Clarence Garfield Mainse  
Private 781324  
28th Battalion Saskatchewan Regiment (Northwest)  
6th Infantry Brigade 2nd Infantry Division  
Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF)

**Personal information:** Clarence Garfield Mainse was born on 3 November, 1892 in Lynhurst Ontario, thirty kilometres northeast of Kingston, Ontario. He was the oldest of five children born to Edward and Susan Mainse. Clarence came from a family of strong religious convictions, belonging to the Methodist congregation in Lynhurst. As a young unmarried man, he moved to Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, where he took a job as a clerk. Clarence was single when he enlisted with the 28th (Moose Jaws) Overseas Battalion in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan on 2 December, 1915. Clarence felt compelled to enlist and fight. In a letter to his mother, written two weeks before he enlisted, he wrote "I have done little enough for others and the bible says 'Love thy fellow man'. Does that not mean Belgian's suffering, northern France and poor Serbia?"

**Military movements:** Upon enlistment in December 1915, Mainse and the rest of the 28th Battalion trained over the winter and spring of 1916 in Winnipeg. His decision to enlist was not readily accepted by his mother. In a letter written home on 30 December, 1915, he pleads with her to accept that he has joined. "Perhaps you will learn with regret that I have joined the colors...You have brought me up Canadian and a Canadian I'll live or die as the case may call for...", suggesting that above all her fears, she must agree that he is doing his duty. Clarence trained for the next nine months before moving east to Halifax on 15 August, 1916 for debarkation to England aboard the S.S. Grampian. The transport troop ship would arrive in Liverpool England on 24 August. The 28th Battalion would quickly board the transport trains for Bramshott Camp, north of Portsmouth, England. Here, the 28th would receive another three months of training in preparation for fighting in France and Belgium. In preparation for his move onto the continent to fight in the war, Clarence made out his will at Bramshott Camp on 30 November, 1916. One week later, on 5 December, Clarence was taken on strength (TOS) with the 28th Battalion and shipped out to France the next day. The 28th Battalion was part of the 6th Canadian Infantry Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division. Clarence would fight at the Battle of Vimy Ridge, Hill 70, and Passchendaele.

**The final days:** On 5 November, 1917 Operation Order159 was issued ordering the 2nd Canadian Division to attack and capture the village of Passchendaele. The attack plan called for the 28th to move, take and hold the Mosselmarkt Road, northwest of Passchendaele. To the right of the 28th Battalion, the 31st moved to the northwest edge of the village and the 27th moved to attack the village itself. Specifically, the 28th Battalion was ordered to attack on the left of the front. The
rest of the day of the 5th was spent getting the 27th Battalion in position on the right, the 31st Battalion in the centre and the 28th Battalion on the left. The Germans too wanted to keep Passchendaele and had reinforced their lines on 3 November with the 11th Division which had been transported from Champagne in Northern France. The importance of Passchendaele was not lost on the Germans. According to records from German High Command, "Passchendaele must be held or, if lost, recaptured at all costs." The morning of 6 November began with clear skies, but clouds rolled in as the day progressed. Mainse and the rest of the 28th Battalion began their attack at 6:00 a.m. using a heavy artillery barrage as cover to penetrate German lines. The 27th (Winnipeg), 28th (Saskatchewan) and 31st (Alberta) had to cover a distance of 1000 yards to reach their objectives. The battalions would move two minutes behind the artillery barrage that was intended to clear out German positions. For some battalions, the creeping barrage produced excellent results as German trenches were overrun and many prisoners taken before the Germans could get into position with their machine guns. The 27th and 31st Battalions covered the ground in good speed, but this is not the case for the 28th. Mud slowed the men down. Much of the terrain was muddy up to the knees and in some places up to the waist. This slowed the forward movement significantly, increasing the time span between artillery barrage and infantry attack. The result for the 28th Battalion was that it received the brunt of the German fire, resulting in heavy casualties. Members of the 28th Battalion were pinned down on two occasions by heavy German rearguard actions and got caught in their own artillery barrage. Despite this setback, Passchendaele and the ridge to the north was in Canadian hands by 7:40 a.m. However, it cost the battalion dearly as 12 officers and 178 infantrymen were killed. Corporal H.C. Baker of the 28th Battalion remarked on the morning of 7 November, "My impression was that we had won the ridge but lost the battalion." In the early hours of 7 November, the 28th Battalion was relieved and bivouacked near a cemetery at Ypres. Soldiers recounted that soup was being served by cooks and this was their first hot meal in 72 hours. Roll call that day reveals that not many soldiers of the 28th Battalion remained alive after the previous day's attack.

