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THE CALGARY MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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April Extra 4, 2020

Member Tim Popp wrote: This article is written in response to the club's January's 2020 newsletter. Although this is not about a military figure who's name was given to a geographic feature in Waterton area, I feel that the membership would find this equally interesting.

John "Jack" Street

Mountie, Hunter, Mountain Guide

Over twenty years ago at the Calgary Easter Gun Show, I acquired a display frame containing a North West Canada Medal with "SASKATCHEWAN" bar named to "J. STREET CONST N.W.M.P." and as well a complete set of North West Mounted Police hat, collars and shoulder title badges. I was delighted to find this and amazed that no one had snapped up this frame of desirable Mounted Police history. I couldn't pay fast enough and squirreled it away for the rest of the show.

Eventually after many years Library Archives of Canada digitized all NWMP service files and I therefore downloaded Street's entire file. I did find out more about him but strange enough there was no mention of his involvement in the Rebellion. I had found one small clipping from the Saskatchewan Herald from 1904 that Street died in a snow avalanche in the Kootenay Lakes area. I could not find anything more about him and therefore set my research aside.

One day a good friend of mine, Kevin Joynt who collects Victorian medals, asked me if I had any medals that he could research for me. I gave him all the information I had on Street and before long Kevin found some interesting information. With what Kevin had found, I then began searching and found even more information. This is what we had found.

Not much is known about John "Jack" Street in his earlier years. No photograph of him is known to exist. He was born in 1863 in New Brunswick to Major George and Septima Street. Jack had three other siblings, Walter, Maud and Cathaline. Sometime later the family moved out west to the province Manitoba settling in Winnipeg. At age 18, John Street enlisted with the North West Mounted Police for five years on 12th August 1881 at Qu'Appelle, North West Territories (later Saskatchewan). His Oath of Allegiance and Oath of Office was sworn before Inspector Samuel B. Steele and he was given the regimental number 596.



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The SOCIETY

is a non-profit registered society
which fosters the study of the
military and the police, and the heritage of
Canada, the British Empire, and the world
as well as the preservation of military
artifacts and records.

The CMHS meets once every calendar month
at: Petty Officers' Mess
HMCS Tecumseh
1820 - 24th Street SW
Calgary AB T2T 0G6

Acknowledgements and Thanks

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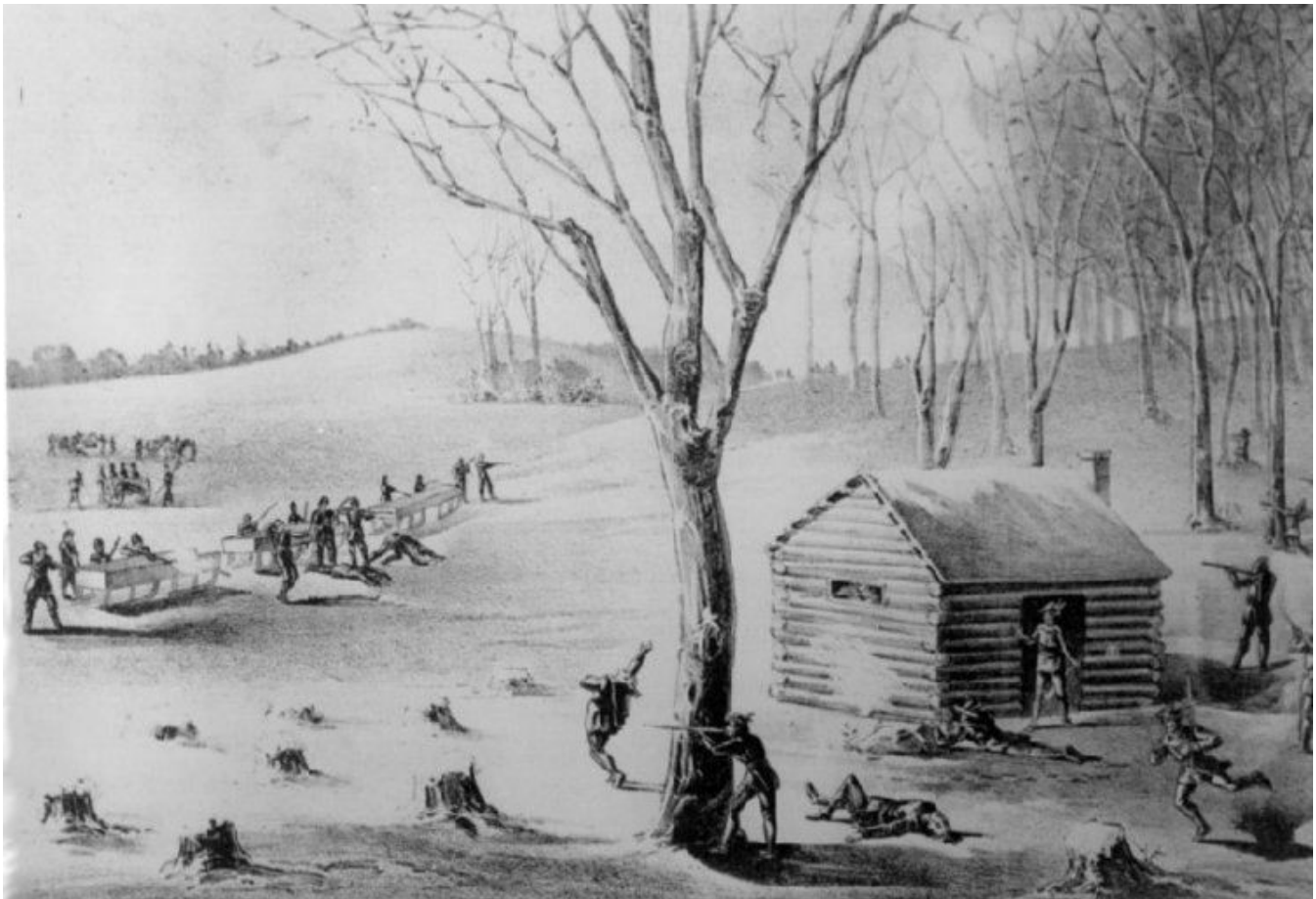
The 1st April Extra was written by Rory from the [Boer War Forum](#). We thank him for allowing us to publish his work.
It was forwarded to us by long time member Mike Clare

