

PTE. BERTRAM “BERT” AUGUSTUS SCHUBERT (1892–1916)

Bert was born in Victoria, B.C., 19 October 1892, to James and Fanny (Jaegar or Winger) Schubert. His mother passed away when he was quite young and his widowed father then took Bert to live with his paternal grandparents in Armstrong, while James went to Penticton to open a mercantile store. Bert spent his early years on his grandparents' farm in Spallumcheen, just outside of Armstrong. In a few years, James remarried a Miss Elizabeth Adamson Playfair, who had come to B.C. From England to tutor children.

James Schubert, owned the first mercantile store in Hedley – and perhaps the first *building* in Camp Hedley – as early as 1899 at the present-day location of the Nickel Plate Mine Manager's Office (Gold House B&B) by the stamp mill ruins. Schubert Merchandise was then very shortly relocated into the new Hedley townsite, onto Haynes St., the last lot of the block on the south side by 20 Mile Creek – prime real estate at the time, as this was “main street” - the roadway between Keremeos and Princeton.

Bert moved to Hedley with his father and stepmother, Elizabeth, when he was about 9 years old, ca. 1902. He was to become the oldest sibling of six more children born to this second marriage. Thus, Bert was to become one of the original “Hedley Boys,” residing over half of his young and short life in this booming gold mining town. As Schubert Merchandise housed the first post office, in 1903, the store would have been the focal point of town activity and life in Hedley. And Bert grew up in the midst of this, learning the mercantile business from his father.

Around 1911, James moved his second family to Tulameen, the “next mining boom town,” to construct a third mercantile store and Bert, now age 18, stayed behind in Hedley to manage the family business. In 1913, Schubert Merchandise of Hedley consolidated with the other town mercantile store, Shatford's, and together they opened the Hedley Trading Co. Ltd. This store was housed in the present-day Hitching Post Restaurant building on Scott Ave., now located in the centre of town. Bert was employed at the Hedley Trading Co., jointly owned by his father and F.H. French, until he enlisted in the 54th Kootenay Battalion in August, 1915.

Bert had wanted to join an “aviation squad” but he would have had to pay for his own training, an amount of several hundred dollars, which he was unable to afford. So, when the recruitment officer, Capt. Lucas, came to town for the 54th Battalion, Bert decided to join the other men already committed to enlistment there.

Bert was assigned to the machine gun section in the 54th, possibly partially due to his big build, as he was 6' 2", and the Lewis machine gun was about 3 ft. long and weighed 28 lbs. Bert wrote home to a friend in Hedley, "The machine gun section which I am now in is very interesting, and as I always took a great interest in the mechanism of guns am getting along very well so far..." The 54th Battalion, left England for the fighting in France a year later, in mid-August 1916. In September, another Hedley Boy of the 54th, Doc Martin, wrote home, "Bert Schubert is the leading light on our gun [machine gun section], a good man in the right place."

Six weeks later, Bert was killed in action, 25 Oct 1916, in the trenches north of Courcellette, France, as part of the Battle of Regina Trench action on the Somme. It was a week after his 24th birthday. In his last letter home, he wrote of being hungry and the terrible quality and shortage of rations on the front.

Bert left us some particularly poignant words in a letter printed in the *Hedley Gazette* three weeks after he was killed. He wrote as follows, "I often think of you people back in that little town of luxury. Yes, that is the right word. Even if things do get quiet once in awhile, there is sure to be plenty of pure cold water to drink and there isn't any poison gas or liquid fire in the air. If you ever get a chance to enjoy yourself, do so. I am glad I enjoyed myself while in Hedley, because those things are all we have to look back on now."

Pte. Bert Schubert's name is on the Vimy Memorial in France, as he has no known grave.