

**Rogers, Stanley Edward Private F91481  
No. 13 Company  
Canadian Forestry Corps**



3<sup>rd</sup> row 22<sup>nd</sup> from left  
Aug 1941 No 13 Coy CFC photo

Third Row - left to right

Pte McColl D A

Pte Wentzell E T

Pte Pudsey H B

Pte Linkletter L G

Pte Kernahan J A

Pte Parker H B

Pte Hirtle C A

Pte Dickie J K

Pte Manuel F A

Pte Oliver E L

Pte Dexter E L

Pte Hill H M

Pte Zwicker G W

Pte McLellan B B

Pte Stevenson J R

Pte Rogers E S

Pte Gillis D A

Pte Potter L D

Pte Hill R N

Pte Stevens W F

Pte Helm P G



Stanley on leave at Millstream Jan 1944

[http://raking-leaves.blogspot.ca/2012\\_05\\_01\\_archive.html](http://raking-leaves.blogspot.ca/2012_05_01_archive.html)

World War 2 put tremendous strains on supplies of natural resources of all types, but on wood in particular. In addition to civilian requirements, the military needed timber for road and bridge building in support of the front lines, soldiers' living quarters, rail lines, ships, coffins, gun stocks, crates to transport food, ammunition and equipment and countless other needs. Britain had plenty of logable forest, particularly in the north, but had neither adequate skilled personnel nor efficient equipment available to perform the task. In WW1 the British Government had turned to Canada to assist with such matters and so it was natural they would do so once again. In May 1940 Canada formed the Canadian Forestry Corps, recruiting from across the country and by 1942 deploying 7000 men in 30 Companies, mostly to the forests of Scotland. Among the first companies deployed was

Stanley Edward Rogers (1889-1982), who was soon joined by his sons Sheldon and Emerson. This was a job for which they had been training all their lives.

#### A Family Business



**James Valentine Rogers with crew c.1905.**

Stanley was born in Stellarton, Nova Scotia, second son of lumberman James Valentine Rogers (1845-1909). Lumber was a significant industry in the province in the 1800s (after the fishery, of course). The industry had thrived based on extensive timber resources and the close proximity of mills to tidewater. According to the Nova Scotia Lumber Assn. there were 1144 Sawmills in N.S. by 1871 and 1126 of those were water powered. Relatively new on the scene were portable steam powered sawmills that logging crews could take into the woods with them, initially pulled by a team of horses, later of a self-propelled tractor design. James V. owned his own mill and horses, doing his logging in winter and sawing when weather permitted moving the mill.



**Portable steam sawmill of type similar to that used by Rogers crews.**

When his father died in 1909 Stanley took over the business and operated it for the next forty years, joined at times by some of his brothers and later his own sons. With a portable mill, Stanley shifted locations often, the pattern reflected in the birthplaces of his children: Audrey and Emerson in Westchester (about 20 kilometres east of the family homestead at Windham Hill near Springfield), Sheldon in Little River (just north of Oxford), then after a break in the business for service in World War One, south to Great Village on the Bay of Fundy shore for Doug (Cobequid Bay), Emily and Al to the west along the shore in Bass River, and Prescott and Charles a little further west in Little Bass River. Over the next few years Stanley continued to move the mill about, south to Lakeview and east as far as Antigonish and Guysborough.



**Rogers Mill crew, winter 1929-30 front: Willard Rogers,?, Clarence Rogers, Ken MacIntosh, Churchill Newton,?, Back: Grant Peppard, Laurie Cameron, Stanley Rogers, Bill Tanner, Roy Taylor, Ernest Harrison,?, Irwin Sutherland**

Being essentially just large steam-boiler engines, the portable sawmills were a constant fire hazard, as their boiler tanks grew hot and fuel fires spit sparks onto surrounding ground that was usually dry brush and wood debris. Stanley's son Charles recalls how he and brother Prescott, when they were still too young to help with the actual logging and milling, would often be tasked with keeping watch over the mill site with fire-fighting equipment.



View of Mill from roof of Millstream house.

About 1934 Stanley shifted from portable operations, acquiring one of eastern Canada's oldest mill structures in Millstream, just south of Stellarton. It was here the family called home for the next ten years, interrupted by one year in nearby Hopewell so that Emily could attend school there. When World War 2 began brothers Emerson, Sheldon and Doug were first to join the armed forces, and were soon followed by Stanley, and later Al and Emily. By war's end Stanley and five of his children were in uniform.

#### War



1940 Doug, Emerson, Sheldon, 1<sup>st</sup> Field Company, R.C.E.





When training at Valcartier was complete, the company once again boarded a train and returned to Halifax to depart by troop ship for Scotland. They arrived June 30, 1941 at Firth of Clyde as part of a six ship convoy, disembarked July 2 at Gourock, caught a train to Brechin and from there went by truck to South Esk to establish their first camp. Most CFC personnel built barracks, roads, bridges and set up power plants from scratch. However No. 13 Company's camp was already nearly completed by civilian contractors when they arrived. Thus while other companies often took up to 3 months to become operational, No. 13 took less than half that time, beginning timber operations August 14. [No. 13 didn't stay in one place for the war's duration as some other companies did. They moved November 8, 1943 to Orrin Bridge, Muir of Ord; July 15 1944 to Skibo, Spinningdale; and November 14, 1944 back to Orrin Bridge.]

Each company was divided into two sections, one cutting timber and bringing it out of the bush, the other sawing it into lumber at the mill. The 13<sup>th</sup> Co. had brought with them some of the most modern logging equipment then available in Canada; a rotary mill, diesel generators, Caterpillar TD9 tractors, lorries, sulkies (pneumatic-tired arches), angle dozers and drum winches.



