

MAKING IT UP AS YOU GO: RACIAL POLICY IN THE
CANADIAN MILITARY DURING THE TWO WORLD WARS

by

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Bachelor of Arts, University of New Brunswick, 2016
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A Report Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of
the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the Graduate Academic Unit of History

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This report is accepted by the
Dean of Graduate Studies

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW BRUNSWICK

June, 2019

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Abstract

Approximately two thousand Black soldiers served overseas as part of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) during the First World War. An unknown number of Black soldiers enlisted and served with the Canadian military during the Second World War. Private James Eatman, born March 1882, served with the 25th Infantry Battalion in the First World War, and his son, Sergeant Arthur Eatman, born May 1920 served with the Carleton and York Regiment during the Second World War. They are two of the many Black soldiers whose stories are largely absent from the historical record. This report uses the personnel files of James and Arthur Eatman, along with other military records, to examine the wartime policies of the Canadian military towards racialized Black soldiers and to consider the affects of these policies on Black soldier's wartime experiences.

*To all those who served, known and unknown-
-Thank you.*

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List of Abbreviations

CAMC	Canadian Army Medical Corps
CCD	Canadian Convalescent Depot
CCS	Casualty Clearing Station
CEF	Canadian Expeditionary Force
CFA	Canadian Field Ambulance
CIB	Canadian Infantry Brigade
CMHQ	Canadian Military Headquarters
CO	Commanding Officer
CTS	Canadian Training School
CYR	Carleton and York Regiment
ENT Battalion	Entrenching Battalion
NCO	Non-commissioned Officer
NSRD	Nova Scotia Regimental Depot

Introduction:

Understanding Effects: Race Policy in the Canadian Military during the World Wars

In November 1917, Private James Eatman, of the 25th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) was wounded at the Battle of Passchendaele. Shrapnel from an exploding shell inflicted wounds to his right shoulder and head. Like so many of his wounded comrades, Private Eatman spent several days at a casualty clearing station before he was moved to a hospital further behind front lines. Eventually he was transferred to a hospital in England to undergo several surgeries and recover from his injuries. No longer fit for combat, Private Eatman spent the rest of his war assigned to various military units doing an assortment of jobs before being sent home in July 1919 as part of the demobilization of the CEF.

On 15 May 1920, James and his wife Thursa welcomed their seventh child together—a boy they named Arthur Wallace Eatman. Arthur, who acquired the nickname Duke sometime during his youth, would eventually follow in his father's footsteps, and enlist with the Canadian Army at the outbreak of the Second World War. Duke first enrolled as a Private with the Carleton and York Regiment (CYR) in September 1939 and reached the rank of Sergeant by October 1942. The Carleton and Yorks took part in Operation Husky, the Allied invasion of Sicily, in July and August 1943. Duke would not survive that campaign; he was declared killed in action on 22 July 1943.

At first glance, little information found in either James or Arthur's personnel service files sets them apart from any other soldiers who fought with the Canadian armed forces during the two global conflicts. However, a close reading, especially of

James' file, reveals one small detail, easily overlooked, that has significant repercussions for how historians treat both James and Arthur in the historical record. James, and his son Arthur were Black Canadians, and they represent just two of an unknown number who served in the in the Canadian military during the two world wars. This one detail adds an entirely new level of analysis to James' and Arthur's wartime service and experiences. New questions arise that would not be applicable if James and Arthur were white include whether they experienced trouble enlisting, how their wartime experience compared to that of their white comrades, and what relations between Black and white soldiers were like in integrated units. It would also be valuable to know more about how the capability and reliability of Black soldiers was perceived by their peers and leaders. Further questions emerge surrounding the Canadian Army, the Royal Canadian Navy and the Royal Canadian Air Force as public institutions. This project examines the how Canada's military forces possessed and enforced race-based policies during these conflicts. It is worth investigating the reactions of military and political leaders to the integration of racialized minorities into the armed services and how these compared to other public and private institutions in terms of accepting racialized minority persons into its ranks.

Throughout this report, the term "racialized" is used to describe Black Canadians and other minority populations such as Japanese and Chinese Canadians. The use of this term reflects the understanding that race is a construct used to enforce specific social and political norms. Ascribing race and race-based characteristics to an individual is an active, multi-faceted process in which multiple

individuals and institutions are engaged, and the term “racialized” is used in order to reflect this process.¹ The scholarship on Blackness in Canada, and on race and racism in Canada are ever-growing fields which provide critical insight into the many ways race, racism and racialization are manifest in Canadian society, and how they have become entrenched through a long history of oppression and discrimination. Public institutions, such as schools and medical facilities feature prominently in such discussions, demonstrating the ways both the state and general society engage in processes of racialization.² As such, information gleaned from the scholarship on race and racialization in Canada is an important tool for grounding terminology used throughout this report.. There are a few useful terms to keep in mind throughout this report. One is institutional racism, defined as a series of institutional policies, practices and procedures that limit the mobility and prospects of a specifically racialized group within the institution when compared to opportunities offered to the dominant racial majority.³ Another helpful term is prejudice which speaks to the preconceived beliefs, often ungrounded or illogical,

¹ For scholarship describing this process, see Barrington Walker, ed., “Part II: Space and Racialized Communities” in *The History of Immigration and Racism in Canada: Essential Readings* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press Inc., 2008) 67-108; Robin DiAngelo, “White Fragility,” *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, vol. 3 no. 3 (2011) 54-70; S. Sayyid, “Post-racial paradoxes: rethinking European racism and anti-racism,” *Patterns of Prejudices* vol. 51, no, 1 (2017) 9-25. See also, Constance Backhouse, *Colour-Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999) 148.

² Examples include Dionne Brand, “We weren’t allowed to go into factory work until Hitler started the War’: The 1920s to the 1940s,” in *The History of Immigration and Racism in Canada: Essential Readings*, edited by Barrington Walker (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press Inc., 2011) 239-249; Rinaldo Walcott, *Black like Who?: Writing Black Canada, Revised Edition* (Toronto: Insomnia Press, 2003); Robin Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: a History, 2nd edition* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997).

³ Carl James, “Chapter 1: Race. Culture and Identity” in *Perspectives on Racism and the Human Service Sector: A Case For Changed*, edited by Carl James (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996) 26-27.

that used to justify actions and practices that unfairly target racialized minorities.⁴

Within the military context, an example might be thinking that Indigenous soldiers would make good trackers or that Black soldiers are unable to withstand cold, snowy climates.⁵

It is important to note that the relationship between the fields of critical race studies and racism studies, and military studies is complex, and the two fields intersect in some interesting ways. However, it is also important to recognize that the scholarship addressing race in the Canadian military has largely neglected the important task of situating the military in a broader context and relating military practices and trends patterns found in other public institutions. This preliminary study acknowledges that this gap exists and aims to more fully integrate these disparate fields in future research.

The lack of an established and well-defined historiography surrounding race and Canadian military service makes addressing questions in this field difficult, though no less necessary. This study cannot hope to answer all the questions identified above, but these questions do provide an important framework for inquiry and an important avenue for further investigation. This study therefore focuses on the fundamental question of how the race policies of the Canadian military shaped the wartime experience of Black Canadian soldiers who fought with integrated units in the First and Second World Wars. Recent scholarship by a select group of

⁴ James, “Chapter 1: Race. Culture and Identity”, 25-26.

⁵ Both of these beliefs are apart of the so-called “martial race theory” which dominates much of the discussion about the relationship between race and the military. For more on martial race theory, see Scott Sheffield and Noah Riseman, *Indigenous Peoples and the Second World War* (2019) among others.

scholars has suggested that the policy of the Canadian military in the 20th century was one of racial indifference where all recruits could become soldiers regardless of skin colour leading to the assertion that the Canadian military was not a racially prejudiced organization.⁶ This report seeks to examine this claim, showing how gaps between policy and practice regarding the treatment of racialized Black soldiers, become manifest in their wartime experience, thus complicating the image of the Canadian military as a racially indifferent organization. The image that emerges of the Canadian military and its policies towards race is complicated, however. What is clear is that the Canadian military was an institution where racial prejudice certainly existed, but the origins and perpetrators of that prejudice are more difficult to assess. It is also clear that wartime and the immediate post-war era represent times of social change regarding race relations. As a result of this complicated legacy of racial policies, scholars seeking to understand the individual and collective experiences of racialized soldiers find themselves in a situation where there are more questions than answers, and where resources for accessing these experiences are slim. This report is no exception, and while it cannot offer a definitive answer as to the extent of racial prejudice experienced by Black Canadian soldiers, it does demonstrate not only that race mattered to the Canadian military as part of an unofficial policy and it establishes the groundwork for future research in this field.

⁶ For example, see Richard Holt, *Filling the Ranks: Manpower in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1918* (Montreal; McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017); Brian D. Tennyson, *Nova Scotia at War, 1914-1919* (Halifax; Nimbus, 2017). These texts are addressed more fully through a review of scholarly literature.

As previously noted, this field of Canadian military history suffers from a shortage of secondary literature. In fact, in the past three decades, less than a dozen academic texts have addressed the plight of racialized Black soldiers in the Canadian military during the First World War, with even less attention directed to question of Black soldiers in the Second World War. Due to this limited body of secondary literature, this historiographical review will be brief.

The scholarship addressing the First World War can generally be broken down into three thematic streams: general interest or survey texts, which include some discussion of racialized soldiers within a broader analysis; texts where the central focus is on racialized soldiers only; and studies that are dedicated solely to the No. 2 Construction Battalion, the only segregated unit to serve with the CEF during the First World War.⁷ Admittedly, there is some overlap between these fields, given that each thematic stream only contains a handful of texts. For example, John Armstrong's article "The Unwelcome Sacrifice" (1994), is a striking discussion

⁷ General interest and survey texts include Richard Holt's *Filling the Ranks*, and Brian Tennyson's *Nova Scotia at War*. Texts on racialized soldiers include James Walker, "Race and Recruitment in World War I: Enlistment of Visible Minorities in the Canadian Expeditionary Force", *Canadian Historical Review* vol. 70 (1989), 1-26; Sean Flynn Foyn, "The Underside of Glory: AfriCanadian Enlistment in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1917," (Master's Thesis, University of Ottawa, 2000); Melissa Shaw, "Most Anxious to Serve their King and Country: Black Canadians' Fight to Enlist in WWI and Emerging Race Consciousness in Ontario, 1914-1919", *Social History*, vol. 100, (2016), 543-580. Texts on the No. 2 Construction Battalion include Calvin Ruck, *The Black Battalion: 1916-1920, Canada's Best Kept Military Secret* (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing, 1987, 2016); Danielle Pittman, "Moving Mountains: The No. 2 Construction Battalion and African Canadian Experience During the First World War" (Honours thesis, Mount Saint Vincent University, April 2012); John Armstrong, "The Unwelcome Sacrifice: A Black Unit in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1917-1919." In *Polyethnic Armed Forces from the Time of the Habsburgs to the Age of the Superpowers* by N.F. Dreisziger (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1994), 178-197.

about the recruitment practices of the CEF in relation to racialized minorities, thus positioning it within the second thematic group. However, Armstrong also relies almost exclusively on examples from the No. 2 Construction Battalion, suggesting that his work could also fit within the third category.