The success of the attack was communicated to Canadian Commander Lt. General Sir Arthur Currie who passed the information onto General Head Quarters. Commander-in-Chief, Sir Douglas Haig, in his response to Currie, classified the importance of the attack and battle as one on par with Vimy Ridge. Overall, the cost in casualties was heavy. Between 26 October and 7 November, 1917 the Canadian Corps suffered some 16,000 casualties in taking Passchendaele; 3,000 dead, 1,000 missing and 12,000 wounded.

Medical records: Clarence was sent to a field ambulance on 22 April, 1917 and spent four days there due to illness. There is no specific information given of his illness. The only other entry in his medical record concerns his death during the Battle of Passchendaele. Mainse's body was taken to #1 Field Ambulance depot where he was examined and pronounced dead. His medical records reveal that he
suffered from a concussion to the head by a German shell that had landed extremely close to him. This is consistent with information that is recorded about a heavy concentrated German artillery barrage after the Canadians had taken Passchendaele and the ridge beyond the town. The concussion was so severe that he died from the blast.

**Lest We Forget:** Clarence Mainse is buried at Vlamertinghe New Military Cemetery in Belgium. The cemetery now contains 1,813 Commonwealth burials of the First World War. In his written will he left everything to his mother. She received his military plaque with serial number 752774. He had received $402.01 in total from the CEF until his death. He was 25 years of age when he died.

**Bibliography**


**Archival Reference**

Military service files of Private Clarence Garfield Mainse (RG 150, Acc. 1992-93/166, Box 5855-37) obtained from Library and Archives Canada, 395 Wellington Street, Ottawa, Ontario.

**Internet Sites**

- Phantom Regiment Drum and Bugle Corps  
  http://www.regiment.org
- The Great War Series, The War Times Journal  
  http://wtj.com/wars/greatwar/
- Veterans Affairs Canada  
  http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca/general/
- Soldiers of the First World War (1914-1918)  
  Commonwealth War Graves Commission  
  http://www.cwgc.org/

Clarence Garfield Mainse  
*Lest We Forge*
Knowledge of Mainse's religious fervour told by Sharon Seward, niece of Clarence Mainse. Sharon Seward was interviewed in 2002.

Military File of Clarence G. Mainse. Library Archives Canada (LAC) Record Group (RG) 150, Accession 93/16/6, Box 5855 - 37.

Letter from Clarence Mainse to his mother, Susan Mainse, written on November 20, 1915. Letter provided by Kent Mainse of Athens Ontario, nephew of Clarence Mainse. Letter was shared with author in 2004.

Letter from Clarence Mainse to his mother, Susan Mainse, written on December 30, 1915. Letter provided by Kent Mainse of Athens Ontario, nephew of Clarence Mainse. Letter was shared with author in 2004.


For more information on the history of the 28th Battalion please refer to: G.E. Hewitt, The Story of the 28th (North-West) Battalion (London: Charles and Son, 1918). The 28th Battalion fought at St. Eloi, April, 1916; Hooge, June 6, 1916; Courcelette (Somme) September, 1916; Vimy Ridge, April 1917; Hill 70, August, 1917; Passchendaele, November 1917. This history can be viewed on the internet at: www.nwbattalion.com/hewitt/hewitt01.html.


For an excellent visual overview of the attack on Passchendaele refer to Nicholson's official history maps, specifically Map 9.

Dancocks, p. 170.