

Archival Detective Work: The Case of the Yukon Field Force Diary

by GERALD G. CUMMING

In July 1981, a document described as the “manuscript diary of an unknown member of the Yukon Field Force” was placed on my desk in the Manuscript Division of the Public Archives of Canada. It had been forwarded from the Archives’ office in London, England, and it was a document that I had been awaiting with some curiosity and enthusiasm. About a year earlier, the PAC’s London Office had been informed by the Midland Bank Trust Company, acting as executors for the estate of the late Miss Florence Annie Taylor of Ditton Close, Thames Ditton, Surrey, that the dear lady had willed the diary to Canada’s Public Archives.

At that time, what connection the late Miss Taylor had with the Yukon Field Force, if any, was unstated. How the diary had come into her possession was unknown. Perhaps some answers could be obtained from the executors. However, the onset of the Canadian postal strike prevented me from obtaining answers from those sources at that time.

The diary arrived at my desk in the same brown envelope used by the Midland Bank Trust Company and perhaps by the donor herself. It was the envelope which seemed to provide an easy answer as to how Miss Taylor acquired the diary. Written in longhand across the front of the envelope was the notation “Yukon Field Force Diary found in the old barracks at Fort Selkirk by Florence Taylor (probably in 1919).” The diary had been in her custody for sixty years! Perhaps many times during those sixty years she pondered the question that now intrigued me: who wrote the diary? The answer to that question would not only satisfy my own deep-seated curiosity, but most importantly it would go a long way towards authentication of the diary, a vital matter from the archival point of view.

The document in the ancient envelope was in appalling condition. It was extremely fragile to the touch; the binding had long ago been broken and many pages were brown with age, badly creased, torn, and smudged with dirt. Before attempting to examine it, I consigned it to the care of the PAC Conservation Division. Unnecessary handling before restoration would only have further damaged the already battered diary.

In approximately two weeks, the diary was returned. The conservation experts had cleaned, restored, and strengthened the pages and binding. Yet it was only then, after a thorough examination, that I realized how much of the manuscript had been lost over the years. Both front and back covers had disappeared and the first



The Yukon Field Force, Dawson, Y.T., 1899. Courtesy: Public Archives of Canada, C-8401.

twenty-four pages and an indeterminate number of concluding pages were missing. As well, between the first and last entries, that is, 19 May 1898 and 27 April 1899, some thirty-one days were lost through damaged or missing entries. The loss of historical information that perished with these pages was regrettable. The absence of a front cover struck me as particularly unfortunate in that diarists usually record their names on or inside diary covers. Whether that was so in this case will never be known, but there was certainly no direct evidence of authorship on the volume in 1981.

Despite the diary's mutilated condition, I hoped that clues to the diarist's identity might lay somewhere among its faded pages. Before beginning my detective work, however, I needed background information on the Yukon Field Force itself. Consisting of over two hundred officers and men, excluding civilians, the Force was composed of professional soldiers drawn from various units of Canada's small Permanent Force.¹ It was despatched to the Yukon in May 1898 to help the North West Mounted Police maintain order and to bolster the Canadian government's presence in the Territory. The discovery of gold in the Klondike region and the subsequent influx of large numbers of miners and adventurers had strained the slim resources of the North West Mounted Police. Moreover, it was not merely the increased size of the Yukon population, but its nature which worried some Canadian officials. That population in 1898 was composed largely of American citizens, the majority drawn north by the gold. This large, restless, foreign population was worry

¹ This account is based on "The Canadian Military Marches North" by Brereton Greenhous and W.J. McAndrew, in *Canadian Defence Quarterly* (Spring, 1981), pp. 30-41.

enough, but in 1898 there were also sections of the Yukon-Alaska border in dispute between Ottawa and Washington. Some friction had already occurred over the disputed frontiers and a few Canadians, including the Yukon Commissioner, Major J.M. Walsh, feared that the large American population might conceivably try to seize control of the Territory, establish a provisional government, and request that the government of the United States intervene on its behalf!