Despite the overlap, each identifiably thematic category represents valuable scholarship in the field of race and racism in the CEF, and the history of racialized soldiers. General interest or survey texts, including recent works published by Brian Tennyson and Richard Holt, offer first and foremost, visibility to this understudied field. By positioning their discussions on racialized soldiers within broader narratives of soldiers during the First World War, Holt and Tennyson offer audiences a glimpse at the extraordinary circumstances surrounding the wartime service of racialized minorities. However, the downfall of these brief discussions is that they are often incomplete, and lack rigour, which on occasion has produced texts that do not recognize the racist attitudes directed towards Black Canadians. This is evident in Brian Tennyson's 2017 book *Nova Scotia at War, 1914-1919* which offers a reinterpretation of Nova Scotia's wartime contribution both on the home front and through sending its residents overseas. As Nova Scotia had one of the largest pre-war populations of Black residents, and was where the No. 2 Construction Battalion was formed, Tennyson spends some time recounting the experiences of Black Nova Scotians. However, his conversation is brief, a mere eight pages, and it lacks nuance in its analysis of Black wartime experiences. Tennyson does identify two critical questions: first, the tension between legacy of segregation and the feelings of pride among white Nova Scotians, and second, why a

segregated unit (the No.2 Construction Battalion) was created during a time when the CEF was ordering all units to accept Black recruits. Rather than pursuing these interesting lines of questioning, Tennyson simply states: “people did not notice the contradiction” and that “the records offer no explanations”, both statements prove false when compared to the findings of other historians include John Armstrong, Calvin Ruck, and James Walker.⁸ Furthermore, despite acknowledging the problems that arise from calling a segregated unit an inclusive initiative, Tennyson still concludes by saying “...white Nova Scotians [today] appear to be proud that their ancestors displayed such progressive thinking.”⁹ Despite being a relatively new text, Tennyson’s book simply republishes previous knowledge and fails to reshape the narrative in any substantial way.

A similar critique is possible when considering another example of recent scholarship that engages with material on racialized soldiers. Richard Holts’ *Filling the Ranks* (2017) addresses the topic of recruitment policies and racialized soldiers in a mere four pages and argues that the attempts made by senior military leadership to avoid outright racism outweighs the results of their inaction and insufficient policies. Unlike Tennyson, however, Holt fails to acknowledge the tension between a policy of inclusivity and forcing Black soldiers into a segregated unit.¹⁰ Because

⁸ Tennyson, 120-121.

⁹ Tennyson, 120.

¹⁰ For example, there was an incident with the No. 1 Construction Battalion, where the Commanding Officer of that unit requested that the segregated unit not be named the No. 2 Construction Battalion as it raised concerns and feelings of resentment among the white men serving in the No. 1 Battalion who did not want to be associated with a Black unit. Militia HQ denied the request and told the Commanding Officer that it was his duty to ensure that the men in the No. 1 knew that the Black recruits were Canadian citizens and comrades in arms in the war effort. Holt uses this example to demonstrate how senior leadership defended the rights of Black soldiers to serve, but never is there a discussion or

he does not identify this tension, Holt is highly critical of other historians, stating that examples of rejected Black recruits are used by historians “to demonstrate universal racism”, and that contemporary historians have ignored “the effects [made] to ensure that blacks were able to enlist.”¹¹ Rather than engaging with these texts further, Holt concludes his discussion on Black recruits by attempting to explain why some Black recruits experienced difficulties during enlistment, and why the concept of Black platoons failed to gain traction. He states:

prejudice certainly existed, but there were military considerations as well...Commanding officers were (and still are) very busy people. Reorganizing the battalion to accommodate a black platoon...was another burden that the Commanding Officer would do without. The platoon might have advanced the status of blacks within Canada, but it would have also added complication for the overworked commanding officers striving to complete their battalions.¹²

While there is no question that Commanding Officers were busy and that they had a challenging job, the notion that the easing of responsibility is a sufficient enough reason to defend racist actions by these men should alarm modern readers and highlight the controversial and contested nature of Holt’s assertions.

In contrast to these general or survey texts, a small number of scholarly pieces specifically address the treatment of racialized soldiers. This is the second identifiably thematic stream in the literature. The foundational text in this field is James W. Walker’s “Race and Recruitment in World War I”. Published in 1989, this article remains one of the most comprehensive studies on the experiences of

an acknowledgement that perhaps these men should have served in integrated construction battalions or infantry units. See Holt, 74.

¹¹ Holt, 73-74.

¹² Holt, 75.

racialized minorities during their recruitment and subsequent service with the CEF. Walker argues “The experiences of ‘visible’ minorities in World War I illustrates the nature of Canadian race sentiment early in this [20th] century. Most abruptly, it demonstrates that white Canadians participated in the Western ideology of racism.”¹³ He also emphasises the links between Canadian and British notions of race, arguing that for Canadian society, race was also connected to the concept of empire and imperial identity, resulting in the notion that the First World War was a “white man’s war”, and that the integration of non-whites into the CEF would dilute the capabilities of the military to fulfill its duty in defence of empire. As a result of these linkages, Walker concludes that “Canada’s war effort was impeded by prejudices for which there were no Canadian foundations.”¹⁴

Since its publication, Walker’s excellent article has been joined by several other pieces of scholarship, including several dissertations, and a 2016 article by Melissa Shaw.¹⁵ Shaw diverges slightly from Walker’s understanding of Canadian racism within the context of British identity and approaches the issue through a lens of understanding the creation of Black identity. She demonstrates how Black Canadians developed race consciousness through their wartime experiences, and how that consciousness was carried through the war into the post-war era, prompting an increase in Black activism through the 1920s. Like Walker, Shaw’s article represents a critical piece in the building of a complete understanding of Black wartime experiences. However, Shaw and Walker’s work focus heavily on the

¹³ Walker, “Race and Ethnicity,” 25.

¹⁴ Walker, “Race and Ethnicity,” 1-3; 22-23, 25.

¹⁵ Including work by Sean Foyn and Danielle Pittman. See Ch. 1, footnote 7 for citations.

process of recruitment and stop short of investigating how Black soldiers were treated once they entered military service. This is where the third thematic category enters into the historiographic record.

This final group of sources specifically addresses the No. 2 Construction Battalion—the only segregated unit in the CEF during the First World War. The No. 2 Construction Battalion was established in 1916 in Nova Scotia and served as a labour company in France for the last two years of the war. The Battalion's legacy is mixed; while upheld as an example of racial inclusivity and progress in early 20th century Canada, many scholars point out the existence of a segregated unit is the ultimate evidence of inclusivity. Thus, the formation and deployment of the Battalion is often criticized, though the authors of these texts make clear that their criticisms of the No. 2 Construction Battalion are not meant to denigrate the respect and honour earned by these soldiers through their wartime service. Rather, these authors criticize how these soldiers were treated by the CEF as an institution, by military leadership, and by their fellow soldiers. The first study of the No. 2 Construction Battalion was published in 1987 by Calvin Ruck, who saw his book not as a tool for academics, but rather “to honour, and pay tribute to, the forgotten, unknown and unsung Black veterans of World War One.”¹⁶ Some thirty years after its publication, and despite his intentions, his book is an invaluable tool for scholars, as it draws together information from official military records, newspapers, oral testimonies, and images to provide a rich record of the unit. Shortly after Ruck published his book, historian John Armstrong published a piece that also addressed

¹⁶ Ruck, “Preface”.

the experiences of the soldiers in the No. 2 Construction Battalion. Armstrong does not make an explicit argument in his piece; rather, the documents and evidence he presents in his work demonstrate that despite their capabilities, Black recruits were treated as second-class soldiers. For example, Armstrong points to attempts made by senior leadership to send the to expediate the deployment of the No. 2 Battalion by sending it overseas on a private ship without naval escort despite the serious threat posed by submarines. While the Royal Canadian Navy did not agree to this request, it points to attitudes held by some towards the presence of a Black unit in the CEF.¹⁷

While this selection of texts on racialized Black Canadian soldiers in the First World War is small, it is much greater than the existing scholarship addressing the Black Canadian experiences in Second World War. There is a significant body of literature that addresses questions surrounding the recruitment and service of other racialized minorities, including Chinese Canadians, Japanese Canadians and Indigenous peoples, this body of work has not yet grown to include the experiences of Black Canadians.¹⁸ The majority of texts that address the question of Black soldiers in the Second World War only do so in passing as a part of a larger discussion about minorities during wartime, and rarely do these texts delve into the question of the policies that governed the recruitment and service of Black

¹⁷ See Armstrong, 187.

¹⁸ Examples of such texts include: Roy Ito, *We Went to War: The Story of Japanese Canadians Who Served During the First and Second World Wars* (1984); Peter Neary, “Zenosuke Inouye’s Land: A Canadian Veterans Affairs Dilemma: (2004); Lyle Dick, “Sergeant Masumi Mitsui and the Japanese Canadian War Memorial” (2010); Judy Maxwell, *A Cause Worth Fighting for: Chinese Canadians Debate Their Participation in the Second World War* (2005); Scott Sheffield, “Of Pure European Descent and of the White Race: Recruitment Policy an Aboriginal Canadians, 1939-1945” (2010); Scott Sheffield, *The Red Man’s on the Warpath: The Image of the “Indian” and the Second World War* (2005); Fred Gaffen, *Forgotten Soldiers* (2008).

Canadians.¹⁹ One of the only texts to do so is a 2015 article by historian Mathias Joost, and while the focus is on the policies of the air force, Joost does spend time establishing the policies of the army and navy as points of comparison.²⁰ While its scope is limited, Joost's article is the most comprehensive review of the policies that dictated the recruitment of racialized minorities into the military during the Second World War available to scholars to date.

The lack of secondary source material raises interesting questions about the focus and priorities of the narratives that dominate the literature on Canada's Second World War. One possible explanation is that more attention is given to understanding the First World War in the Canadian context as a result of the segregated No. 2 Construction Battalion. A second possible explanation is found through an exploration of Canada's complicated history with racism and racial prejudice, which is a history that is often downplayed in the national narrative. Ultimately, a satisfactory answer to why Black soldiers in the Second World War do not feature more prominently in the historical narrative is hard to pin down. Nevertheless, thinking about this question is an interesting mental exercise for understanding how scholars construct their own research questions and fields of study.

¹⁹ See for example, Jack Granatstein, "Ethnic and Religious Enlistment in Canada during the Second World War," *Canadian Jewish Studies*, vol. 2 (2013): 174-180; Daniel T. Byers, *Zombie Army: The Canadian Army and Conscription in the Second World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016).

²⁰ Mathias Joost, "Racism and Enlistment: The Second World War Policies of the Royal Canadian Air Force," *Canadian Military History* vol. 21, no. 1 (2015): 17-34. For his discussion on the Canadian Military's policies, see pp. 19-22.