The 2nd April Extra article was researched, written and provided to us by Member Garrett Lapp

The 3rd April Extra paper was researched, and provided by Member Michael Clare

This 4th April Extra article was provided by Member Tim Popp

Street's early career as a Mounted Policeman was routine but he did serve during the North West Rebellion that pitted Canadian Military Forces against Metis and First Nation Forces in Saskatchewan. Street was present at the engagement that sparked the North West Rebellion at Duck Lake on 26th March 1885. He continued to serve in various places and NWMP forts during the rebellion until hostilities ceased with the defeat of rebel forces on 12th May 1885. Later he was awarded the North West Canada Medal with bar when the NWMP was granted the medal by Canadian Government Order-In-Council of 1900. Street's medal was in the first issue allotment to the NWMP.



Battle of Duck Lake. Image from Google search



North West Canada Medal from authors collection

Interesting to note, his father Major George Ward Street participated in the Fenian Raids and was awarded the Canada General Service Medal with bar Fenian Raid 1866. He was then attached to General Middleton's Column during the NW Rebellion and awarded the NWC + bar. As well, Jacks brother, Walter George Stanley Street served during the NW Rebellion with the 90th Winnipeg Rifles and was awarded the NWC + bar.

Street re-engaged with the NWMP for another three years on 12th August 1886 and was now stationed with "B" Division. The conduct during his service up to this point has been recorded as *"very good"*. Street transferred divisions and was now assigned to "D" Division with Superintendent Sam Steele in



in the south east corner of British Columbia. In Steele's annual report of 1888, Cst. Street was mentioned with other members as being used to clear trails, packing gear and supplies through the trails around the Crow's Nest Pass.

Some members of the N.W.M. Police, Fort Steele 1888. Image from the book "Kootenai Brown, his life and times" by William Rodney

In June 1889, while Street was still with “D” Division, he met John George “Kootenai” Brown. In Steele’s monthly report for June of that year he noted “*Kootenay Brown left on the 8th June in charge of the herd as Constable J. Street was required to break-in bronchos (horses)*”. Both Street and Brown struck up an endearing friendship which was to last until Street’s death.

Street took his discharge from the Mounted Police at Fort MacLeod, North West Territories (later Alberta) on 12th August 1889 since his time was expired.

During his eight years his conduct was recorded as being “*very good*”. Street now teamed up with Brown, who’s temporary employment with the NWMP ended on 2nd September the same year. The pair went on a long hunting expedition through the mountains in southern British Columbia and Alberta. Street’s discharge certificate was later sent to him and he eventually received it at Kootenai (Waterton) Lake on 24th October 1889.