The Yukon Field Force was authorized by Order-in-Council No. 596 of 21 March 1898. The bulk of the Force left Ottawa on 6 May 1898 and an advance party reached Fort Selkirk, at the confluence of the Yukon and Pelly Rivers on 25 July. The route chosen had not been the easiest. For political and diplomatic reasons, instead of sailing up the west coast to the American ports of Skagway or Dyea, which would have provided direct access to the Klondike via the White or Chilcoot Passes, the Force transferred to riverboats at the United States port of Wrangel and proceeded by water and land up the arduous Teslin Trail to Fort Selkirk. After the arrival of the main body, the Force was divided with detachments stationed at Dawson and Fort Selkirk.

By late 1899, as the great gold rush had peaked and no civil disturbances had occurred, the need for the Force was no longer felt. Since the Field Force represented nearly one-quarter of the total strength of Canada's Permanent Force, there was pressure from the military establishment itself to return the troops to their barracks in the south so they could get on with their normal tasks. In September 1899, approximately one-half of the Force was withdrawn and the remainder left in the Spring of 1900.

Compared to Canada's participation in the South African War, which began in October 1899, or even the North-West Rebellion of 1885, the Yukon Field Force was a small affair indeed. Unlike the other two late-nineteenth century campaigns which were fought largely by volunteer militiamen, the Yukon Field Force was composed almost completely of men drawn from Canada's tiny Permanent Force. It was a test of the organization, discipline, and leadership of Canada's professional army.

The measure of the Force's success was that they had got there and stayed there until ordered out — the first formation of Imperial troops to serve so far north. In the 1890s Canada's Permanent Force had not been generally distinguished for the calibre of either its officers or men. Pay scales were substantially lower than those of the NWMP, or the conveniently close U.S. Army, and there were no pensions for Canadian soldiers, so that the cream of the recruiting crop rarely ended up in the service. But their operations in the Yukon did something to dispel the popular image of the Permanent Force as 'snowbirds' — joining in the Fall and deserting in the Spring — and 'barrack soldiers.' They had shown themselves, by their actions, to be much more than that.²

It is against this background that the diary acquires its significance. Despite its missing pages and the fact that it did not encompass the total period of the Force's existence, the diary represents one of the few surviving, contemporary personal

2 *Ibid.*, p. 41

accounts of any real length concerning the expedition. Seen in this perspective, the diary assumed new importance and provided an added incentive to identify its creator.

The first few pages of the diary clearly indicated, from the nature of the diarist's daily activities, that he was not an officer or non-commissioned officer; rather, he was one of the approximately 157 private soldiers who served with the Field Force. With this discovery my spirits sank, for the task of identifying the author now appeared more difficult. Generally, historical information on commissioned officers in the old Canadian Militia is more abundant and accessible than information on enlisted men. Furthermore, even if I did discover his name, after eighty years the chance of unearthing enough biographical information about a private soldier in the Canadian Militia to really flesh out our diarist seemed improbable.

A survey of existing records on the Field Force available in the Public Archives soon brought the realization that the only body of documents which promised to yield any information on the enlisted men was the unit paylists. These lists have been preserved, along with thousands of other records of Canadian military history, in the Records of the Department of Militia and Defence in the Federal Archives Division. The paylists grouped all the enlisted men of the Field Force into three companies. I reasoned that if I could first discover the company to which the diarist belonged, I would have at least narrowed the identity of the diarist to a group of about fifty rank-and-file soldiers. Then I hoped that other clues within the diary would allow me to isolate the author from his company comrades.

I began a careful reading of the diary from its beginning at page 25. As I read I began to compile a list of all the personal names mentioned by the author. I hoped that I could take the names, especially those with whom he seemed to associate on a daily basis, and relate them to the names found on the payroll of one of the companies. The first few pages yielded tantalizing but hardly definitive clues:

- 2 June The Elwood brought mail. I got a St. John's News from Cotton but no letter. Spence however got one from him ... Bob Langille seems sick, he has been failing for some time....
- 7 June Lce. Corp. Grey (Fredericton) refused to fall in at all saying he was no d——d pac mule....
- 8 June Immediately after reveille [sic] this morning (5:30) we got the order. Turn out No. 3 at once in marching order....

