

Private Stanley Theodore Hunter[©]
Regimental Number: 343
2nd Canadian Battalion (Eastern Ontario Regiment)

born: 28 September 1896–died: 2 April 1918

Private Stanley Theodore Hunter spent most of his wartime service in relative safety, assisting dentists in the Canadian Army Dental Corps in Britain. He was at the Front for just three weeks before incurring his fatal injury.

Stanley was born on 28 September 1896 in Kingston, Frontenac County, Ontario, to John Charles Hunter and Ida Delia Smith.¹ John had been born on 6 September 1871 in Smiths Falls, Lanark County, Ontario, and had a number of occupations during his life, from butcher² to carter³ to assistant plumber (during a short interval in Watertown, New York)⁴ to transfer agent⁵ and teamster.⁶ Ida had been born in July 1875 in Kingston.⁷ They married on 1 November 1893 in Frontenac⁸ and had four children, all but one born in Kingston: Stanley; Charles Hilton, born on 23 September 1898 in Kingston;⁹ Gladys May, born in April 1901 in Adams, New York, USA,¹⁰ and Ida Myrtle, born on 29 May 1903 in Kingston.¹¹

Although the family was living in New York when Gladys was born in early 1901, it was for a short time only, as the July 1898 to July 1899 Kingston Directory shows the family living at 321 Brock Street, and the 1900-01 Kingston Directory shows the family living at 155 Bagot Street.¹² In 1911 the family was living in Kingston and John was a teamster.¹³

Stanley enlisted with the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force on 1 June 1916 at the age of 19. He was then single and working as a salesman. Stanley arrived in England in December 1917 and



Patient in chair, Canadian Army Dental Corps
Source: Topley Studio, Library and Archives Canada,
PA-012794

the first 14 months of his time there was spent with the Canadian Army Dental Corps stationed in Bramshott, a Canadian training base in Hampshire; in London; and finally at Seaford, another Canadian training base in Sussex.¹⁴

The Canadian Army Dental Corps was established in May 1915 under the administrative control of the director of medical services. It included dental officers, NCOs and privates. They served in hospitals in the UK as well as at or near the front lines in France, Greece, Italy and Belgium. Each dental surgeon had a batman and an orderly to assist him. The functions of this corps included dental inspections on arrival in England and prior to departing for home, normal preventative care, special reconstructive surgery in dedicated clinics, and treatment of wounds and trench mouth.¹⁵ Trench mouth was a common, non-contagious infection of the gums

featuring bleeding gums and ulceration of the gums between teeth. Many soldiers developed the disease during this war, probably due to the poor conditions and extreme psychological stress.¹⁶

However, on 7 February 1918 Stanley was drafted to the 2nd Canadian Battalion at Seaford. Shortly thereafter, he arrived in France at the Canadian Corps Reinforcement Centre, where troops were held before being sent to reinforce existing units, and he joined the 2nd Canadian Battalion on 1 March.

Stanley was immediately sent to the Front, where his battalion was supporting other troops. They performed trench maintenance at night, sometimes during violent bombardments. On 5 March 1918 his battalion was relieved and moved to billets in Les Brebis. There, Stanley would have enjoyed having a bath, receiving his pay, and perhaps attending church services and the Battalion Concert Party at the Brebis YMCA Cinema. Of course, there was daily training occurring as well.¹⁷

On 20 March the battalion moved from its billets and proceeded to the forward area in the left subsection of Hill 70. At 5:30 a.m. on 21 March, under cover of an intense bombardment and heavy smoke, the enemy raided and successfully entered the trenches where Stanley's regiment was located. Although the enemy was forced to retreat after suffering heavy casualties, one officer and 29 soldiers were injured while 10 soldiers were killed.¹⁸ Sadly, Stanley was seriously wounded during this raid, suffering several shrapnel wounds to his legs and a compound fracture of his left foot and right ankle.¹⁹

Stanley was triaged at No. 2 Canadian Field Ambulance then taken to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station. A casualty clearing station (CCS) is a military medical facility behind the front lines that is used to treat wounded soldiers. A CCS would usually be located just beyond the range of enemy artillery and often near transportation facilities (e.g., a railway). The CCS receives battlefield casualties from regimental aid posts located in the combat zone. Casualties that cannot be adequately treated in the CCS are stabilized there before being transported to a field hospital or military hospital.²⁰

In trying to save Stanley's life, doctors amputated part of one leg, but the effort was unsuccessful. Stanley died of complications from his wounds on 2 April 1918 and was buried the same day at Houchin British Cemetery (Row F, Grave 3).^{21 22} Houchin Cemetery was opened in March 1918 when No. 6 British CCS came to Houchin. From April to September the German advance made Houchin unsafe for hospitals, and the cemetery was used by the 55th (West Lancashire) Division. In September 1918, No. 6 British CCS returned to Houchin and was joined by No. 15 British CCS in October.²³