When taken as a collective, the scholarship addressing the wartime experiences of Black Canadians provides a solid base for understanding wartime experiences from the First World War but leaves substantial gaps in understanding the Second World War era. Additionally, both the broad survey works and the more focused pieces of scholarship, largely take a top-down approach. Their focus is on the military as an institution and on policy development and debates around the “issue” of Black soldiers. While this is certainly a worthy aspect for consideration, it does not address how these policies affected the war-time experiences of soldiers, nor does it consider the post-war consequences of these policies. Similarly, the substantial attention given to the No. 2 Construction Battalion serves to obscure the voices of Black soldiers who served in other units, combat or otherwise.²¹ For audiences unfamiliar with the CEF and Canada during the First World War, the scholarship and popular portrayal of the No. 2 Battalion can often lead audiences to the assumption that the No. 2 Battalion contained the sole representatives of Black soldiers in the CEF. This assumption is supported by public discourse and the presentation of the No. 2 Construction Battalion as the *Black Battalion* [author emphasis] by organizations such as Veterans Affairs Canada, and by media outlets.²²

²¹ Scholars estimate that there were approximately 2,000 Black Canadians who served in the First World War. Approximately 600 soldiers served with the No. 2 Construction Battalion throughout the war. The remained 1400 served in many different positions, including positions within combat units, engineering units, logistical positions, medical services, etc. See Armstrong, footnote 10; Veterans Affairs Canada, “Black Canadians in Uniform- A Proud Tradition: History”, Government of Canada, last modified 14 February 2019.

²² For example, see Jessica Leeder, “Black on the Battlefield: Canada’s forgotten First World War battalion”, *The Globe and Mail* (9 November 2018); Keith Doucette, “Nova Scotia Celebrates 100th Anniversary of all-Black No. 2 Construction Battalion”, *CBC: The Canadian Press* (8 March 2016); Jon Tattrie, “Pictou celebrating No. 2 Construction Battalion on 100th Anniversary”, *CBC News* (5 July 2016).

This critique of the scholarship is no way intended to detract from the wartime service of these men. The attention their service has received is well-deserved. However, the continued focus on the No. 2 Construction Battalion to the near exclusion of all other Black narratives needs to be addressed, and the noticeable silence around the Second World War needs to be filled in order for a more complete understanding of Black wartime service to emerge.

This report builds on the scholarship addressed above and attempts to begin filling the noted gaps by bringing the focus of the discussion to the wartime service of two Black combat soldiers—the aforementioned Private James Eatman who served during the First World War, and his son, Sergeant Arthur Eatman who served during the Second World War. This report combs their respective personnel service files, official unit war diaries, and the official military histories compiled by the Government of Canada, to shed light on and identify new questions about the complicated and ambiguous relationship between Canada's military institutions and racialized minorities. Similarly, it is also an opportunity for this discussion to dig beneath the realm of political debate and controversy, in search of the human implications and cost of these policy decisions.

Certainly, there are some limitations to the primary sources identified above. Personnel service files, for example, contain a wealth of information about next of kin connections, wartime movement, administration, medical status, and training of soldiers and their military life, but they do not include the type of personal information needed to investigate their unique experience. This is due, in part, to the fact that service files served a very particular purpose within the military institution,

therefore certain information was simply never recorded. As such, these service files reveal the institution's perspectives on individual Canadian military members rather than individual personal stories and experiences. However, if the documents are examined not just as records of soldiers, but also as records of racialized people, then these service files can shed partial light on some facets of what individuals may have experienced, institutional policy, and society values that are otherwise marginalized within historical conversations. Unit war diaries can speak more directly to the experiences of soldiers, but only in a collective sense. Typically, individual soldiers are not named in unit war diaries, unless there were the subject of some conspicuous activity.²³ As a result, the utility of war diaries lies in providing broader context to frame the specific information found within personnel files.

In the two chapters that follow, use will be made of both James' and Arthur's service files and their respective unit's war diaries to reconstruct their individual wartime experiences, and to gain greater understanding of institutional policies towards race in the military. Both of their stories provide unique perspectives on how military policy influenced the wartime trajectory and service of Black Canadian soldiers during two different conflicts. These two chapters, one dedicated to each soldier's wartime experience, are followed by a conclusion discussion addressing the legacy of the wartime service of Black Canadians, and avenues for future research.

²³ Disciplinary actions, commendations, deaths (especially of officers) are all examples of times when individual soldiers might be named in a unit war diary.

Chapter 2:

Private James Eatman: a Soldier of the First World War

Very little is known about James prior to his enlistment with the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF). He was born on 14 March 1882 to Major and Hannah Eatman, of Elm Hill, Queens' Country, New Brunswick.¹ James was still living in Fredericton when he married his wife Thursa on 6 June 1904. The couple had eight children together: six prior to the war and two after.²

Few other details about James' life prior to the war are evident in his military service file but what his file lacks in detail concerning his civilian life, it makes up for by providing a rich and detailed outline of his movements throughout the war. James enlisted on 28 December 1915 as a private soldier with the 104th Battalion, out of Sussex New Brunswick, only six days after the unit was authorized.³ His medical examination noted a man of average height and build, five foot eight inches with a chest measurement of thirty-three inches. His recorded brown eyes, black hair, and dark complexion hinted at his race without being explicit. However, a note

¹ In his file, James listed his father's name as Major. For now, it is assumed that his was his Christian given name, as it is the only name James identified. See LAC, Canadian Expeditionary Forces Personnel Files 1914-1918: Private James Wallace Eatman, "Attestation Sheet" 817469. RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 2812-13. (Referenced here after as Personnel File: James Eatman).

² In paperwork completed by James in June 1916, prior to his embarkation for England, he lists his children with their respective ages. Thelma Leon, age 12; Dubert Mansfield, age 8; Henry, age 6; Mabel, age 4; and Blanche, age 1. His seventh child, Arthur Wallace, was born on 20 May 1920, 11 months after James returned home from the war. Arthur Eatman would go on to serve in the Carleton and York Regiment in the Second World War. In Arthur's military file, he identified another sibling- Hilda Rosebud. See LAC, Service Files of the Second World War- War Dead, 1939-1947: Sergeant Arthur Wallace Eatman, G18010. RG 24, Volume 25803, Item 10283. In Arthur's file, she is listed as deceased as of 14 January 1942, circumstances of death unknown.

³ Personnel File: James Eatman, "Attestation Sheet."

reading “negro” made under the heading *Marks indication Congenital Peculiarities or Previous Disease* speaks more explicitly to the reality faced by many black men attempting to enlist with the CEF.⁴ Though, it is worth emphasising that not all Black soldiers’ personnel files contained such a notation.

Under the military recruitment policy laid out in October 1915 by the Adjutant-General the decision to allow any potential recruit into a CEF “Overseas” Battalion rested with the unit’s Commanding Officer.⁵ This system, perhaps unorthodox by today’s standards, was a result of the uneasy transition the CEF underwent from a pre-war militia structure into a wartime military force. The CEF, for better and for worse, remained closely tied to the Non-Permanent Active Militia (NPAM) when it came to recruitment and mobilization.⁶ Under Sam Hughes, the Minister of Militia and Defence for the first several years of the war, the CEF retained a decentralized recruitment structure. The country was divided into nine military divisions/districts, each with its own headquarters that oversaw recruitment and training for all “Overseas” units and soldiers within their respective geographic areas.⁷ These divisions and districts reported to the centralized Militia Headquarters,

⁴ This note appears on his medical history sheet, originally dated on 28 December 1915.

⁵ As cited in Holt, 73.

⁶ Several scholars perpetuate this argument. See, for example, Holt, 3; Jack Granatstein, *Canada’s Army: Waging War and Keeping the Peace* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011) 53-95; Desmond Morton, *A Military History of Canada: From Champlain to Kosovo, 4th Edition* (Toronto: McClelland, Inc, 1999) 130-145.

⁷ Division areas included: 1st Division area with headquarters in London, Ontario. 2nd Division area with headquarters in Toronto, Ontario. 3rd Division area with headquarters in Kingston, Ontario. 4th Division area with headquarters in Montreal, Quebec. 5th Division area with headquarters in Quebec City, Quebec. 6th Division area with headquarters in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Districts include: Military District 10 with headquarters in Winnipeg. Military District 11 with headquarters in Victoria, British Columbia. Military District 13 with headquarters in Edmonton, Alberta.

which suffered from several structural problems that impeded its ability to operate successfully, most notably immense understaffing. Division Headquarters faced similar problems, and as a result, oversight for recruitment and training largely fell to individual Commanding Officers.⁸

This system meant that the process of recruitment was uneven throughout the country, and throughout the war. The Department of Militia and Defence established and circulated national recruitment criteria for service eligibility. These criteria included things like fitting within a specific age range, minimum height, minimum weight, vision and dental health, and proof of Canadian citizenship and British subjecthood.⁹ This last criterion—British subjecthood—was the most fluid of the official criteria throughout the war. Originally, it was thought that because the CEF drew from pre-war militiamen, a citizen requirement was not necessary as all militiamen were already British subjects based on militia recruitment standards. However, as the war progressed, there was an increased number of non-British subjects attempting to enlist, thus necessitating the creation of a formal policy. The formal policy, however, was unclear and lacked specificity, leading to much confusion as to who was and was not a British subject. As a result, many Commanding Officers simply chose to ignore the policy, especially as manpower became an increasingly big issue for the CEF. Of course, there were also unofficial

⁸ Holt, 17-18.

⁹ For a full discussion on recruitment criteria, see Holt, 55-71. See also A.F. Duguid, “Telegram, Attorney General to District Commanders, 6th August 1914: Conditions of Enlistment” in *Official History of the Canadian Forces in the Great War, 1914-1919 General Series, Vol.1, Part II: Chronologies, Appendices and Maps*, (Ottawa, King’s Printer, 1938), 37.

criteria, of which race was the most prominent and problematic for many Commanding Officers.¹⁰ Technically speaking, as long as soldiers could provide proof of Canadian citizenship and British subjecthood, they could not be denied recruitment based on their race.¹¹ However, in practice, the lack of oversight from both Division Headquarters and Militia Headquarters meant that Commanding Officers routinely turned a blind eye to recruitment criteria both official and unofficial. As such, the fate of Black recruits rested upon the biases and beliefs of those at recruiting centres or medical boards who had the power to arbitrarily decide that soldiers were unfit for military service. The issue of Black recruits was one of contention throughout the war, and drew the attention of Samuel Hughes, among others, on several occasions, and caused some significant discussion among senior officials within Militia H.¹² While emphasis was placed on the need for indiscriminate recruitment policies throughout the war, an example of a situation when a commanding officer was punished for refusing Black recruits has yet to come to light.

In James' case, inclusion of the word "negro" in his file is particularly interesting as it raises several questions about the motivation and meaning behind the notation. Of course, assessing motive is a difficult task. The medical officer responsible for James' examination was Captain David D. Freeze, a Fredericton physician who had previously served with the Canadian Militia. A survey of other personnel files signed by Captain Freeze failed to produce another example where

¹⁰ The ambiguity in the wording of the written recruitment policy, along with significant disagreement between senior officials, meant that commanding officers were often left to decipher and interpret recruitment requirements on an individual basis, given their own personal beliefs and opinions. See Holt, 71-72.

¹¹ See Holt, 67.

¹² See Walker (1989) and Armstrong for summaries of these discussions.

he indicated a specific racial category or description on a medical examination sheet, making James' file unique.¹³ There are several possible explanations—without an image of James, there is no way of telling how dark his skin tone was, therefore the notation might simply be a way of indicating James' racial heritage. But that explanation leaves the question of why his race was noted if military regulations did not require it. There are two sub-sections on a medical examination sheet where a medical office could put additional comments about a soldier's fitness. Subsection A reads "Marks indicating congenital peculiarities or previous diseases" while subsection B reads "Slight defects but not significant to cause rejection". Any information recorded in this subsection A could be used to determine medical fitness and deny a soldier enlistment while information in subsection B could not. Freeze made his notation concerning James' race in subsection A. So, while it is difficult to assess motivation, a prosaic explanation is that Freeze could find no medical fault with James but still felt it necessary to make clear that James' race might impact his ability to be an effective soldier.