Clearly the last cited quotation pointed strongly to the diarist being a member of No. 3 Company. As well, the aforementioned individuals (Spence, Langille, and Grey) were all found on No. 3 Company payroll for 1 to 30 June 1898.³

I felt that these references represented good, but not conclusive evidence. I wanted the weight of a series of solid references before I would begin to look for clues pointing to an individual within a particular company. Other references followed in rapid succession:

3 Public Archives of Canada (hereafter PAC), Department of Militia and Defence, Record Group 9, II F 7, vol. 11.

- 11 June Issued with what is supposed to be a two months supply of tobacco, but through a mistake of Sgt. Lapierre's our section got only 4 plugs. I got two extra from Bobbie Graham....
- 12 June I am for guard at 6 PM with Platt and Lowe....
- 13 June Platt, Lowe and I slept in the open rolled in our blankets....

Almost all the soldiers mentioned in the above quotation were found on the No. 3 Company payroll for June 1898. Finally came the reference which confirmed the diarist's affiliation with No. 3 Company:

- 19 June Yesterday the vacancies in our tent caused by the men who have gone away with the ax party were filled. Corp. Hansen taking Corp. Hanlon's place. There are now in our tent Sgt. Lapierre, Corp. Hansen, Fowler, Platt, myself, Spence, Lefebvre, Doré, Graham, Hayes, McGowan and Lowe....

All the above mentioned men were found on the No. 3 Company June 1898 payroll. If the diarist's tent mates were from No. 3 Company, there could be little doubt about his own affiliation. Later references in the diary only served to confirm my conclusion.

But how to distinguish the mysterious diarist from the fifty-four other enlisted men in No. 3 Company? I continued my careful reading of each page, noting anything which could conceivably isolate the diarist from his comrades. As well, I continued to compile my list of all the names mentioned in the text. There was a chance that if the evidence I gathered pointed to more than one soldier in the company, my list of names could prove decisive in distinguishing between the author and his comrades.

The original diary began on page 25 and ended on page 147. On page 103, the clue I had been waiting for presented itself! The diarist casually mentioned the pay he received for a specific period of time.

- 26 September We only worked until 3:45 PM on account of pay which we received up to the end of June. I received \$44.70....

Now this was a statement that could be directly related to a specific individual on the company payroll! A check of No. 3 Company payroll for June failed to reveal any private soldier who received that sum. Again on page 112 the diarist mentioned his pay:

- 26 October We received three months pay this afternoon viz. July, Aug. & Sept. I received \$83.30....

Once more I was unable to relate this lump sum payment to anything I found in the paylists. However, his next entry concerning pay proved more helpful:

- 11 November Pay for October \$32.60....

Had getting them him up again. The Sapper seems to know just what they wanted him to do & then go and do exactly the opposite. Finally they had to lug him up with a man and mule & a carrier. We have had a working day: no work at all.

Sun June 19th It has been raining all night & is still raining. Church Parade altered from 7 to 10 am. then postponed indefinitely. Yesterday the vacancies in our tent caused by the men who have gone away with the ice party, were filled. Corp Hansen taking Corp Stenlon's place. There are now in our tent Sgt Lapierre, Corp Stenlon, Fowler, Platt, myself, Spence, Lefebvre, Dore, Graham, Mayes, Dr. Gowan & Lane. There is a report from the comd. the 40 Indians have gone wild up the trail & have killed one man & wounded another I think however it is merely a yarn. The Dr. was sent for this afternoon for some one or one of the advance parties, I have not heard who it is. It has been raining all day and is still at it (Retreat) We have not been out of the tent all day. Our tent is however fairly waterproof so we are pretty comfortable & thanks to the two batches of papers received last week are well provided with reading matter. I am reading just now "An Ocean Tragedy" by Clara Russell. Our kits & rifles are all piled outside the tent covered as far as possible with moose sheets, but I expect they will be in a pretty state after all this rain. At 8.30. a mail came in & I got another batch of papers but not letters.

Checking the payroll for October 1898 I found that under the "Cash Received" column three private soldiers had received \$32.60! These men were L. Lefebvre, E. Lincoln, and H. Wakefield.⁴ But how to distinguish our diarist from his two comrades?

Here is where my cumulative list of names mentioned by the author proved its worth. Our diarist had already referred to both Lefebvre and Wakefield as comrades in arms. I was fairly certain now that E. Lincoln was the diarist. To be absolutely certain, however, I once again sought the weight of evidence presented by a series of additional facts.

