

12th Mar 2011

Danny DELVES from Jacksonville, Florida writes about his grandfather George Edward DELVES:

George Edward DELVES born 7th Jun 1889, Long Preston, was the son of Thomas Hirst DELVES and Annie WRATHALL.

My Aunt Mary told me about five years ago this story which Grandmother Charlotte (George Edwards wife) told her many, many years ago.

At Lockinvar, Thomas Hirst Delves had horses, I don't know how many, but one was an Arabian that only he rode and which was used for breeding as they were quite a commodity. Grandfather George Edward had his own horse, but it was not an expensive Arabian. Thomas Hirst prohibited the boys from riding his Arabian. It was definitely off limits.

Thomas Hirst Delves was away from home for a time on business. While he was gone, George Edward rode the Arabian, jumping over walls, fences, etc. on his way to a friend's (or cousin's?) home. George couldn't get the Arabian to make one of the jumps and the horse broke a leg. George Edward (then between age approx. 19 or 20) had to shoot the horse to put him out of his misery.

When Thomas Hirst came home, he saw that his prized horse was gone and he learned what had happened. An extreme state of rage overtook Thomas Hirst, the level of rage was particularly described as a fit that Great-Grandmother Annie Wrathall Delves had never seen.

Thomas Hirst headed up the stairs toward the room where the guns were kept. Great-grandmother Annie knew (or feared) that Thomas Hirst was so angry that he was going to get a gun to shoot his own son, George Edward. Annie pulled her stash of money from a hiding place downstairs, gave it to Grandfather Delves, and whisked him out the door quickly, telling him to ride as far and as fast as his horse could take him. All of this occurred within a very short span of a few minutes.

He rode all the way to Liverpool to board a ship out of the Country, flipped a coin as to which destination: either America or Australia. He headed for America and made his way to Miles City, Montana where he worked as a rancher/cowboy. He had raised, broken, and trained over 30 horses in the five year span of time that he was in Miles City. He sold several of those horses to the Canadian Cavalry as WWI began and England was drawn into the war.

There you go cousin! Crazy Delves story fit for a movie script. But very close to verbatim as told to me by Aunt Mary Delves Prentiss, who is my father's older sister. When she told me this recently (about 5 years ago), we (my brother and sisters) only knew that Grandfather Delves left England due to a disagreement with his father, but never heard the story. I had always wondered. When she told me this, I was shocked and saddened.

By the way, you know how people can embellish or add to a story over the course of years? Well, this one just rolled out of Aunt Mary's mouth as if she could still hear it being told to her. I'd rather believe that it isn't true, or that things didn't happen that way, but I don't believe she was weaving a tale either.

Danny DELVES continues:

We think George arrived in America between the ages of 19 and 20, in the year 1909. He found work in Miles City, Montana and worked for several years as a rancher/ cowboy of sorts. He raised, broke, and trained over 30 horses himself over a five year period, selling them to the Canadian Army.

He was still working in Montana when England was drawn into the war in August 1914. As the war progressed, he planned to travel back to England to join His Majesty's Service, but learned that he could save the boat passage and join the Canadian Army, still under His Majesty's Service, but Canadian.

In April 1915 he joined the Canadian Expeditionary Forces at a "ReMount Depot" in Toronto, Ontario. ReMount units were units responsible for handling, training, and caring for the horses.

His Canadian Attestation papers reference him joining the C.E.F. at a ReMount Depot in Toronto. Upon close examination of the hat badge on his 1915 photo (the profile photo, without a moustache) it is apparent that the badge carries the image of a horse. That type of badge, and the hat he wore, indicate that he was in fact assigned to a ReMount Unit upon joining. It is not known exactly what type of other units he may have served in (infantry, cavalry, etc.), other than the fact that he was attached to a Machine Gun Corps later in the war, as evidenced by the badge on his hat in the photo with a moustache.

The particular "cowboy hat" he wears in the photos of him in his Canadian uniform is the same hat worn by ReMount units, as well as the 19th Alberta Dragoons and certain other Cavalry units from western Canada. The type of hat is referred to as a "campaign hat" and the 4 square folds on top are called a "Montana crease." This certainly makes sense, as the area where he was working and raising horses to sell to the Canadians, Montana, is directly south of Alberta, Canada.

What is certain is that he was part of the Second Division when he joined. The particular unit (Regiment, battalion, etc.) that he was originally assigned to is currently being researched. It is certain though, that he served substantial time on the front lines, having participated in the Third Battle of Ypres, among others. Also, by the end of his service (injuries in 1917), it is certain that he was part of the Machine Gun Corps of whatever unit he was attached to, as evidenced by the badge and pins on his hat and collar, shown in his "moustache" photo from 1917, as referenced above.

(Considerable research was done to determine these facts above. The remainder of information regarding his Canadian service will be sent along when completed.

He met Charlotte Agnes Bennion in Toronto before he joined the Canadian Expeditionary Forces. They met at a dance in Toronto, Ontario before he was shipped to Shorncliffe, England for preparations to fight in France. He asked Charlotte to marry him and she said "...wait 'till you come back".

In 1917 he was discharged from the C.E.F. for injuries ("trench fever" we were told), from being buried in a trench that collapsed in a bombardment. He was buried for several days.

He returned to Toronto with the war still active and married Charlotte in Youngstown, Ohio, near her hometown, and probably where her parents lived (as the Delves Family Bible entry says), on 8th April 1918. Her parents were originally English, her father became an American citizen in 1888.

They had a small farm outside of Toronto where five of their eight children were born. They moved to Florida from Toronto after the death of their baby Danny from whooping cough in Sept 1924 and the birth of Marjorie in December. They travelled south in the spring of 1925, stopping off to stay for a very short while with Grandmother Charlotte's family in Alliance,

Ohio, then on to Jacksonville, Florida. There may have been additional reasons, for work, but I've only heard that the move was to get to a "warmer climate."

They had eight children:

- Annie Catherine Delves (Prentiss), born 18th December, 1918, Toronto, Ontario, Canada (died 199?, Jax., Fla.)
- Mary Marion Delves (Prentiss), born 2nd August, 1920, Toronto, Ontario, Canada (Mary and Ann married brothers)
- Monica May Delves (Walden), born 9th July, 1922, Toronto, Ontario, Canada (died 2010, Jax., Fla.)
- Daniel Delves, born 9th October, 1923 - died 27th September 1924, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
- Marjorie Jean Delves (Buck), born 6th December, 1924, Toronto, Ontario, Canada (died 2008, Palatka, Fla.)
- Margaret "Madge" Agnes Delves (Reinertson), born 29th June, 1926, Jacksonville, Florida)
- George Thomas Delves (my father), born 28th November, 1927, Jacksonville, Florida (died 20th July, 2002, Jax., Fla.)
- David William Delves, born 7th August, 1930, Jacksonville, Florida (died 12th February, 2011)

The only surviving siblings are Aunt Mary Prentiss, now age 90, and in North Carolina with her daughter, and Aunt Madge Reinertson, now age 84 and living in Miami, Florida with her daughter.

Grandfather Delves was the subject of deportation proceedings here in Jacksonville, starting in 1946 or 1947. He successfully fought this and several documents from these proceedings, including Family Bible birth registries, Citizenship certificates and affidavits, can be added here if requested.

George Edward died 13th Sept 1966, Jacksonville, Florida.
Charlotte Agnes died 13th March 1985, Jacksonville, Florida.