Street and Brown continued to be very close friends and lifelong hunting partners. Their well-known reputation attracted many clients that were seeking good hunting or adventure trips in the Waterton Lakes area. The pair travelled across the Canada/US border freely in their many escapades as in those years there was no requirement for notification when crossing the 49th parallel in wilderness locations.



Mountain guides in the Rockies. Advertising images from Pinterest website

Canadian frontier woman Marie-Rose Smith wrote about her memoirs called “Eighty Years on the Plains” and published in 1949 in the newspaper Canadian Cattlemen. One chapter was dedicated to Kootenai Brown and Street was mentioned several times. Smith described Street as “*an ex-policeman of quiet disposition*” and “*one of the best hunters I know of*”. Smith continued to praise the character of Street and described the unfortunate accident that took his life too early in life. She described that Street, who was with another well-known guide Henry “Frenchie” Riviere and two clients, died in an avalanche. Smith did not give any date, nor did she mention the mountain or location of the accident.

It was though on 18th February 1904 that the unfortunate accident in northern Montana took Street’s life. There have been many news accounts of the avalanche reported at the time that took Jack Street’s life. As soon as the story broke newspapers across Canada and several in the United States published a brief report of the accident. Only the Winnipeg Free Press ran more details.

Some reports have not been that accurate as details of what occurred became misinterpreted or incorrectly recorded.

The most detailed personal account of the accident was reported in the newspaper The Columbian dated 4th March 1904. This news account describes what became of Street on that fateful day.

The entire newspaper article is quoted below.

JACK STREET’S AWFUL FATE

BURIED IN AN AVALANCHE IN EAST KOOTENAY

Description of the affair By J.C. Cosley a Special Correspondent of the Columbian. He was known at Columbia Falls.

The miraculous death of Jack Street a Rocky Mountaineer in the East Kootenai Country caused quite a commotion to all the inhabitants of that densely wild region. Mr. Street quite recently became fascinated with the sublimity of the Rockies and being anxious to appease his gnawing appetite for climbing the rugged peaks undertook a dangerous trip in the mountains with an Englishman whose name is not known but who, fresh from the east and full of enthusiasm for a thrilling experience in the Rockies, arrived at Mr. Howell’s cabin at the head of Kootenai Lake.

The aforesaid gentleman traveled up the side of the mountain until they reached the top of a great “hog back” which would lead to the summit on a steep incline. And to the left of them lay a great gulch that cannot be seen from the lake below owing to the distance which blended out the hog back with the main divide beyond. The east side of the hog back was remarkably precipitous and great drifts of snow extended beyond its crest. Street was on the lead and undertook the task of going beneath the snow to reach a shelf partially bare which lean on a perpendicular wall of rock to the top of the mountain. They each reached the shelf safely but had not proceeded far until they came to a fissure which had evidently been washed out of the rocks by the spring freshets of the preceding seasons. The shelf where they stood was not wide and in the fissure the snow lay deep and soft to the summit of the hog back.

Mr. Street had nearly crossed the fissure but the English gentleman became so frightened after coming part of the way that he refused to go farther and turned back on his hands knees and implored Mr. Street to also come back.

He turned his head enough to note that Street was retracing his steps and heard him say that he had been in the Rocky Mountains for twelve years and did not consider this a bad place. But he had no sooner reached the center of the snow bridge when it gave way beneath his weight and he shot down the mountain side.

The Englishman by this time had nearly reached the shelf again but was carried an appreciable distance to some friendly rocks where he managed to gain a footing and save himself. He saw Mr. Street descending in a cloud of snow seemingly unconcerned and smiling as he went. The snow burst forth in large columns and the air immediately became so thick with it that he soon lost sight of Jack Street.

The last he saw of him he was in the midst of a whirling mist of vapory snow just disappearing over the verge of a great precipice which looked like a perpendicular wall probably 2,000 feet high. The avalanche was so great and went with such terrific force that it carried large boulders from above and in the canyon below swept everything in its wake. Great trees were snapped off like so many pipe stems and carried for a distance of two hundred yards on the far side of the ravine between the hog back and the main range.