By the time I reached page 130 of the 147 page diary, I began to have a sinking feeling that my diligent search might yield only one slim proof of identity. Then on pages 132 and 134 the additional facts I needed suddenly materialized:

26 January [1899] Pay for Dec. \$30.80....

21 February Pay for January \$21.55....

I fumbled nervously with the dry, dusty pages of the paylists, where the faded handwriting indicated that only one private soldier in No. 3 Company received \$30.80 — E. Lincoln. Similarly, the January payroll disclosed that only Pte. E. Lincoln, of all the enlisted men, received \$21.55. There could be no doubt that Lincoln was "the unknown member of the Yukon Field Force" who, inadvertently or otherwise, had left his diary as a time capsule secreted amid the ruins of Fort Selkirk.

But who was Pte. E. Lincoln? A careful re-reading of the diary produced a number of interesting facts. Lincoln many times mentioned receiving letters from "St. Johns." As well, he often reminisced about his barrack room comrades at "St. Johns." At first I assumed that the reference was to Saint John, New Brunswick, as I recollected that there were men from the Maritime provinces in the Field Force. However, a quick check of the main secondary source indicated that the force was composed of subunits of the Royal Canadian Dragoons, the Royal Canadian Artillery, and the Royal Regiment of the Canadian Infantry. These subunits were from Fredericton, Quebec, St. Jean, Kingston, Toronto, London, and Winnipeg. Clearly, no units from Saint John, New Brunswick, but one from St. Jean, or "St. John," Quebec. This fact was the starting point for further research into the old records of the Department of Militia and Defence which eventually resulted in a fairly comprehensive record of Pte. Lincoln's career in Canada's armed forces.

The inventory to the Records of the Department of Militia and Defence revealed that at the turn of the century, No. 3 Company, Regimental Depot of the Royal Regiment of Canadian Infantry, was stationed at St. Jean, Quebec. The earliest reference to our diarist was found on a February 1895 payroll of officers, non-commissioned officers, and men attached for instruction No. 3 Company.⁵ The lists of attached personnel for the period February-May 1895 revealed that Lincoln, late of the 60th Battalion, was taking a Short Course of military instruction. By August 1895, Lincoln's name disappeared from the payroll of those under instruction

4 *Ibid.*, vol. 12.

5 PAC, RG 9, II F 8, vol. 11

and first appeared on the Permanent Force payroll of No. 3 Company, Royal Regiment of Canadian Infantry.⁶ This was the beginning of our diarist's professional military career in Canada's armed forces.

What of Lincoln's career prior to 1895? At this point, my attempts to use the Department of Militia and Defence records to push my knowledge of his career back before February 1895 failed. Regrettably, the paylists of Lincoln's non-permanent militia unit, the 60th Battalion, for the years 1893-1898 have not survived and the unit was disbanded in 1898, not to reappear until 1913. I did, however, uncover a tantalizing reference to E. Lincoln in the Adjutant-General's Correspondence Register. The reference was to a letter from the commanding officer of the 60th Battalion recommending Lincoln for the Long Course of Military Instruction. Unfortunately, the document itself was missing.⁷

Yet, if Edward Lincoln's immediate past still remained a mystery, I was hopeful that I could trace his progress in the Permanent Force and perhaps cast some light on his personal life. Using the indispensable paylists, I was able to trace Private Edward Lincoln's career from August 1895 to June 1897 as a member of No. 3 Company, Royal Regiment of Canadian Infantry, at St. Jean, Quebec. Our diarist next appeared on the payroll of No. 3 Company of the Yukon Field Force at Vancouver in May 1898 just as the Force was about to embark for the voyage north.⁸

Although I anticipated no problems in tracing Lincoln's Yukon experience with the Field Force and his return to St. Jean, Quebec, I was in for a few surprises! As outlined earlier, the Field Force left the Yukon in two stages. In September 1899, four officers and eighty-eight other ranks left via Skagway. The paylists indicate that the balance of the Force which remained, including Private Lincoln, was divided into two small garrisons at Dawson and Fort Selkirk. The payroll for May 1900 lists Private Lincoln as one of the nine-man garrison at Fort Selkirk.⁹ The list for June 1900 indicates that Lincoln, now promoted corporal, was transferred to the Dawson contingent.¹⁰

In June 1900, the remainder of the Field Force left the Yukon Territory. The final payroll for the Force, prior to dispersal, was dated at Toronto, 12 July 1900.¹¹ Yet, incredibly, Corporal Lincoln's name was not on the list! It appeared that he either did not return from the Yukon or he was transferred directly back to his original unit. Moreover, Lincoln's name did not appear on the paylists of No. 3 Company at St. Jean for this period.