Stanley received posthumously the British War Medal and the Allied Victory Medal for his service at the Front during those several weeks in March 1918. The British War Medal was issued to men of the British and Imperial Forces who entered a theatre of war between 5 August 1914 and 11 November 1918. It was a silver medal, the front of which depicts the head of George V. The recipient's service number, rank, name and unit were impressed on the rim. The Allied Victory Medal is bronze, depicting a winged classical figure representing victory. It was similarly inscribed on the rim with the recipient's service number, rank, name and unit.²⁴



Gravestone of Private Stanley Theodore Hunter

Source: Find a Grave

Tragically for this family, Stanley lost both his sister and his mother to tuberculosis while he was away serving his country. Sister Gladys died on 24 January 1917 at the age of 16 after suffering from the disease for two years,²⁵ and his mother Ida died on 18 June 1917, after suffering for three years.²⁶ However, the Memorial Cross (commonly known as the Silver Cross) for her son's sacrifice was still sent to his mother. This medal was awarded to the mother or widow of Canadian soldiers who died on active duty.²⁷

Stanley's father John remarried on 4 September 1919 to Margaret Gilmour²⁸ and passed away on 25 April 1931 in Kingston, Ontario, of pneumonia and cardiac dropsy.²⁹

Sadly, Stanley's last sister Myrtle also died young of tuberculosis at the age of 18, on 28 January 1922.³⁰

Stanley's brother Hilton married Ethel Harnbrook on 8 September 1919.³¹ He does not appear to have served in the war. In 1921 Hilton and Ethel were living with her parents and their infant daughter Audry in Kingston.³² Hilton continued to live with Ethel in Kingston until at least 1949, but no further records were confirmed for him.³³

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¹ "Ontario, Canada Births, 1858–1913," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 15 April 2017), entry for Stanley Theodore Hunter

² "1891 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 15 April 2017), entry for John Hunter, Province: Ontario, District number: 80, District: Kingston City, Sub-district: Victoria Ward

³ "Ontario, Canada, Marriages, 1801–1928, 1933–1934," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 15 April 2017), entry for John C Hunter

⁴ "1900 United States Federal Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 15 April 2017), entry for John Hunter

⁵ "Ontario, Canada, Marriages, 1801–1928, 1933–1934," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 15 April 2017), entry for John Chas Hunter

⁶ "1911 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 10 August 2020), entry for John C Hurter [sic], Province: Ontario, District: East Kingston, District number: 86, Sub-district: 6-Kingston

⁷ "1900 United States Federal Census," *Ancestry*, entry for John Hunter

⁸ "Ontario, Canada, Marriages, 1826–1938," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 8 August 2020), entry for Ida Delea [sic] Smith

⁹ "Ontario, Canada Births, 1858–1913," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 15 April 2017), entry for Charles Hilton Hunter

¹⁰ "1911 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 10 August 2020), entry for John C Hurter [sic]

¹¹ "Ontario, Canada Births, 1858–1913," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 15 April 2017), entry for Ida Myrtle Hunter

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- ¹² City Directories 1855-1923, *Kingston Frontenac Public Library* (<https://research.digitalkingston.ca/records-and-documents/city-directories/city-directories-1855-1923>: accessed 9 August 2020), entry for Hunter, John
- ¹³ "1911 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 10 August 2020), entry for John C Hurter [sic]
- ¹⁴ "Service Files of the First World War, 1914–1918 - CEF," *Library and Archives Canada* (<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/>: accessed 15 April 2017) entry for Hunter, Stanley, Reference: RG 150 Accession 1992-93/166, Box 1635-22, Item number: 472713, Digitized service file - PDF format: B4635-S022. Unless otherwise noted, all information about Stanley's military service comes from this source.
- ¹⁵ "The Royal Canadian Dental Corps," *Canadiansoldiers.com* (<https://www.canadiansoldiers.com/corpsbranches/dentalcorps.htm>: accessed 17 April 2017)
- ¹⁶ "Trench Mouth," *Wikipedia* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acute_necrotizing_ulcerative_gingivitis: accessed 15 April 2017)
- ¹⁷ "2nd Canadian Infantry Battalion War Diary," *Collections Canada* (http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=2nd+Canadian+Battalion&s13=&s12=&l=20&s9=RG9&s7=9-52&Sect1=IMAGE&Sect2=THESOFF&Sect4=AND&Sect5=WARDPEN&Sect6=HITOFF&d=FINDD&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=3&f=G: accessed 15 April 2017)
- ¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁹ "Service Files of the First World War, 1914–1918," *Ancestry*, entry for Hunter, Stanley
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- ²¹ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 15 April 2017), entry for Hunter, S. T.
- ²² *Find A Grave* (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/50534811/s-t-hunter>: accessed 9 August 2020), entry for Private S. T. Hunter
- ²³ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 15 April 2017), entry for Houchin British Cemetery
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- ²⁵ "Ontario, Canada, Deaths and Deaths Overseas, 1869–1948," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 10 August 2020), entry for Gildy [sic] May Hunter
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- ³⁰ "Ontario, Canada, Deaths, 1869–1938 and Deaths Overseas, 1939–1947," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 15 April 2017), entry for Myrtle Hunter
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