Despite this notation, James was permitted to enlist with the 104th Battalion. It is interesting to note that only a month prior, in November 1915, a group of twenty Black soldiers from Saint John were denied entry into the 104th Battalion

¹³ The nominal role for the 104th Battalion when it sailed overseas indicates that there were 1,173 number of men, officers and other ranks. A survey of approximately 250 personnel files from these soldiers yielded 58 files that were signed for by Captain Freeze. Of those soldiers, 15 were listed as having a dark complexion. None of the personnel files surveyed contained any racialized language or notation similar to the notation found in James' file. The only notations found in the files surveyed reference things like tattoos, scars, flat feet and poor veins. See LAC, Canadian Expeditionary Force Nominal Roles: 104th Infantry Battalion, RG9-II-B-3, Volume 79, Item 11.

after being medically cleared for service. The soldiers reportedly travelled from Saint John to report to the 104th, which was stationed at a military camp Sussex. Only when they arrived, they were not permitted to join, and were told instead to join the No. 2 Construction Battalion.¹⁴ Therefore, the question that remains is if others were denied, why was James permitted to enlist with the 104th Battalion? Records from the 104th Battalion are unfortunately scarce, raising more questions than answers.¹⁵ Regardless, James began his military career with the 104th Battalion in Sussex but stayed with this unit a very short time before being transferred to the 140th Battalion that mobilized out of Saint John. No reason was listed for this transfer, though it is worth noting that soldiers were frequently shuffled between units, in part due to the need to ensure that units were at full strength when they departed for Europe.¹⁶

James, along with the rest of the 140th Battalion left Halifax on 5 September 1916, aboard the *S.S. Corsica*, and disembarked eleven days later in Liverpool, England. Upon his arrival in England, the records briefly lose track of James. The 140th Battalion, though originally recruited for front-line service was dissolved in November 1916, and its members distributed to various reserve depots to be used as

¹⁴ Ruck, 10-11.

¹⁵ Some records do exist in local museums around New Brunswick, but what they add to this research has yet to be determined.

¹⁶ It is worth noting that in James' case, his transfer to the 140th Battalion meant an additional three months spent in Canada prior to being sent overseas. The 104th Battalion sailed at the end of June 1916, while the 140th Battalion did not sail until the end of September 1916. Without records from the 104th Battalion, it is difficult to say whether or not it sailed for Europe at full strength. If it did not, the question then becomes why did they transfer out a capable and medically fit soldier just prior to their embarkation to Europe? It is tempting to read into this as evidence of racial bias, but without more supporting evidence, it remains conjecture at best. Personnel File: James Eatman, "Medical Case Sheet", "Casualty Form- Active Service."

reinforcements.¹⁷ James' time in England was shorter than many of his comrades from the 140th however, as prior to the official dissolution of the 140th Battalion, James was once again transferred, this time to the 25th Battalion, otherwise known as the Halifax Rifles or the Nova Scotia Rifles. After only three weeks in England, during which time he passed through the main Canadian military training facility at Camp Shorncliffe, he disembarked for France. His records indicate his arrival at the Canadian Base Depot in La Harve on 29 October 1916, but rather than being despatched directly to his new unit, James was held in reserve and assigned to the 2nd Canadian Entrenching Battalion (2nd ENT Battalion).

Entrenching Battalions were reinforcing units where soldiers were held in immediate reserve until they were needed by their units.¹⁸ The 2nd ENT Battalion contained reserve for the 2nd Canadian Division, specifically the 4th, 5th, and 6th Canadian Infantry Brigades.¹⁹ Soldiers held in reserve with the Entrenching Battalions would be used for various work projects, including trench and road maintenance, burial parties, or carrying parties to bring supplies to units in the front. James' records indicate that he joined 2nd ENT Battalion on 19 November 1916. The

¹⁷ In the wake of the devastation caused by the campaigns on the Somme during the summer of 1916, both the Canadian and British militaries were in the process of enacting changes to their reserve and reinforcement structures in the fall of 1916. The 104th Battalion was among many Canadian units to be caught up in this change, resulting in its dismantlement. See G. Nicholson, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the First World War: Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1918* (Ottawa, Queen's Printer, 1964) 231-232; John Meek, *Over the Top! The Canadian Infantry in the First World War* (Ontario, 1971).

¹⁸ See LAC, "Guide to Sources Relating to Units of the Canadian Expeditionary Force: Entrenching Battalions" *Governments of Canada*. <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/Documents/entrenching%20battalions.pdf>

¹⁹ James' unit, the 25th Battalion, was a part of the 5th Canadian Infantry Brigade, along with the 22nd Battalion from Quebec, the 24th Battalion from Victoria, and the 26th Battalion from New Brunswick.

unit's War Diary confirms that they received a total of one hundred and ninety-six other ranks that day, sixty-six of whom were slated for the 25th Battalion.²⁰

According to the War Diary, the 2nd ENT Battalion was stationed in the area of Hersin, a small village approximately ten kilometers away from the Bully-Grenay area where the 25th Battalion was stationed, in the Lens-Arras sector. Given the nature of the remaining records, it is unclear exactly how often James would have been assigned to work parties, though a sampling of the records indicates that rarely a day passed when a party of other ranks was not led out by a Lieutenant only to return later in the evening.²¹ On the rare occasion when working parties were not sent out, or in instances when smaller working parties were needed, the War Diary records that soldiers not assigned to working details participated in training exercises, a subtle reminder that all the men would eventually make their way to a front-line infantry battalion.²²

James stayed in reserve with the 2nd ENT Battalion consistently for several months with the exception of a brief trip to the 4th Canadian Field Ambulance in late January 1917 due to hand abrasions.²³ He returned to the unit several days later

²⁰ War Diary: 2nd Entrenching Battalion, November 1916. RG 9-III- D-3, Vol. 5009, file 717. T10857-10858.

²¹ For example, the entry dated 25 November 1916 indicates that a Captain Burnhan took 140 other ranks to a supply yard in Coupigny to assist with differing wiring jobs, loading and unloading supplies from trench runs, while a Captain Doran took another 100 other ranks to assist with transporting rations. Both working parties returned between 1630h and 1730h. See War Diary: 2nd Entrenching Battalion, November 1916.

²² For example, the war diary entry dating 6 January 1917 states that approximately 340 men were sent out in various working parties, and that training took place for all other available officers and other ranks led by Major Deedes from 0800h-1200h, and again from 1400h-1600h. Similar notations are found throughout the unit's war diary record. See War Diary: 2nd Entrenching Battalion, January 1917.

²³ His file indicates he departed for the 4th Canadian Field Ambulance on 20 January 1917; the 2nd ENT Battalion War Diary records a decrease of strength occurring on 19 January of

without further incident. Finally, in early March 1917, James received notification that he was to be sent forward as reinforcement. He left the 2nd ENT Battalion on 8 March 1917 as part of a group totalling one hundred and twenty other ranks all bound for 25th Battalion; the party arrived at their new unit later that same day.²⁴

Having been battletested thoroughly by spring 1917, the 25th Battalion, like all Canadian units, was preparing for its upcoming role in the coming assault on Vimy Ridge as part of the British and Dominion spring offensive. From 11-14 March, the 25th Battalion rotated from its forward trench positions back into 5 Brigade support, and by 19 March, the 25th Battalion was placed in Division reserve in order to undergo a week-long training course that included bayonet fighting, gas and respirator training, and attack formation drill.²⁵

James received his first taste of combat at Vimy Ridge. The records seem clear that he was assigned to serve as an infantry soldier alongside white men, rather than in some other kind of segregated assignment. The events of that battle, including the role of the 25th Battalion have been recorded by numerous individuals since its occurrence, and thus do not need to be restated here.²⁶ The 25th Battalion sustained a high number of casualties during their assault at Vimy Ridge: fifty-two soldiers were killed, one hundred and twelve wounded and ninety missing in

4 members-1 killed and 3 wounded, 2 of whom were sent to Field Ambulance locations. As a clarifying note, the death that occurred – that of Private Newsam (847633) – was caused by an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound. The causes of the other injuries are not noted.

²⁴ War Diary: 2nd Entrenching Battalion, March 1917; War Diary: 25th Battalion, March 1917. RG 9-III- D-3, Vol. 4933, file 417. T-10735.

²⁵ War Diary: 25th Battalion, March 1917, Appendix D.

²⁶ See Robert Clements, Brian D. Tennyson, *Merry Hell: The story of the 25th Battalion (Nova Scotia Regiment), Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1919*, (Toronto; University of Toronto Press, 2013); Tennyson, *Nova Scotia at War*, among others.

action.²⁷ But despite these casualty numbers, James came through his first combat experience physically unscathed. In the weeks following, the 25th continued to alternate between time spent in reserve in the village of Neuville St. Vast and time spent in front line trench positions in the Arleux-Mericourt-Avion area. Even though he emerged from Vimy without injury, the toll of trench duty and even the training and working parties that the unit took part in when in reserve eventually caught up with James. On 19 May 1917, his file indicated he was transferred to the 4th Canadian Field Ambulance with myalgia – a term used to indicate stiffness and pain due to muscular or joint strain. It was not an uncommon occurrence for soldiers to fall ill with minor ailments, especially given the damp living conditions and strain of the trenches. James' record then indicates he was transferred to No. 23 British Casualty Clearing Station, and then onto No. 3 Canadian General Hospital for treatment. He was discharged from hospital on 9 June 1917, and after passing through the Canadian Base Depot, was once again assigned to the 2nd ENT Battalion in reserve on 20 July 1917. Around the same time James was reacquainting himself with work duty at 2nd ENT Battalion, his comrades in the 25th were pulled out of line and put in reserve so they could train and prepare for the upcoming assault on Hill 70. James missed the intense fighting at Hill 70 and rejoined the 25th to replenish their losses after the 2nd Canadian Division was relieved in the line by the 3rd

²⁷ Clements, Tennyson; "The Nova Scotia Rifles 25th Battalion", *Flags for Vimy Project, the Gregg Centre for the Study of War and Society* (University of New Brunswick): <https://www.unb.ca/initiatives/vimyridge/25th-battalion.html>

Division on 22/23 August.²⁸ This was followed by a prolonged period of rest, reconstitution, and training in a division reserve position.

Despite having just returned to the 25th Battalion after an extended medical leave, James was granted ten days personal leave, from 1-10 September. It is unclear where he went on leave, though his file indicates he stayed in France, and he reported back to the 25th Battalion on 9 September.²⁹ Approximately a week later, the unit was moved from its Division reserve position, and put back in the line in the area around Mont St. Eloi in the Vimy-Lens sector.³⁰ They stayed there for approximately a month, rotating between reserve billet and trench duty, at which point they were once again pulled from the line with the entire Canadian Corps in order to travel north and join in the next phase of the 3rd Ypres offensive at Passchendaele. The 25th Battalion, along with the rest of 2nd Canadian Division formed part of the second Canadian assault there that captured Passchendaele Ridge in early November. The 25th War Diary offers a glimpse at the conditions that James would have experienced during this offensive. Entries from 5-7 November all indicate the German artillery fire was consistent, and heavy at times, and the Germans were concentrating fire around mule and cart pathways and supply dumps. The muddy ground helped absorb some of the shell fire and keep the effects

²⁸ It is unclear from James' file exactly what date he departed from the 2nd ENT Battalion for his unit, though his record indicates he was back with his unit by 25 August. The war diary for the 2nd ENT Battalion confirms that between 20-22 August, 130 other ranks were sent to the 25th Battalion, any one of whom could have been James. See War Diary: 2nd Entrenching Battalion, August 1917.