At first, I felt that our diarist must have been transferred to one of the other four companies of his regiment. After a rather frantic search through the many boxes of company paylists for the year 1900, I finally found Corporal Lincoln's name on No. 5 Company paylists as "on command in Dawson".¹² But why would one corporal be

6 *Ibid.*

7 PAC, RG 9, II B 1, vol. 513, pt. 1, docket no. 57272.

8 PAC, RG 9, II F 7, vol. 11.

9 *Ibid.*, vol. 13.

10 *Ibid.*

11 *Ibid.*

12 PAC, RG 9, II F 8, vol. 49.

left in the Yukon long after the rest of the Field Force had been withdrawn? Was this the Liberal Government's method in 1900 of reducing Canada's northern military presence to a bare minimum? Was Lincoln our "corporal's guard" in the northern latitudes? Leaving aside atrocious puns, Corporal Lincoln's sturdy presence at Dawson intrigued me.

Close scrutiny of the correspondence register for the Adjutant-General's office led me to letters and memoranda which disclosed some interesting information concerning our diarist's Yukon service.¹³ Lincoln's continued presence at Dawson long after the last contingent of the Field Force had left in June 1900, was explained by Superintendent Zachary Taylor Wood of the North West Mounted Police to the Deputy Adjutant General in a letter from Dawson dated 20 November 1900:

I have the honor to state that when the Yukon Garrison left here last June, Reg. No. 5068 Corporal Edward Lincoln...was left behind, as he was required as an important witness in the case of the Queen vs O'Brien held for murder.¹⁴

My curiosity about Lincoln's role in this murder case led me to the Capital Case Files in the Department of Justice records. An examination of the O'Brien murder trial transcript indicated that Lincoln had never been called as a witness.¹⁵ Indeed, it failed to make mention of him at all!

Although at this point in my research Lincoln's role in the celebrated O'Brien murder case¹⁶ remained somewhat enigmatic, further probing of the Adjutant-General's correspondence did unearth one gem. In a letter written in his own hand at Dawson on 28 August 1900, Lincoln briefly explained his detention in the north and made a request of his company commander back in Quebec City:

Sir:

I have the honour to request that you will with the least possible delay make arrangements for the forwarding of my pay to the above address [c/o NWMP, Dawson, YT]. As you are no doubt aware I am detained as a Crown witness in a murder trial & at present there seems to be no possibility of the trial taking place before winter or even this year. I am entirely without funds & owe for washing etc.¹⁷

Poor Lincoln! His company commander claimed in a letter to his superior that in early August 1900 he had received instructions to withhold Lincoln's pay. Whatever the reason for the error, our diarist had received no pay since June 1900 and he was reduced to borrowing money from the North West Mounted Police Contingency Account at Dawson for his day-to-day expenses. Documents on file indicate the situation was rectified and Lincoln was sufficiently mollified to re-enlist in the Permanent Force on 17 March 1901 while still marooned in the Yukon. The same

13 PAC, RG 9, II B 1, vol. 513, pt. 1.

14 *Ibid.*, vol. 327, no. 92649.

15 PAC, RG 13, C 1, vol. 1440.

16 George O'Brien was found guilty of the murder of Lynn Wallace Relfe near Minto, Yukon Territory, on or about 25 December 1899. However, the murder was a triple one, Frederick H. Clayton and Lawrence Olsen having been killed at the same time. O'Brien was sentenced to death on 22 June 1901 and executed at Dawson on 22 August 1902.

