewer drugs and equipment.

The following year Dr. Munroe and team hospitalized the area at Charmes with marquee tents and later the No. 8 Hospital move to Dunkirk and established a tent hospital of 400 beds which was later expanded to 600 beds.

April 1919 Dr. Munroe was honourably discharged from military life and returned to Saskatoon where he formed a medical practice with Dr. MacDonald. Paradise must also have been returning for a summer holiday to Manitou Beach, a calm and peaceful oasis.

Dr. Munroe O.B.E. was also active on the political scene but that’s another episode.

* Winston Churchill was forced to resign as Lord of the Admiralty because of the Gallipoli/Dardanelle fiasco.

Sources: Village Records, Saskatchewan Archives, Assorted web sites, e.g. Official History Canadian Forces

1914-1918 Medical Services, Trent University Archives,
Soldiers of the First World War.

So folks, we have it cushy here, we need be thankful for what we have and give special thoughts to the troops who are currently serving in Afghanistan and Iraq. I'm sure they'd like to be home for Christmas.

Have a good and thoughtful week, Sue.