²⁹ An interesting question with reference to James' leave is to consider what his experiences in were dealing with France's civilian population. What did France look like for a racialized person, and a racialized Allied soldier during the war? And how did James' experiences compare with those of his white comrades?

³⁰ War Diary: 25th Battalion, September 1917 "Appendix".

localized which helped keep casualty rates low.³¹ On the 6th of November, the 25th Battalion was in a reserve position, and a part of fifty was sent out to carry supplies to the front line, held by the 26th Battalion at that time. The next day, 7 November, the 25th was ordered to move forward and relieve the 26th Battalion; this process began at 1730h and was complete by 0130h on 8 November. The 25th was relieved approximately twenty-four hours later. Casualty rates for those three days were listed as: 6 November, two other ranks killed, one officer and one other rank wounded; 7-8 November, seventeen killed, sixty-seven wounded, and six missing.³² During that intense and trying battle, James suffered extensive shrapnel wounds to his right shoulder and head. While his name is not listed in the war diary, his file indicates that James sustained his injury on 6 November, which corresponds with the one other rank soldiers listed as wounded in action. The Battle of Passchendaele marked the end of his front-line experience as he spent the rest of his war recovering from his wounds.

Similar to other service files from the First World War, the majority of James' service file is dedicated to his medical treatment and recovery. While the records are extensive there are gaps in the information. After being wounded on 6 November, records indicate he passed through a Casualty Clearing Station (CCS), and the care of 6th Canadian Field Ambulance before he was moved back to No. 20 General Hospital.³³ There are a few inconsistencies in his record concerning the

³¹ War Diary: 25th Battalion, 5-6 November 1917.

³² War Diary: 25th Battalion, 6-8 November 1917.

³³ The No. 20 General Hospital served as one of the largest combat hospitals in France. Operated mostly by the British, it was located in the Camiers region along the northwestern

dates of all these events, which is not surprising. Intake forms from one of his hospital stays indicate that no one is sure how he arrived at the CCS, appearing there approximately fourteen hours after the attack on Passchendaele began.³⁴ At the CCS, several pieces of shrapnel were removed from his shoulder. The obvious question that lingers from his time at the CCS is how he got there. There are several possibilities including that he walked there himself, and considering that he sustained a head injury, it is possible he fell unconscious on the battlefield and either walked or was ferried by stretcher bearers after the battle. Unfortunately, his file does not indicate which one of the several CCS located around Passchendaele James was at, so finding more information is challenging.³⁵

Five days after being injured, more shrapnel was removed from James' his back and head, while at while at No. 20 General Hospital. How James arrived at the No. 20 General Hospital is unclear due to the confusion over his time at the CCS, however it is clear that he was transferred through the 6th Canadian Field Ambulance and arrived at the General Hospital around 11 November.³⁶ His stay there was not long as he was quickly invalided to England aboard the hospital transport ship *HMS*

coast of France, offering easy transport access for soldiers who needed to be billeted back to England for further treatment.

³⁴ Personnel File: James Eatman, "Medical Case Sheet."

³⁵ There were multiple CCS positioned around Passchendaele run both by the Canadians and the British, including several located within the 5th Brigade's and 2nd Canadian Division's area of operations. However, records from these units are scarce and were rarely kept on the patients themselves. Conflicting statements in James' file only adds to the mystery as some records indicate that he did not even spend time at a CCS, and instead was transported directly to No. General Hospital from 6th Canadian Field Ambulance, bypassing the CCS altogether. See Personnel File: James Eatman "Casualty Form- Active Service", "Medical Case Sheet- No. 4 Canadian General Hospital"

³⁶ The No. 20 General Hospital was primarily a British military instillation adjacent to the main Canadian hospital which was located in Etaples, France.

St. Denis.³⁷ He was admitted to 1st Western General Hospital, a Liverpool civilian hospital that was transformed into a military installation during wartime. His intake paper shows that he arrived in Liverpool on 15 November and spent thirty-six days in hospital there before being transferred to No. 4 General Canadian Hospital, located in Basingstoke, in December 1917. His records from No. 4 GCH indicate that his head wound was fully healed, but his shoulder continued to cause him significant pain. This prompted yet another transfer to Granville Canadian Specialty Hospital, located in Derbyshire, which specialized in orthopaedic injuries. James spent one hundred and twenty-four days in Granville, and was finally discharged on 6 June 1918, after passing a medical examination board that found him fit for duty in certain non-combat roles in accordance with the new medical classification system being employed by the CAMC.³⁸

James' file contains intake papers from all of his lengthy hospital stays, as well as medical case sheets that provide extensive insight into his treatment plans, his progress towards the normal use of his shoulder, and his pain levels, among other things. While difficult to read in places, his file gives no indication that the

³⁷ The inconsistency of dates is not surprising. Intake forms from one of his hospital stays indicate that no one is sure how he arrived at the CCS, appearing there approximately 14 hours after the attack on Passchendaele began. At the CCS, several pieces of shrapnel were removed from his shoulder. The record goes on to state that 5 days later, while at No. 20 General Hospital, more shrapnel was removed from his back and head.

³⁸ A brief note on the classification system used to determine fitness for duty: under the reorganized structure of the CAMC in 1917, a new classification system for assessing soldiers was established that identified five categories. James fell into Category B: Fit for Duty but not in front-line units. For the full description of this classification, see Andrew Macphail, *Official History of the Canadian Forces in the Great War, 1914-1919: The Medical Services*, (Ottawa; Anland, 1925): 211-212.

standard of care James received was in any way diminished because of his race.³⁹ This is not only encouraging but raises some interesting questions about how his treatment in military hospitals compared to the practices of public hospitals at the time.⁴⁰

Following his release from Granville Hospital James was attached to the 2nd CCD in Bramshott, though it is unclear from his file what this acronym stands for. There are two plausible translations— 2nd Canadian Convalescent Depot, or the 2nd Canadian Command Depot; both were places where recovered soldiers would wait and train before distribution to other units. James was with 2nd CCD for approximately a month before being attached briefly to the Nova Scotia Regimental Depot (NSRD). Following his injury and in order to remove him from the nominal roll of the 25th Battalion, James was posted to the NSRD in November 1917.⁴¹ As such, he needed to be returned to the depot in order to be formally be struck off strength from the 25th Battalion and its reserve system, as he was not cleared for combat duty. By 25 July 1918, he was removed from the NSRD and taken on strength with the Canadian Army Medical Corps (CAMC) Depot, in Shorncliffe.⁴² The CAMC Depot held recovering soldiers in reserve and reassigned them based on their medical fitness for service.⁴³

³⁹ See Personnel File: James Eatman, “Medical Case Sheet- No. 4 Canadian General Hospital”, “Medical Case Sheet- 1st Western General Hospital”, and “Medical Case Sheet- Granville Canadian Specialty Hospital.”

⁴⁰ While outside the scope of this research project, his question is to be addressed in further research.

⁴¹ Personnel File: James Eatman, “Casualty Form, Active Service.”

⁴² Personnel File: James Eatman, “Casualty Form, Active Service.”

⁴³ Macphail, 204-208.

James spent very little time with CAMC Depot, before being again transferred on 1 August 1918, to the Canadian Specialty Hospital Etchinghill. This is perhaps the most perplexing part of his file. Unlike James' previous trips to various hospitals, no admission or treatment records from Etchinghill are found in his file which is puzzling in light of the fact Etchinghill was a specialty hospital for treating venereal disease cases among soldiers. Adding to this mystery is the length of time he spent at Etchinghill: his file indicates that he was taken on strength on 1 August 1918, and that he remained there until 9 May 1919. When he was finally transferred to the CAMC Casualty Company, James had spent just over eight months at Etchinghill, and there are very few indications as to what he was doing. The most likely explanation is that he was employed by the CAMC and was working at Etchinghill, and not a patient. There is some evidence to support this idea. When he was declared Fit for Duty under Category B, one of the recommended tasks for these men was employment at base units within the medical service.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the War Diary from the CAMC Depot indicates that on 1 August, thirty individuals of other rank were dispersed to medical facilities throughout England for service.⁴⁵ One final piece of evidence supporting this is James' pay record which indicate that beginning in August 1918 and continuing through to May 1919, his pay was being distributed by Etchinghill Hospital. Furthermore, there is no documentation of the pay deduction levied against all

⁴⁴ Macphail, 212.

⁴⁵ Wary Diary: Canadian Army Medical Corps Depot, August 1918. 1915/08-1919/04: RG 9-III- D-3, Vol. 5039, file 873. T-10930.

soldiers being treated for venereal disease.⁴⁶ Given this evidence, it is likely that James was indeed working at Etchingill, though the type of work he was doing is not specified in his records.

In May 1919, James was transferred to the CAMC Casualty Company. From there, he was issued his orders to return to Canada. On 23 May, the entire CAMC Casualty Company moved from their position in Bexhill to Camp Witley, which was the site for the majority of demobilization efforts by this time.⁴⁷ While Witley experienced a number of riots and a fair bit of violence in May and June 1919, James' file gives no indication that he was involved. The final entry on his service record indicates that, he embarked on the *SS Baltic* in Liverpool on 26 June 1919 for passage home to Canada. His short-form discharge papers indicate that he was released from the CEF on 5 July 1919 after he had served a total of forty-two months and eight days.

Surveying all the information available on James Eatman, there is very little that can conclusively be said about how his race factored upon his military experience. The first section of his record, detailing his time spent with the 104th and 140th Battalion do raise some questions about the extent to which his race prompted a unit transfer, and the extent to which he battled the prejudices of local Commanding Officers and medical officers, but there are no concrete comments concerning his race. Meanwhile, the second section of his file dealing with his service overseas and medical treatment is also broadly devoid of comments about

⁴⁶ Personnel File: James Eatman, "Pay Records."

⁴⁷ War Diary: Canadian Army Medical Corps Casualty Company, May 1919. 1918/08-1919/05: RG 9-III-D-3, Vol. 5039, file 873. T-1093.

his race influencing his experience. From all the details gathered from his file and war diaries every indication suggests that James was a regular private.⁴⁸ There is no indication concerning what company of the 25th Battalion he belonged to, nor is there any indication about the work details he was assigned to while with the 2nd ENT Battalion which makes tracking his experience difficult, but the lack of specificity points to the conclusion that his experience was that of a regular private. Unless a soldier committed an offense, was awarded commendation, or was tied to some other extraordinary circumstance, rarely were those details recorded in military files, especially for other ranks. If he had been an officer or a senior non-commissioned officer (NCO) more details might be included in his file, but even that is not a guarantee. Even in his own file, there are very few details to suggest that his race was a great deterrent to equal treatment. Field conduct sheets indicate there were never any issues -- the three entries in the file all read “no entries” and his character was listed as “very good”.⁴⁹ The general picture that emerges from these records is one of James as an ordinary private in Nova Scotia’s most famous First World War infantry unit, and this perhaps challenges the expectations of many who would anticipate finding indications of racist treatment directed towards James. However, these findings need to be treated carefully, and speak to a much larger question about the nature of military records and the process of reconstructing soldier experiences. An absence of evidence does not translate to evidence of an

⁴⁸ Here it is worth noting that the war diaries consulted thus far include the 25th Battalion, the 2nd ENT Battalion, the 4th and 5th Canadian Field Ambulance, which James passed through on multiple occasions, the CAMC Depot and the 5th Canadian Infantry Brigade.