17 PAC, RG 9, II B 1, vol. 326, no. 92287.



Physical Drill by the Yukon Field Force, Dawson, Y.T., 1900. Courtesy: Public Archives of Canada, C-1339.

file also contained memoranda which indicated that prior to the departure of the Field Force, when Lincoln was stationed as part of a ten-man garrison at Fort Selkirk in February 1900, he was part of a police team that rushed medical assistance to a member of the North West Mounted Police.¹⁸ In a memorandum dated May 1901, the Comptroller of the NWMP informed the *Department of Militia and Defence* that Corporal Lincoln had now submitted a claim for pay to the Mounted Police for his services! When asked to comment on Lincoln's claim for pay, Lt. Col. Hemming, late commanding officer of the Yukon Field Force, wrote that he knew little of the case itself, but he did know that Lincoln should receive no extra pay:

All I know about this case is that Major Perry got permission from Corporal Lincoln to proceed up river with Captain Scarth N.W.M.P. to attend to a man with a frozen foot at Big Salmon. I am under the impression that Corpl. Lincoln volunteered for this service, to my knowledge no understanding was made as regards to pay for this service.¹⁹

Corporal Lincoln remained at Dawson till midsummer 1901. Number 5 Company payroll of the Royal Regiment of Canadian Infantry indicates that Lincoln reached Vancouver on 16 August 1901.²⁰ By the following month, he was signing his own name on the company payroll. Further research revealed that, in

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ PAC, RG 9, II F 8, vol. 50

September 1901, Lincoln was transferred to No. 4 Company at Fredericton, where he is listed as an "Acting Hospital Sergeant."²¹ He was confirmed in this rank on 10 September 1901 and remained at Fredericton until June 1902, when he was transferred back to his original subunit, No. 3 Company, at St. Jean, Quebec.

Once back with his old company, Sgt. Lincoln soon fell on evil days. The payroll for April 1903 listed him as being paid at the rank of sergeant for the first eighteen days of the month, then at the rank of private for the balance of the month.²² In July 1903, a note on the company payroll indicated that he "Reverted to the ranks 9 July."²³ I was curious as to what befell our diarist, suspecting that such a loss of rank was the result of a court martial.

A reference in the Adjutant-General's Correspondence Register led me to docket number 1672/03, "Application for D.C. Martial [for] No. 5068 Sgt. E. Lincoln No. 3 Co. R.C. Regt. 11.4.03." Lincoln pleaded guilty to the charge of being drunk while on piquet duty at St. Jean, Quebec, 7 April 1903. To the question "Do you wish to make any statement in mitigation of Punishment?" Lincoln replied:

Since my return from the Youkon [sic] I have had a good deal of family and private trouble and have been drinking perhaps more than I should do. I should like to draw the attention of the Court to the fact that I have no Regimental entry between 7th December 1895 and the summer of 1901, after my return from the Youkon. It was on account of my general good conduct in the Youkon that Lt. Col. Hemming gave me my rank.²⁴

On 18 April, the court sentenced Sgt. Lincoln to be reduced to the rank of corporal. He reverted to the rank of private in July 1903. Lincoln remained with No. 3 Company until 16 March 1904 when he was struck off strength.²⁵

At this point, with his departure from the Permanent Force, I lost contact with our diarist. The series of correspondence registers which provided me with such fruitful access to the Adjutant-General and Deputy Minister's correspondence series in the Old Militia and Defence Department end abruptly in 1903. My most rewarding sources had dried up! I searched all the Royal Canadian Regiment paylists for the next two years hoping to find that Lincoln had re-enlisted. No luck. The trail seemed lost. There was the faint possibility, of course, that our diarist had re-enlisted in another Permanent Force unit. However, to sift through scores of paylists on such a search hardly seemed worth the effort.

There remained only one other general source that I had not yet consulted: the Reference Files of the Manuscript Division. These files contain research reports on persons, places, and events prepared over the years by PAC staff in response to various inquiries. I knew that some of these reports dated back to the 1920s. I judged that the possibility of finding any information on so obscure a figure as Lincoln was very remote. Yet, it was a case of not leaving the last stone, however unpromising, unturned.

21 *Ibid.*, vol. 42.

22 *Ibid.*, vol. 35.

