



## COLDWATER REMEMBERS

# PRIVATE GEORGE H. BEACH

George Henry Beach was born on December 5, 1897, son of John and Mary (Lang) Beach of Coldwater, Ontario. On October 6, 1915, George enlisted in Toronto with the 95th Overseas Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. He was 18 years old and single. On his Attestation Form he is described as 5 feet 7 inches tall, with blue eyes and brown hair. He identified his religious denomination as Methodist, and his trade as farmer, with no previous military experience.

Private George Beach, regimental number 201537, sailed from Halifax to England on the S.S. Olympic, arriving on June 8, 1916. After training in England for several months, he landed in France on September 16. He later joined his front line unit, the 1st Canadian Infantry Battalion (Western Ontario Regiment), part of the 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade, 1st Canadian Division.



In October 1917, Canadian troops, including Private Beach's unit, were sent to Belgium to relieve the battered Australian and New Zealand forces and take part in the final push to capture the village of Passchendaele. Despite the horrible conditions, the Canadians reached the outskirts of Passchendaele by October 30 during a driving rainstorm. On November 6, the Canadians launched a final assault and were successful in capturing the village of Passchendaele itself. But the victory came at a high price. More than 4,000 Canadian soldiers died in the fighting there, and almost 12,000 were wounded. Private Beach was one of the many soldiers killed in action. On November 6, day of the final assault, he was hit in the chest by a piece of shrapnel from an enemy shell that exploded directly over his trench. He was killed instantly.

Four years later, George's mother Mary would have received the awards her son was entitled to: the 1914-1918 British War Medal; the Inter Allied Victory Medal; a Memorial Plaque (a bronze medallion often referred to as "Dead Man's Penny"); and a scroll from King George V. She would also have received a "Mother's Cross".

Private George Henry Beach has no known grave. His name is engraved on the Menin Gate Memorial at the eastern side of the town of Ypres in Belgium, and he is commemorated on page 198 of the *First World War Book of Remembrance*, located inside the Memorial Chamber in the Peace Tower in Ottawa. As of November 11, 2018, he is also commemorated on a plaque on the Cenotaph in front of the Coldwater Branch of the Royal Canadian Legion.

We will remember him.