

March 24, 1920: Flight Cadet Hubert Edward Pettipas



Date of Birth: March 25, 1894, at East Tracadie, Antigonish County

Parents: Hubert and Marie (Decoste) Pettipas

Siblings: Brothers Joseph, Benjamin, Peter, Jeremiah, William, Desiré and Reginald; sisters Ella and Bertha

Marital Status: Single

Occupation: Bank Clerk

Enlistment: February 1, 1916, at Moncton, NB

Units: 145th Battalion; 165th Battalion (Acadiens); No. 47 Company, Canadian Forestry Corps; Royal Flying Corps/Royal Air Force

Service #: 832298

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Rank: Flight Cadet

Previous Military Service: None

Next of Kin: Hubert Pettipas, East Tracadie, Antigonish County, NS (father)

Date of Death: March 24, 1920, at Dartmouth, NS

Final Resting Place: St. Peter's Roman Catholic Cemetery, Tracadie, Antigonish County, NS

Hubert Edward Pettipas was born on March 25, 1894, to Marie (Decoste) and Hubert Pettipas, East Tracadie, Antigonish County. Hubert had deep roots in Nova Scotia and Antigonish County on his father's side. The Pettipas family is descended from Claude (Sr.) Pettipas of Port Royal, also known as Sieur de la Fleur. Claude Sr. became clerk of the Court at Port Royal under the Governor of the time and raised a family of 13 children. His third child, also named Claude (Jr.), became a trader and ship master who operated between Port Royal, Musquodabouet (Musquodoboit Harbour, NS) & Port Toulouse (St. Peter's, Cape Breton).

Claude Jr., born in 1663, also had a large family. His first marriage to Marie-Therese Sauvagese, of Mi'kmaq origin, produced seven children before Marie-Therese's passing. In 1721, Claude Jr. remarried Françoise Lavandier of Port Royal, and the couple raised four sons—Jean Baptiste, Jacques, Joseph and Louis. Due to the constant warfare between French-controlled Acadia (Nova Scotia) and England—particularly its 13 Colonies—Claude Jr. moved his family to St. Peter's for safety, following the death of his first wife.

Claude and Françoise's four sons operated out of Chezzetcook, NS, as ship's captains and traders. Louis was well connected, his 35-ton schooner Longsplice conducting trade between Halifax and Boston, even during the American War of Independence. Louis eventually moved to Boston with his family in May 1781, following the end of hostilities.

Claude Jr. passed way at St. Peter's in 1731 and his widow, Françoise, remarried Antoine Lavandier, a relationship that produced two more children, Abraham and Marguerite. Abraham

Lavandier eventually settled in Antigonish County on land grants obtained at East Tracadie, Linwood and Tracadie. Joseph Pettipas later joined his half-brother, relocating there from Chezzetcook sometime after 1781.

Joseph Pettipas, born in 1731—the same year as his father’s death—first married Louise Fougere, a union that produced five children. A second marriage to Marguerite Breau resulted in five more descendants. Michael Pettipas, a child from Joseph’s first marriage, married Victorie Girroir. Their son, Desiré Pettipas—born in 1818—was the father of Hubert Pettipas and grandfather of Hubert E. Pettipas.

Desiré Pettipas became the patriarch of a large East Tracadie family, passing away sometime after 1891. He was a strong presence in the community, donating land for its first school. His son, Hubert, was also a community leader, his full white beard making him a very distinct figure. Hubert married Marie Decoste, daughter of Jean-Michel Decoste. This branch of the Decoste family was known as the “Joe Webbs,” as their grandfather drowned while fishing in St George’s Bay, and his children were taken in by the Webb family.

Hubert Edward Pettipas attended the local school and was working as bank clerk with the Canadian Bank of Commerce’s Moncton branch when he enlisted in the 145th Battalion on February 1, 1916. Transferred to the 165th Battalion (Acadiens) on April 24, 1916, Hubert was soon promoted to the rank of Sergeant. After a lengthy delay, the 165th departed for overseas aboard SS *Metagama* on March 25, 1917, and arrived at Shoreham, England, on April 12.

Shortly afterward, the 165th was absorbed by the 13th Reserve Battalion, New Brunswick’s depot unit for its front-line battalions. Hubert, however, was transferred to the Canadian Forestry Corps on May 9 and six weeks later was assigned to No. 47 Company, CFC. Shortly afterward, he reported to its camp at Jura, France.

Before year’s end, Hubert reverted to the rank of Private in order to pursue an opportunity to serve with the Royal Flying Corps (RFC). He returned to England on November 26, 1917, and reported to the RFC’s Farnborough base. Shortly after his arrival, Hubert was promoted to the rank of Acting Sergeant with pay. Upon completing four months’ training at Farnborough, he departed for Alexandria, Egypt, on April 15, 1918.

At that time, there was a huge British Imperial force in Egypt. Early in the war, ground forces successfully repelled a Turkish advance on the Suez Canal and subsequently drove Turkish forces out of Palestine. The offensive was intended to keep Turkish forces away from the strategic Suez Canal, a vital British link to its eastern colonies, particularly India and Australia.

Shortly before Hubert’s departure for Egypt, the newly created Royal Air Force (RAF) combined the members of the Royal Flying Corps and Royal Naval Air Service into one cohesive fighting force. On April 27, 1918, Hubert arrived at the Aboukir RAF Base Depot, about seven miles east of Alexandria, Egypt. Three weeks later, he reported to No. 3 Cadet Wing at Heliopolis, near

Cairo, for a “course of instruction.” Upon completing his training in mid-September, he received the rank of “Flight Cadet.”

On November 25, while working in one of the base’s hangars, Hubert suffered injuries from a “burning tin of petrol.” While he was attempting to extinguish the fire, flames leapt from the canister. Hubert jumped back and fell, suffering further injury. He was admitted to hospital with “superficial burns to both knees and [his] right arm.” A subsequent investigation into the incident concluded that Flight Cadet Pettipas suffered his injuries in the performance of his duties and was not at fault, blaming the fire on an “unknown party.”

Discharged from hospital on December 7, Hubert continued his duties until late January 1919, when he “cease[d] flying instruction but retain[ed] rank of F/Cadet.” On March 11, he returned to RAF Base Depot, Aboukir, for “repatriation” and departed for England on June 10. While formally discharged from military service on September 19, 1919, Hubert had departed from Liverpool the SS *Megantic* four days previously and arrived at Montreal, QC, on September 23.

Hubert made his way back home by train and returned to his previous career, obtaining a position as a bank clerk at the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce’s Antigonish branch. Life appeared to return to normal until mid-March 1920, when Hubert suffered a severe attack of influenza. Admitted to the Nova Scotia Hospital, Dartmouth, NS, shortly afterward, he died at 7:15 a.m. March 24, 1920. Hubert’s remains were returned to Tracadie, where he was laid to rest in St. Peter’s Roman Catholic Cemetery close to his mother Marie, who had passed away on February 1, 1916, the same date on which Hubert had enlisted.

Two other members of the Pettipas family served during the First World War. Hubert’s brother, Benjamin, was conscripted under the Military Service Act (1917) in March 1918 but never departed for overseas service. Another brother, Desiré, registered for the United States military draft at Boston, MA, on June 5, 1917. No further details are available on his military service.

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