23 *Ibid.*

24 PAC, RG 9, II B 1, vol. 467, no. 1672/03.

25 PAC, RG 9, II F 8, vol. 36.

Reference File 1536 was initiated by an Archives' employee in November 1920 in response to a letter from the Department of Militia and Defence. The department's Director of Records forwarded a copy of a letter received from a soldier requesting a long-service pension. The soldier's pension request contained a brief summary of his military career that the department wished verified by archival records. The soldier was, incredibly enough, Edward Lincoln. The resumé that he offered to the Board of Pension Commissioners confirmed all of my information about his military career and added more. Although I had lost contact with Lincoln after his discharge in 1904, I learned from his resumé that he had re-enlisted in the Royal Canadian Regiment in 1907 and subsequently transferred to the Army Medical Corps. He was discharged upon the expiration of his term in January 1910, but in February re-enlisted in the Royal Canadian Dragoons. He purchased his discharge from the Dragoons in August. However, it was the final paragraph of his resumé which provided me with the greatest surprise of my research:

Enlisted and served in Permanent Corps under the 'alias' of Edward Lincoln on account of private family reasons. Those reasons no longer existing, served in C.E.F. and am now living under my own name.
(sgd) Edward Lester
(late) Corpl. 33rd Battn C.E.F.

Edward Lester's letter went on to outline briefly his First World War career in the Canadian Expeditionary Force and to list his CEF serial number. Using the serial number, I was able to contact the National Personnel Records Centre in Ottawa and obtain a limited amount of information from his CEF file. Although most of the information was not new, Lester did list his date and place of birth as 15 April 1871 at Liverpool, England. His date of death was listed as 23 May 1938 at Toronto. Lester's obituary, which I located in the *Globe and Mail* stated simply that he died

At Christie St. Hospital on Monday May 23 1938. Edward Lester in his 79th year (late Corporal 33rd Battalion) beloved husband of Adelia Alice Langille.²⁶

Interestingly enough, Lester's age in the obituary is in conflict with his stated date of birth on his CEF file. However, given his earlier efforts to conceal his identity, this discrepancy is understandable. Perhaps Lester had forgotten it himself!

With Lester's (alias Lincoln) identity firmly established, it only remained to confirm how the diary came into the possession of the late Miss Taylor. As I indicated earlier, the envelope, which contained the diary, bore the notation "Yukon Field Force Diary found in the old barracks at Fort Selkirk by Florence Taylor (probably in 1919)." The reference to the date of discovery was so vague, however, that I doubted whether the notation had really been written by Miss Taylor. Perhaps it had been the work of a lawyer sent to inventory the estate after her death. In any case, I wanted to confirm the circumstances of the diary's discovery and if possible learn something of the life of the discoverer herself. Who was Miss Taylor and what had she been doing in the Yukon?

26 *Globe and Mail*, 26 May 1938, p. 26.

A copy of Florence Taylor's will had been forwarded by the executors along with the diary. The other beneficiaries, besides the Public Archives of Canada, included two brothers, one of whom, Mr. Charles Taylor, was a resident of the Yukon Territory. While I was contemplating contacting Mr. Taylor, a letter arrived from the Yukon Archives. Mr. Taylor had been informed of his sister's bequest to the Public Archives and had contacted the territorial archives which was near his home in Whitehorse. The Yukon Archives wrote requesting a copy of the diary. Within a short time the territorial archives had its copy of the diary and I had a transcript of an interview with Charles Taylor concerning his late sister.

Florence Annie Taylor was born in Whitehorse, Yukon Territory, on 8 August 1904, the daughter of Mrs. and Mrs. Isaac Taylor. Mr. Taylor and William S. Drury were partners in the general merchandise firm of Taylor and Drury. The eldest child in the family, Florence Taylor, received an excellent education which may account for her careful guardianship of the diary and its eventual donation to the Public Archives. After obtaining her primary and secondary education in local schools, she was sent overseas at sixteen to attend the Clairemont School for Girls at Esher, England. Later schooling took place at the Sorbonne and the London School of Economics.

According to her brother, it was on a visit with her family about 1925, while staying with an uncle who managed the family store at Fort Selkirk, that she discovered the diary in the nearby abandoned barracks.

From about 1928 to 1932, Florence Taylor worked as assistant staff superintendent and later as a departmental manager for the Woodward's department store in Vancouver. In 1933, she emigrated to England and worked in the Juvenile Employment Office for the London Region until her retirement in 1969. She died in England on 28 May 1980.