⁴⁹ Personnel File: James Eatman, “Company Conduct Sheet.”

absence. And in James' case, that the available evidence does not indicate racist treatment does not prove that racism did not exist, despite the efforts of some scholars to the contrary.

Certainly, evidence from James' file, particularly the notations from his medical examination, support the claim that the military as an institution, and those in positions of power in the military, were not colour blind. Race did matter, both in recruitment and in wartime service; the question is then, to what extent race mattered. Unfortunately, the ability of James' story to address these questions, particularly the role of race in combat is hampered both by his rank as a Private, but also due to the length of time he spent in hospital recovering from his wounds. These unanswered questions about combat experience form the content for the next chapter, which considers the wartime service of James' youngest son, Arthur.

Chapter 3

Sergeant Arthur Eatman: a Soldier of the Second World War

Arthur Wallace Eatman- “Duke”- was born ten months after his father’s return from overseas service, on 15 May 1920. Similar to his father, not a lot of information about known Duke prior to his enlistment is contained in his military file, though by the Second World War, a greater effort was made to record details such as pre-war education and employment history. Duke attended Charlotte Street School in Fredericton as part of an integrated class, and he attended school for several years, completing grade seven before leaving school at the age of fifteen.¹ He also attended a motor mechanics course and indicated on his enlistment form he intended to work as a mechanic following his wartime service. However, prior to his enlistment, his occupation was listed as a general labourer, and he identified lumbering as his primary occupation.² Based on information from his medical upon enlistment, Duke was in good health and was an athletic young man. Standing over six feet tall, with a chest measurement of forty inches, he was recommended for active duty.³

Duke enlisted on 3 September 1939, almost immediately after the order to mobilize was issued but before the official declaration of war against Germany. One has to wonder if his father’s experience in the First World War influenced at all Duke’s decision to enlist. It is certainly possible, and one of Duke’s brothers joined

¹ LAC, Service Files of the Second World War- War Dead, 1939-1947: Sergeant Arthur Wallace Eatman, “Occupational History Form”, G18010. RG 24, Volume 25803, Item 10283. Hence referred to as Personnel File: Arthur Eatman.

² Personnel File: Arthur Eatman, “Occupational History Form.”

³ Personnel File: Arthur Eatman, “Certificate of Medial Examination”; Lee Windsor, “A Black Leader of White Men: Sergeant Arthur Eatman”, Public Lecture, February 2012.

him in enlisting. Dubert, his eldest brother, served with the Canadian Forestry Corps for the duration of the war.⁴ Duke joined the Carleton and York Regiment (CYR), which was formed in December 1936 in New Brunswick's Saint John River Valley area during the restructuring of Canada's Non-Permanent Active Militia forces. It drew upon its heritage from the York Regiment and the Carleton Light Infantry, both units with their service roots in the First World War.⁵ Under the mobilization plan put into action in September 1939, the Carleton and York Regiment was one of the first NPAM units called up for the Second World War Canadian Active Service Force. The regiment immediately began recruiting members in order to bring the unit up to wartime requirements. Following his enlistment on 3 September, Duke joined the unit in Woodstock, where the expanding force received their kit and underwent preliminary training.⁶

The unit stayed in Woodstock for several weeks before moving down to Halifax, where it soon departed as part of 1st Canadian Division in the first contingent heading overseas. The Carleton and Yorks boarded the *SS Monarch of Bermuda* on 9 December and departed Halifax the next day.⁷ After a ten-day voyage, the unit arrived in Greenock, Scotland and boarded trains bound for their

⁴ His other brother, Henry, is more of a mystery. Duke's file indicates that as of October 1942, Henry was recorded as missing by the U.S Government from Virginia Air Base. See Personnel File: Arthur Eatman, "DND-Estate's Branch."

⁵ The York Regiment inherited the legacy of the 12th and 140th Battalions, while the Carleton Light Infantry carried the legacy of the 44th and 104th Battalions. As such, the CYR inherited a rich military legacy, including battle honours from sixteen different First World War engagements. For a full history of the amalgamation of these units, see Robert W. Tooley, *Invicta: The Carleton and York Regiment in the Second World War*, (Fredericton: New Ireland Press, 1989), 19-25.

⁶ Tooley, 31-36.

⁷ Personnel File: Arthur Eatman, "Record of Service."

first billets located at Delville Barracks, just outside of Farnborough, England.⁸

Their arrival in England was followed by three and a half years of training and waiting for their first taste of combat.

The time that the CYR spent in England as part of 1st Canadian Division is well-recorded in the Regimental history written by Robert Tooley and does not need to be explicitly restated here. Rather, the focus below connects information from Duke's file into the regimental record and identifies questions that emerge from this comparison. Tooley breaks down these three and half years into four distinct phases, each phase characterized by new training methods and structure as units both prepared for active deployment and also served as a key formation in the defence of the United Kingdom during the dangerous early days of the war.⁹ Throughout that time in the United Kingdom, Duke continually impressed his superior officers, and earned several promotions, first in April 1940 to Lance-Corporal. Shortly after, he was appointed to the rank of Acting Corporal, and was confirmed in this rank in September 1940, establishing him as a section leader within "A" Company, and for the first time, placing him in charge of his fellow soldiers, almost all of whom were white.¹⁰ Towards the end of 1940, he was assigned to the Irish Guards while attending the Drill Instructor Course for non-commissioned officers.¹¹ This speaks

⁸ Tooley, 39-40.

⁹ Tooley, 43-44.

¹⁰ Tooley notes in the official history that there were "at least four blacks" include Duke and a First World War veteran by the name of Seymour Tyler. He also notes that there a number of Indigenous soldiers. See Tooley, 11.

¹¹ Personnel File: Arthur Eatman, "Service and Casualty Form, Part II."

directly to confidence his superior offices had in Duke, and the leadership potential he must have shown throughout his first year with the Carleton and York Regiment.

There is no indication in his file or in the CYR War Diary suggesting that Duke was in any way incapable of fulfilling his leadership role, or that his race caused any problems with those under his leadership, nor those above him in rank. The CYR underwent several changes of command throughout their time in England, but despite these changes among their senior leadership there is no evidence to suggest that Duke's rank or potential as a junior leader was questioned. It is important to note that the training the CYR was receiving at this time was rigorous and involved frequent route marches and large-scale brigade and division-level exercises. It is easy to think that Duke's position of authority is mitigated by that fact that the CYR was simply undergoing training, and therefore he had less responsibilities.¹² However, within the training scheme of 1941 and into 1942, Duke would have been responsible for ensuring those soldiers in his section performed up to standard, and it was often the NCOs who bore the responsibility for the majority of training.¹³

Duke's strength as a leader and his abilities were again recognized in August 1941 when he was appointed Acting Lance-Sergeant with pay, and his position at that rank was confirmed in November 1941 with a full promotion to Lance-Sergeant.¹⁴ His promotion corresponded with a change in unit structures, increasing

¹² For a full description, see Tooley, 43-108;

¹³ Jack Granatstein, *Canada's Army: Waging War and Keeping the Peace*, Second Edition, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011): 204; Lee Windsor, "A Black Leader of White Men".

¹⁴ Personnel File: Arthur Eatman, "Service and Casualty Form Part II."

the strength of each rifle company, and is perhaps why his promotion was confirmed.¹⁵ The year 1942 issued in significant changes to training methods with the introduction of battle drill as a primary tool for preparing soldiers for combat experience. Battle drill relied on stripping away much of the strategic speak and purpose, and instead focused on teaching section and platoons the minor tactics essential for rapid response and effectiveness in combat situations and prepare all ranks to make decisions without waiting for direct commands. A part of this training scheme included battle inoculation, or the process of acclimatizing soldiers to the noises and realities of battle fields. Though battlefield drill was instituted at all levels, it was primarily taught and enforced by junior leaders, and by the summer of 1942, the Canadian Training School (CTS) at the Canadian Military Headquarters (CMHQ) had established the Battle Drill Wing in order to teach soldiers how to teach battle drill.¹⁶

Duke was among the first group of soldiers from the CYR to attend the Battle Drill Course. Newly promoted to Acting Sergeant, Duke attended CMHQ Course 801 (Battle Drill) from 4-26 July 1942. A little over two months after successfully completing his Battle Drill Course, Duke was promoted to Sergeant. As now a senior non-commissioned officer in the CYR, he attended the 3rd Canadian Infantry Brigade Cadre Training Course at CTS in January 1943.¹⁷ When the decision was made at command level to commit 1st Canadian Division to the

¹⁵ Tooley, 96.

¹⁶ Granatstein, *Canada's Army*, 204; John A. English, *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign: A Study of Failure in High Command*, (New York: Praeger, 1991).

¹⁷ Personnel File: Arthur Eatman, "Service and Casualty Form Part II."

upcoming invasion of Sicily (Operation *Husky*), Duke and the rest of the CYR commenced on a series of training exercises in Scotland, including mountain training and advanced combined operations. Unbeknownst to the men in CYR, this training was intended to prepare them for their deployment to Sicily. The unit wrapped up the last of this training in May 1943 and spent several weeks ensuring that all the correct supplies and equipment were issued, and paperwork filed out as the CYR prepared to embark for Sicily, along with the rest of the 1st Canadian Division.

Before examining Duke's service experience in Sicily, it is important to reflect on the questions and conclusions arising from Duke's military service thus far. Similar to the recruitment policy that applied to his father, Duke's acceptance within the CYR regiment relied upon the decision of the commanding officer and medical officer who declared him fit for duty. At the time mobilization and for the duration of the war there were no formal policies managing the recruitment of non-white racialized groups into the Canadian Army. This set the Army apart from the Royal Canadian Navy and Royal Canadian Air Force which both began the war with formal policies excluding racialized minorities from combat roles based on considerations such as the difficulties associated with close living quarters on ships, or the belief that non-whites lacked the technical abilities to preform specific tasks.¹⁸ However, as mentioned above, there is little scholarship on the integration of racial

¹⁸ While these policies of exclusion slowly gave way to more inclusive recruiting practices as manpower shortages grew, neither branch fully embraced racialized minorities into their ranks. See Mathias Joost, "Racism and Enlistment: The Second World War Policies of the Royal Canadian Air Force", *Canadian Military History* vol. 21, no. 1, (2015):17-34.

minorities into units in the Second World War. This could be due, in part, to the lack of a completely segregated Black unit in the Second World War and accompanying paper trail as was the case with the Great War. To date, there has been little acknowledgement of Black efforts to serve, either in the role as labourers, reflecting the standard attitudes of the First World War, or the unexpected role as infantry soldier. Therefore, questions concerning recruiting experiences still linger, and Duke's story echoes the same questions identified in the discussion of James' wartime experience.