Nissen hut.

The men in most camps erected Nissen huts for accommodation. These huts, developed by Peter Nissen of the Royal Engineers in WW1 based on a design he developed while studying mining engineering in Kingston, Ontario, were constructed from prefabricated sheets of corrugated steel. Although easy to transport and assemble, and widely used in both WW1 and WW2 (hundreds of thousands deployed), they were often cold and draughty. The barracks were fitted out with wooden bunks and self-made furniture.



Heavy CFC log truck.

The heavy lumber lorries stained much of the local infrastructure. Road had to be graveled and some bridges reinforced. No 13 Company in particular had to significantly reinforce Garve Bridge (near their second camp) before moving wood from the area.



**No. 13 Co. men with bridging material to repair Garve Bridge near Orrin Bridge**





In June 1940, the 1<sup>st</sup> Field Combat Engineers with Stanley's sons Emerson, Sheldon and Doug went to France as part of the Second British Expeditionary Force (that will likely be the subject of a future blog post). They reached a point south of Laval before they were ordered back as part of the evacuation more widely famous for the withdrawal at Dunkirk. Back in Britain Sheldon and Emerson headed north to join their father with the 13<sup>th</sup> CFC. Doug stayed with his unit and eventually went with them to Sicily and Italy in 1943. For a while all three Rogers worked together in the Scottish forests. Sheldon then left them to join the 5<sup>th</sup> Field Combat Engineers with whom he participated in the D-Day invasion.



Co. 13 in Scotland, August 1941, Brechin  
Emerson 4<sup>th</sup> row, far right?, Stanley, 3<sup>rd</sup> row ninth from right?

### Highlights

Shortly after arriving 600 men (3 companies) of the Corps received a Royal Inspection by the King and Queen at Balmoral Castle on September 7, 1941, one of the highlights of the wartime experience for many of the CFC members.



His Majesty salutes the CFC.



Queen Inspecting CFC at Balmoral Castle.



Princesses Margaret and Elizabeth looking on.

As for “low”-lights, there was a brawl in Montrose New Year’s Eve 1942 between some members of No. 13 and some Polish soldiers. A CFC member suffered knife wounds. And in the summer of 1943 one member of the 13<sup>th</sup> was murdered by another.

#### A Welcome Presence

The CFC made their presence known in the Scottish highlands. The men at times assisted in local agricultural harvesting, for example No. 13 Company helping with the flax harvest in Mearns in Sept 1941. They participated in local parades, staged Christmas parties for local children and helped with various wartime causes. Some attended religious services in the local churches or joined local lodges such as the Grand Lodge of Scotland in St. Andrew’s. It has also been recounted that it was common practice for forestry workers to pilfer some of the vehicle fuel to give to local taxis in exchange for rides into the village to bars and dances, and that on occasion scrap wood would mysteriously fall from lorries beside homes in need of fuel.

With 7000 men socializing with local communities, it was natural that some of the young local women would find husbands among the CFC foresters. One of those lucky ones was Elizabeth (Betty) Kay Wemyss. In August of 1943, at the age of 21, she married Emerson Rogers (then age 28) in her home town of St. Andrew’s.

#### Winding Down and Moving On

In preparation for the 1944 Normandy invasion, some companies moved to Southampton to construct rafts to be towed across the channel. Some went with the invasion force, supporting front line operations, and even helping to hold the front line against the December 1944 Ardennes counter-offensive by the Germans. The 13<sup>th</sup> Company was one of the ones that remained in Scotland to continue their work.

No. 13 Company ceased operations in Scotland March 17, 1945. After shutting down the Orrin Bridge camp, Stanley and the rest of the Company headed for the train at Beaulieu on June 11 and began the journey home. The Company was officially disbanded August 31, 1945

During their four and a half years in the highlands, No.13 Company produced 19.7 million FBM of sawn lumber, or about 5% (1/20) of the total production of the CFC, a commendable accomplishment considering they were one of *thirty* CFC companies! In addition there were many tens of thousands of poles, tons of pulpwood and other products.

#### Back in Canada

After the war Emerson returned to Canada with Betty, settling in Sydney Forks, Nova Scotia to raise their family. Stanley moved the rest of the family from Millstream to Oxford, buying an electric sawmill in the south end of town and setting up business as S.E. Rogers & Sons.

Thursday Aug. 23, 1951 the Oxford Journal reported that “S.E. Rogers & Sons have sold their electric sawmill on *Lower Main Street* to J.B. Alcorn of Bear River, N.S. who moved the machinery away.”

After winding down his lumber operation Stanley set up an Insurance Business which he ran for almost twenty years before retiring at age 80 and passing the business off to son Sheldon.

The reinforced bridges and road extensions left behind in Scotland were an appreciated legacy of the CFC presence. And having brought the modern methods and equipment to Scotland, the CFC demonstrated more efficient cutting and clearing techniques that the Scottish forestry industry would adopt post war.



*Steve Rogers is the son of Charles Rogers and grandson of Stanley E. Rogers*

## **Sources**

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### **James Valentine Rogers and Stanley E Rogers**

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## **Images**

### **Portable Steam Powered Sawmill:**

Photo by Ruth Tate, Historical Ouachita County, Morrison and Eppinette

### **Rogers mill crews, Millstream, Rogers brothers in Europe, Stanley in 1944:**

Collection of Charles D. Rogers

### **All other images:**

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