

Personal Profile

- Full Name: John Colin Henderson (Henderson,... p. 1).
- Date of Birth: June 23, 1887 (Henderson,... p. 1).
- Place of Birth: East Boston, Massachusetts, USA (Henderson,... p. 1).
- Next of Kin: His mother, Mrs. Angus McMaster, residing in Creignish, Inverness County, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia (Henderson,... pp. 17, 25).
- Trade or Calling: Listed as an Operator or Carpenter (Henderson,... pp. 1, 25).
- Prior Service: Served as a 1st Class Fireman in the United States Navy (Henderson,... p. 1).
- Religion: Roman Catholic (Henderson,... pp. 1, 18).

Enlistment & Description

- Date of Enlistment: November 14, 1916 (Henderson,... p. 1).
- Place of Enlistment: Maple Creek, Saskatchewan (Henderson,... p. 1).
- Initial Unit: 210th Overseas Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) (Henderson,... p. 1).
- Physical Metrics: 29 years old; 5 feet, 8 inches tall; dark complexion with brown eyes and dark brown hair (Henderson,... pp. 2, 18).

Timeline of Overseas Service & Postings

- April 1917: Left Canada from Halifax aboard the troopship *S.S. Carpathia* (also cross-referenced in records as the *S.S. Northland*), arriving in Liverpool, England on April 29, 1917 (Henderson,... pp. 18-19, 41). He never served in the frontline theatre of France (Henderson,... pp. 19, 37).
- May 1917: Absorbed into the 19th Canadian Reserve Battalion at Bramshott Camp (Henderson,... p. 41).
- October 1917: Transferred to the Saskatchewan Regimental Depot (SRD) (Henderson,... p. 41).
- November 1917 – January 1918: Attached for light base duties to the 4th Canadian General Hospital at Basingstoke (Henderson,... pp. 41-42).
- November 1918: Returned to Canada via Halifax aboard the *H.M.T. Aquitania* on November 28, 1918 (Henderson,... p. 25).
- February 5, 1919: Officially discharged from the military in Canada due to being Medically Unfit (Henderson,... pp. 17, 33).

Medical History & Chronic Conditions

Private Henderson's record shows he spent a massive portion of his overseas deployment hospitalized in England due to two painful, ongoing conditions:

1. **Fistula in Ano (Rectal Fistula):** This was his primary medical ailment (Henderson,... p. 35). He was first admitted to Connaught Hospital, Aldershot, on May 2, 1917, just days after landing (Henderson,... p. 41). He underwent a curage and surgical ligation operation at Bramshott Military Hospital on August 9, 1917, remaining hospitalized until October 27, 1917 (Henderson,... pp. 35-36). The condition re-ulcerated, leading to readmission to No. 12 Canadian General Hospital on February 5, 1918, where he underwent another incision surgery on February 18, 1918 (Henderson,... p. 37). Doctors later noted the operations were "not a success," leaving him permanently downgraded to medical fitness Category B-2 (Henderson,... pp. 15, 32).
2. **Chronic Suppurative Otitis Media:** Hospital ear specialists treated him for a chronic infection in both ears, noting a perforated left eardrum, a persistent foul-smelling discharge, and significantly impaired hearing (Henderson,... pp. 36, 38).

Discipline & Legal Record

Henderson's file highlights a highly turbulent disciplinary record while stationed in military camps:

- December 1916: Fined for Absent Without Leave (AWL) and Drunkenness during initial Canadian training (Henderson,... p. 21).
- October 1917: Went AWL for 11 days straight from camp (Henderson,... p. 36).
- March 1918: While a patient under hospital care, he escaped or walked out. On March 9, 1918, he was officially Struck Off Strength as a Deserter (Henderson,... pp. 9, 42).
 - August 1918: Apprehended after months on the run (Henderson,... p. 42). He was tried by a District Court Martial (DCM) on August 6, 1918, found guilty of "deserting His Majesty's Service," and sentenced to 90 days of hard detention alongside a forfeiture of pay (Henderson,... p. 42).

In the context of Private Henderson's sentence by a District Court Martial, "hard detention" (often referred to simply as "detention with hard labour") was a severe form of military incarceration (Henderson,... p. 42). It was served in specialized military prisons or camp detention barracks, such as the facility at Bramshott Camp where he was stationed (Henderson,... p. 42).

Unlike civilian prisons, which focused primarily on locking a person away, WWI military detention was explicitly designed to break a soldier's rebellious spirit, enforce absolute obedience, and maintain peak physical conditioning through exhausting, repetitive tasks.

A 90-day sentence of hard detention consisted of several harsh elements (Henderson,... p. 42):

1. Hard Labour and "Fatigues"

The "hard" aspect of the sentence meant being assigned to the most physically gruelling, miserable manual labour available in the camp. This typically included:

- Breaking stone or digging trenches only to fill them back up again.
- "Bucket details", which involved the near-continuous scrubbing, bleaching, and hand-waxing of the barracks' concrete floors.
- Shot Drill, a traditional military punishment where prisoners had to lift a heavy cannonball (or heavy sack), march a few paces, put it down, pick it up, and march back, repeating the process for hours under a sergeant's watch.

2. "Double-Quick" Drill and Constant Motion

Detainees were subjected to relentless military drill. However, inside the detention barracks, guards commonly forced prisoners to do everything at "double-quick time" (a jogging pace). Prisoners would spend hours marching, suddenly halting, doing push-ups, squats, or burpees, and then sprinting back into formation while being heavily reprimanded by the camp staff. [1, 2]

3. Total Loss of Privacy and Strict Silence

The psychological pressure was intense. Detainees were stripped of their standard uniform and given a basic, distinct prison uniform. [1]

- They were forbidden from speaking to any other prisoner. [1]
- They could not move, sit, or stand without the explicit, shouted permission of the supervising staff (referred to as "Disciplinarians"). [1]
- Daily "kit inspections" were brutal; if a prisoner's blanket layout or washbasin was even a millimeter out of place, their entire cell would be tossed, and extra physical punishments would be added.

4. Basic Rations and No Privileges

While undergoing hard detention, soldiers lost all access to creature comforts. They were denied tobacco, alcohol, letters from home, reading materials (except a Bible), and access to the camp canteen. Their pay was entirely stopped during the 90 days, meaning they emerged from detention completely broke (Henderson,... p. 42).

The Irony in Henderson's Case

What makes Private Henderson's 90-day sentence particularly grim was his existing medical condition (Henderson,... pp. 37, 42). As his file shows, he had spent the previous year suffering from an unhealed, ulcerated rectal fistula that continuously leaked pus and burned when he walked (Henderson,... pp. 32, 37). Being subjected to hours of heavy lifting, scrubbing on his knees, and double-time marching with a severe chronic infection would have been intensely

agonizing—and likely explains why his condition deteriorated so heavily by the time he was shipped back to Canada (Henderson,... pp. 37, 42).