What is clear from Duke's file that is not evident in his father's was that his commanding officers had no compunctions about elevating the best soldiers to positions of junior leadership, regardless of their race. Progression beyond junior leadership is more difficult to discern as no known records indicate Black soldiers served as officers during the war. Duke's file also speaks to the relationship between him and his fellow soldiers. There is no indication in any records of intrapersonal difficulties among the soldiers in "A" Company, nor in any other companies in the CYR, and the lack of this evidence speaks volumes as any sort of restrictions on Duke's ability to properly lead would have likely resulted in a demotion. Part of this could be explained by the fact that Duke was "one of their own", meaning that he joined the unit days after it was mobilized for war, and he was never placed with another unit. Additionally, when the CYR was left for England in September 1939, almost all of its personnel were New Brunswick natives, and by June 1943, when it sailed for Sicily, Duke had been with a core group of New Brunswickers for close to four years. Another element to keep in mind is that after Duke completed the Battle

Drill Course, one of the most physically and mentally demanding courses run by CTS at the time, he became responsible for teaching that knowledge to his soldiers. He led them through training exercises at every level, all the way up to the Division level. One more fact to note is that when it became apparent that 1st Canadian Division would be deployed to Sicily, any leader who failed to demonstrate their ability and potential was removed from their post.¹⁹ Duke kept his rank and his position. He proved his worth and his ability to all those around him, so when he was put in charge of a platoon, he was not an outside and those under his command had no reason to doubt either his ability or his loyalty.

The potential Duke very clearly demonstrated during his time in England only makes the end of his war more tragic. The CYR boarded their transport ship- the *HMT Batory*-on 16 June, and waited aboard until they departed for the Mediterranean on 28 June.²⁰ Within the order of battle for Operation *Husky*, 3 Canadian Infantry Brigade (3 CIB) was part of the reserve for 1st Canadian Division, and therefore not assigned to the initial assault landing on the beaches at Pachino in southern Sicily.²¹ Rather, they would wait until preliminary objectives were obtained and would land as a second wave in order to secure the beachhead before

¹⁹ Granatstein, *Canada's Army*, 205.

²⁰ It should be noted that the entire unit did not sail aboard the *Batory*. Though there is some discrepancy in the numbers, general consensus is that 23 officers, 4 attached officers, and 649 other ranks from the CYR sailed on the *Batory* as part of the assault convoy. The remaining members would follow on another transport vessel as part of the slower convoy that would arrive several days after the initial landing on 10 July. See Tooley, 120.

²¹ The 3rd Canadian Infantry Brigade was also known as the Eastern Brigade as the units serving within 3 CIB included the Carleton and York Regiment, the West Nova Scotia Regiment, and the Royal 22 Regiment.

advancing inland.²² By a stroke of luck and good staff work, most of the vessels sailing for the Mediterranean arrived on time and without any significant issue. The convoy of vessels sailing from England and North Africa all converged around Malta and then proceeded to the final positions on the night of 9 July, and early on the morning of 10 July, Operation *Husky* began.²³

The CYR began disembarkation around noon on 10 July, less than twelve hours after the initial landing took place. The light resistance encountered near the Canadian landing beaches meant that the CYR suffered no casualties on that day. They quickly assembled at their rendezvous point approximately three miles inland at the town of Burgio. Robert Tooley, the author of the CYR history, writes of the Sicily campaign "...for the CYR [it] was mainly an affair of marching on foot across the islands, interrupted by patrolling and three engagements with the enemy, at Beginners' Hill, Catenanuova, and Hill 500."²⁴ Tooley's assessment is perhaps not wrong but it is also not a complete picture of the fighting that took place in Sicily. The geography of the island meant that roadways and transportation junctions were crucial, and therefore much of the fighting took place around such networks and junctions but to discount the activities and skirmishes that took place in other geographic spaces fails to recognize the interconnectivity of Canadian operations during the campaign and instead privileges individual unit histories above all else. Despite its other strengths, Tooley's book fails to connect the actions

²² GW Nicholson, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War, Vol. II: The Canadians in Italy, 1943-1945* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1956) 67, 71-72; Tooley, 122-124.

²³ Tooley, 119-120.

²⁴ Tooley, 124.

of the CYR to the larger story, thus presenting only a partial history of the unit's contributions in Sicily.

Without question, the CYR played a critical role in several of the key Canadian engagements during the campaign, including their first combat action during the battle for Valguarnera. While the tales of those engagements and the CYR's progress are fascinating, recounting the details of the combat lie outside of the scope of this study. Rather, the important fact to note is that the fighting on 18/19 July cost the unit several of its officers including two who were killed in action, and one who was seriously wounded.²⁵ Having survived the CYR's early engagements Duke and the rest of Regiment were now battletested, and had proven themselves capable in combat. By 20/21 July, the main thrust of the Allied advance in Sicily had transitioned away from the British XIII Corps in the Catania Plain, and instead was now focused on Canadian and British assault on the western wing of the German defensive line running from Leonforte back to Catania.²⁶

The third week of July saw the majority of the 1st Canadian Division engaged with German forces between the towns of Leonforte, Assoro. As 1 and 2 Canadian Brigades attacked towards those towns, 3 CIB began to pivot eastward towards Catenauova. As action in Leonforte and Assoro continued, 3 CIB was ordered to protect the right flank of the Canadian advance. The CYR established a

²⁵ Captain T. Porter and Lieutenant J. Starr were both killed, while Lieutenant G. Stewart was seriously wounded. There was additional nine other ranks killed and thirty-four wounded. See War Diary: Carleton and York, 18 July 1943; Tooley, 129.

²⁶ Lee Windsor, "The Eyes of All Fixed on Sicily": Canada's Unexpected Victory, 1943" in *Canadian Military History: Special Edition—the Sicily Campaign* vol. 22, no. 3 (2013), 24-27.

position and patrol base in the Dittaino River valley, near the Raddusa-Agira train station on 21 July and maintained this position until 24 July when they were once again given orders to advance.²⁷ From that firm base position, the Carleton and York's sent out patrols to locate and gauge enemy strength in the area, especially because the train lines that 3 CIB were following were located in a low-point, surrounded by rugged terrain and steep hills, which provided excellent defensive positions for Axis soldiers.²⁸

Duke was tasked with leading one such patrol. With twenty-eight men from A Company under his command, Duke set out in order to determine if a near-by house was occupied by enemy forces.²⁹ This patrol is clouded in controversy for a number of reasons, and there are very few agreed-upon facts about it. The patrol never returned, and a day later, Duke's body was recovered by members of "C" Company, approximately two thousand yards forward from the CYR's position. The bodies of four other men under Duke's command were also recovered, and the other twenty-four members were presumed dead or taken prisoner.³⁰ After three years

²⁷ War Diary: Carleton and York, July 1943.

²⁸ For a more detailed description of Allied operations in Sicily, see Ian Blackwell, *The Battle for Sicily: Stepping Stone to Victory*, (Barnsley: Pen and Sword Military, 2008); Daniel Dancocks, *The D-Day Dodgers: The Canadians in Italy, 1943-1945*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991); Lee Windsor, "'The Eyes of All Fixed on Sicily': Canada's Unexpected Victory, 1943".

²⁹ Tooley, 132; War Diary: Carleton and York, 24 July 1943.

³⁰ The bodies found alongside Duke include Acting Lance Corporal WJ Lapointe, and Privates Omar Gallagher, WJ McCauley, and WH Morris. Of the twenty-three soldiers not accounted for, twenty-two were later revealed to be POWs, and the body of Private Arlie Hanson was never recovered, and he was presumed killed in action. The recollections of one of the survivors tells us that in the fight, 5 were killed immediately with 7 other soldiers being wounded. Those taken as POWs were able to carry 5 of their wounded comrades, while they were forced to leave 2 behind. This account comes from Corporal Marshall Boone, one of the men taken as a POW. His wartime diary and several letters he wrote are

spent training and preparing to lead his men in combat, Duke was killed only two weeks into his first campaign. The CYR went on to take part in Allied operations across Italy and would end their war in Northern Europe after being transferred to the Netherlands in the spring of 1945.

The circumstances surrounding the lost patrol and Duke's death raises multiple questions, largely because so little is known about the events that led up to it. In light of the loss of an entire patrol, reflection and figure-pointing ensued as blame was cast in multiple directions. The commanding officer at the time, Lieutenant Colonel Dodd Tweedie questioned the orders issued by Captain GF Foster, the officer commanding "A" Company and the man responsible for issuing the patrol assignment. Tweedie suggested that they were inadequate for the task at hand. According to Tooley, others have suggested that Tweedie acted irresponsibly by allowing such a large patrol to go forward without an officer in command.³¹ Amidst discussion over who should have led the patrol, more questions emerge concerning the actual destination of the patrol, with Tweedie claiming it was a house within eyesight of the CYR's main position, while the Brigade Major, Major Pangman, argued that the patrol was to survey the area around Mount Scalpello, approximately seven miles east of the CYR's position. Even the timing of the patrol is debated with the CYR War Diary noting the patrol went out on the night of 23 July, while other accounts, including a personal diary written by one of the soldiers

owned by a member of Corporal Boone's family, and copies of the diary pages are in the author's possession.

³¹ Tooley, 132.

captured, suggest that the patrol commenced mid-morning.³² Still another controversy revolves around the possibility that the patrol was heading into a trap due to German interference and interception of the orders issued to A Company. The extent of the controversy is clear, and even the most detailed account of the CYR's operations in Sicily, found in Tooley's book, is unable to provide any answers and only raises more questions.³³

One of the most intriguing question that emerges is connected to Tweedie, and the defence of his decision to allow a sergeant to lead a platoon-sized patrol. Tweedie emphasized that no officer was available, he also noted that Duke was a skilled NCO, and had officer potential.³⁴ The lack of available officers to accompany the patrol could be a reflection of the casualties taken by the CYR in the days previous and in connection with the fight around Valguarnera. Several officers were wounded or killed, and while none of the officer casualties came from A Company, it is possible that officers were in the process of being moved around and reassigned to fill in the gaps. Unfortunately, the documentary record does not provide any insight into if this was the case, but it remains a plausible explanation as to why Duke, as a Sergeant, was tasked with leading a platoon-sized patrol. If this were true, a further question emerges as to whether or not Duke was, in fact, operating as an acting platoon commander, a role usually filled by a Lieutenant.

³² In general, the CYR War Diary for the month of July and August 1943 suffers from a lack of detail, likely due to inconsistent record keeping at the time. Once again, the survivor account comes from the personal diary of Corporal Boone. See footnote 91 for more information.

³³ Tooley, 132.

³⁴ Tooley, 132.

Embedded in questions about the competency of a Sergeant to lead a patrol of this size are questions about the ability of a Black Sergeant to lead a patrol of this size. In 1943, questions still lingered concerning the ability of these men to lead, and in cases of segregated units in other Allied armies, they were often commanded by white officers.³⁵ Canada had a policy of not allowing segregated units in the Second World War—a clear departure from First World War policy, and while there were no regulations preventing the commissioning of Black soldiers as officers, there are no known examples of Black officers.³⁶ It is worth noting that Duke's defender, Dodd Tweedie, was relieved of his command of the CYR on 12 August, as Canadian operations in Sicily came to a close. Tweedie's removal surprised many as he was well-liked among NCOs and Officers alike, and changes to the command structure following his removal caused concern among several other officers in the unit.³⁷ Tweedie's history of causing problems for his superior officers was well-established

³⁵ In both the French and British militaries, non-white colonial forcers were always commanded by white officers. Additionally, units of Japanese Americans were also commanded by white officers, while the famous American 92nd and 93rd Infantry Divisions, all Black units, were allowed to have Black officers, but they were forced to train and live in segregated military installations, and during the First World War, the both formations would spend time under French command as both the British Expeditionary Force and American Expeditionary Force refused to accept Black soldiers. For more on the history of these units, see Robert Ferrel, *Unjustly Dishonored: An African American Division in World War I* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2011); Carolyn Johnson, *My Father's War: Fighting with the Buffalo Soldiers in World War II* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2012).

With respects to Canada's No. 2 Construction Battalion from the First World War, it was commanded by white officers, with the only exception being the unit's chaplain, Reverend White, who like all Chaplains at the time, was an Honorary Captain.

³⁶ Thus far, I have not been able to find a single case of a Black officer in serving with the Canadian Army in the Second World War. Interesting, there are several known examples of commissioned Black soldiers serving in the First World War including a Lieutenant Lancelot Bertrand who served with the 7th Battalion until his death in August 1917. See Joost, 19, footnote 27.

³⁷ Tooley, 141-142.

by 1943, but he was a competent commanding officer who had been with the CYR since its formation in 1936, and who had led the CYR successfully through their first combat operations.³⁸ Thus, one has to ask if his defence of Duke and his disagreement with the Brigade record of events factored at all into his dismissal. This is merely conjecture but nevertheless raises serious questions about how Brigade level command approached the leadership ability of Black soldiers like Duke and suggests an institutional culture that was still wary of integration that was perhaps not replicated in all battalions—the CYR appearing as an exception, thus prompting questions about why such a culture existed in the CYR.³⁹

As time passes, the likelihood of receiving firm answers about the CYR patrol grow increasingly dim, and the lack of information points to how little is actually known about the Canadian's role in Sicily. But this is not a paper about restructuring how Canadian academics remember the Mediterranean campaign, it is about the experiences of Black soldiers who fought in the two world wars, and Duke was one of those soldiers. Despite all the controversy and uncertainty about his patrol, it remains clear that his death and the death of those under his command was a tragic loss of life and of human potential. It is not unreasonable to assume that Duke could have reached a commissioned rank and yet, that possibility remains lost.

³⁸ Tweedie originally began his military career with the CYRs as a Company Commander, at the rank of Captain. As a Major, he was appointed 2 I/C of the Battalion in March 1941 and was made commanding officer in February 1942. Tooley, 141-142.

³⁹ It is worth mentioning that there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that one of the CYR's sister battalions in the 3 CIB—the West Nova Scotias—also had Black soldiers in senior NCO positions. If this is true, there are interesting questions about if there was a regional cultural towards racialized minorities. It would also be interesting to consider the third unit from 3 CIB—the Royal 22nd Regiment—and see if the trend of Black NCOs continues across all three units.

Disheartening as this reality might be, Duke's story is still remarkable. He was only twenty-three when he was killed, having spent four years of his young life in the army, he worked his way from the rank of private, with no previous military training or experience, to the rank of sergeant, with some of the best training available to senior NCOs at the time. He did all of this as a Black soldier in an institution with no formal policy on how to incorporate Black soldiers into their ranks, and where his ability to serve could have been denied him because of a single commanding officer, medical officer, or recruiting agent. By all accounts his white subordinates followed his orders.

This remarkable nature of Duke's story offers a glimpse into what life might have been like during the Second World War for a Black Canadian soldier. Like James' file, Duke's suggests that he was treated like a regular soldier, and he excelled in that environment. However, the same limitations that applied to James' personnel file apply to Duke's personnel file. It conveys factual information but little in way of experiential information. Perhaps the best glimpse into Duke's experience is by considering the patrol that ultimately took his life. The patrol, clouded as it is with controversy and unknowns, is a fitting representation of a conversation about the experiences of Black Canadian soldiers in the Second World War. Within an institution that had no formal policy of exclusion, and little in way of enforcement when it came to the policy of inclusion, Black soldiers were forced to pave their own paths. Some clearly succeeded, as Duke's file proves. However, questions and unknown answers still dominate the majority of the conversation.

Conclusion

Regular Soldiers with Exceptional Stories

In his 2017 book on manpower in the First World War, historian Richard Holt drew the conclusion that “...the CEF was indifferent about black recruits”.¹ Holt criticizes past historical accounts of Black soldiers for failing to accurately depict the CEF’s policy towards racialized minorities, and argues that the conversation thus far has led many to the assumption that Black soldiers faced universal racism in the CEF. Instead, Holt argues that the CEF was in a process of transition, and leaders (including commanding officers) were busy—far too busy to address the complicated questions and circumstances that would arise out of a fully integrated unit. And in the end, Holt states that the CEF’s legacy of dealing with Black soldiers is one of accommodation, select examples of racial biases, and understandable slippages in policy enforcement.² Despite the almost apologist tone that dominates Holt’s discussion, it does raise some very interesting questions for further investigation. The indifference Holt refers to is at the heart of this discussion and challenge to the idea that indifference guaranteed acceptance or openness, while also demonstrating that racism operates at many levels and in many ways. This must be conversation complex and multi-layered. Driven by the question of policy and practice, this report considered the stories of two soldiers—a father and son—who each served in one of the world wars respectively, in hopes of gaining greater understanding of military and institutional policies towards racialized minorities, and how those perspectives shaped wartime trajectories.

¹ Holt, 75.

² Holt, 75.

Both James and Duke served in a Canadian military in which the policy on racial minorities enabled them to serve alongside their fellow, white, citizens provided they meet all other recruitment requirements and standards, at least in theory. The decision to allow soldiers into infantry units during both wars was in the hands of individual commanding officers and local medical examiners who had the power to deny any soldier without facing serious repercussions. Considering the ways in which these gatekeepers to the Canadian military denied and accepted individuals offers intriguing clues about the variety of perspectives on race and inclusivity that dominated early 20th century Canadian society. And both James and Duke's stories demonstrate the different ways that these gatekeepers and military policy effected soldiers, but they also speak to just how messy and complicated it can be to decipher soldier personnel files in the context of understanding wartime experience.

For example, James' file provides an interesting glimpse into a situation that reflects just how much the individual could affect the recruitment process. Even though James was declared medically fit for service, and ultimately allowed to enlist without issue, the medical officer assigned to his case still felt it necessary to note on his file that he was Black. And not only did the medical officer make such a notation, but he did so by listing it under Congenital Peculiarities and Previous Diseases. James' original unit, the 104th, is also an interesting unit to consider as there is evidence to suggest that approximately twenty Black soldiers were turned away from this unit around the same time that James was allowed to enlist.

Besides this notation on his medical examination sheet, there is no other indication from James' file that his race prohibited or interfered with his service in any way. The records from his time not only with the 25th Infantry Battalion, but also the time he spent in reserve with the 2nd Entrenching Battalion, and in hospital recovering all point to James being a "regular" private. This mixed message reflects the nature of the CEF's policy, and how it was enforced or not enforced. It also reflects the reality that from a CEF standpoint, James was probably a regular private like so many others but not all privates had the same experience.

Similarly, Duke's file also speaks to this mixed interpretation. He was a soldier who preformed well in the military environment and was rewarded appropriately with promotions and greater responsibility. But just as James' medical examination sheet offers a look beyond the label of "regular" private, so too do the documents and controversy around Duke's death during the Sicilian campaign in July 1943. While there is no explicit record questioning Duke's ability to lead, or casting fault for the lost patrol solely on Duke's shoulders, there are just enough unanswered questions and unknown facts that doubt is cast in his direction. This is despite the fact that Duke's record and all other evidence suggests that he was a capable young sergeant who had earned the trust of his officers and of his soldiers as well. Again, there appears to be contradiction between what Duke's personnel files indicates and the historical record that questions his abilities and casts doubt on whether or not a Black sergeant was the appropriate choice for a leadership role.³

³ Though, here once again, it is important to remember that the historical record is very limited. Only two individuals have ever provided written accounts of the patrol that cost

The contradictions and answered questions that emerge from James and Duke's stories are still grounded in two broad conclusions drawn from this review of their wartime experiences. First, Holt was partially correct when he said that the CEF, and by extension the Canadian Army in the Second World War, was indifferent to race. From a top down, institutional perspective, the race of a soldier did not matter. This helps explain why so little information concerning race is found in official personnel files and other military documents, but it also explains why someone like Duke could advance to a junior NCO position, or why James received the same medical treatment as any other soldier during his convalescence. The second finding challenges Holt's assessment which equates indifference with acceptances, and is that despite an indifferent policy, the practices of those in the CEF/Canadian Army reveal that race mattered as part of an unofficial policy that was heavily reliant on the individual. This is not only clear from the evidence gathered in support of this report, but from the work of other academics who have addressed the question of not only Black soldiers but also Japanese and Chinese Canadians, and Indigenous peoples.⁴

Exploring the relationship and interaction between this official policy of inclusion and the unofficial policy of personal racial bias represents the next step in this research program. Driving this next step are questions that address how the official policy was shaped and who was responsible for shaping the policy of

Duke his life—Robert Tooley and Brigade Major Pangman. Pangman originated the doubts around Duke's capabilities, and these were carried forward in Tooley's official history.

⁴ For examples, see works by Scott Sheffield, Roy Ito, Lyle Dick, Fred Gaffen, and Norman Hillmer, among others.

inclusion both at the institutional level, but also on the ground in unit recruiting centres and Militia armouries. A secondary branch of these questions seeks to understand how regional characteristics (rural versus urban, French versus English Canada, East coast versus West coast, etc.) change the conversations about racialized minorities in wartime service. Moving forward, there is also an interesting opportunity to explore how the military compared to other public institutions in Canadian society during that time of 20th century change. Was it integrated at a faster pace than schools or hospitals, for example? How did the experiences of Black Canadians differ when dealing with the military compared to other institutions? And to what extent did wartime experiences empower members of the Black community to drive for social change and equality? These questions are important as they begin to bridge the gap between the fields of military history and critical race studies—two fields not typically considered in conjunction with one another.

Furthering this research program will undoubtedly raise other questions, and there are certainly going to be questions that are unanswerable. However, that so many questions still linger speak to the necessity of this further research. Military history is one of the best-established fields of historical inquiry in Canada, and yet the narratives told by so many exclude the service and experience of Canada's racialized minorities. This continued exclusion of Canada's racialized minorities from the academic record and also from public spaces needs to be addressed, especially as discussions surrounding commemoration, military heritage and multiculturalism continue to feature heavily in Canadian discourse. In addressing these

missing voices from the narrative, this examination of the stories of James and Duke Eatman is an important starting point into a much larger gap in historical knowledge. They are important not only because the sacrifice of James and Duke should be recognized, but because they represent the sacrifice of an unknown number of Black Canadians who served their country during the two World Wars.

Today, Private James Eatman lies buried in the Fredericton Rural Extension Cemetery, only a few kilometers away from where he lived when he first enlisted with the CEF. Sergeant Arthur Eatman lies buried in the Agira Canadian War Cemetery, thousands of kilometers away from his home. Both lie alongside dozens, and in Duke's case, hundreds of other soldiers who gave their lives serving their country. Those soldiers faced bullets, gas attacks, and bombs—none of which bothered to discriminate based on race, and it is about time that our academic records followed suit.

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