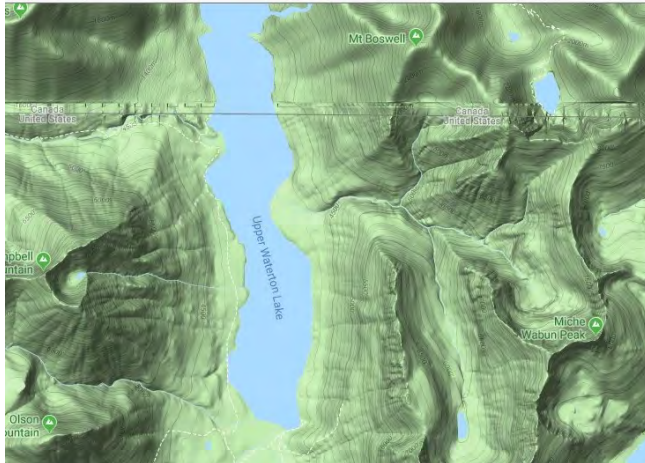
The Englishman spent many hours looking for his friend and guide but with no success. He had no doubt been packed as solid as a cake of ice under thousands of tons of snow and rocks a timber and was beyond all human aid. The adventuring Englishman then returned to Mr. Howells' cabin a worn out and despondent man and with the cup of sorrow filled to the brim told his story of the awful fate of Jack Streeter (sic). Howell sprang into his snowshoes and hurried to the foot of the lake to inform "Kootenai" Brown of the fate of his partner Jack and on February 20th a thorough search was made by Howell, Brown and the Englishman but they failed to find the body of Street. They said that myriads (sic) of tons snow and rocks and trees lay in the canyon to an immense height and the snow is packed as solid as ice.

It is learned from J.G. Brown, better known as Kootenai Brown that Mr. Streeter's (sic) mother and one sister resides in Winnipeg and that he has a brother in the east and that these are likely to be financially unable to offer sufficient reward for the recovery of the body until some later date. Under the circumstances it is possible that the body will lay under the avalanche until the snow is melted away in the coming spring and summer.

Jack Street's body was eventually found that summer by his best friend Kootenia Brown and was interned near the area. This story might as well be totally forgotten until it became almost folklore in the Waterton Lakes area since Jack Street was so well thought of and respected by the locals.

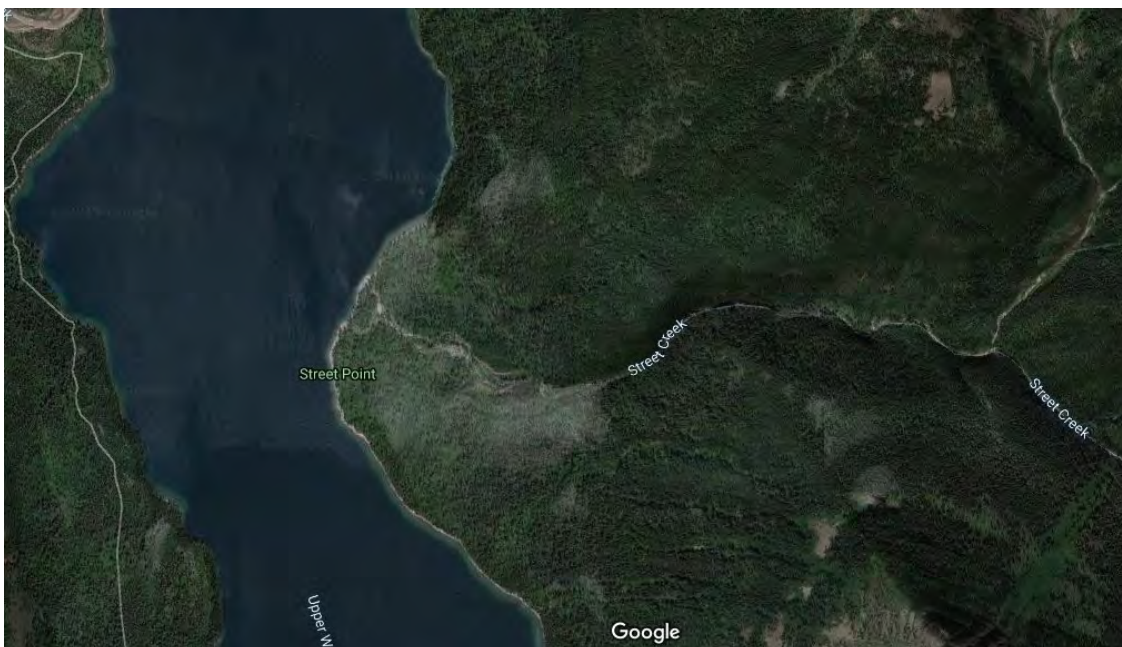
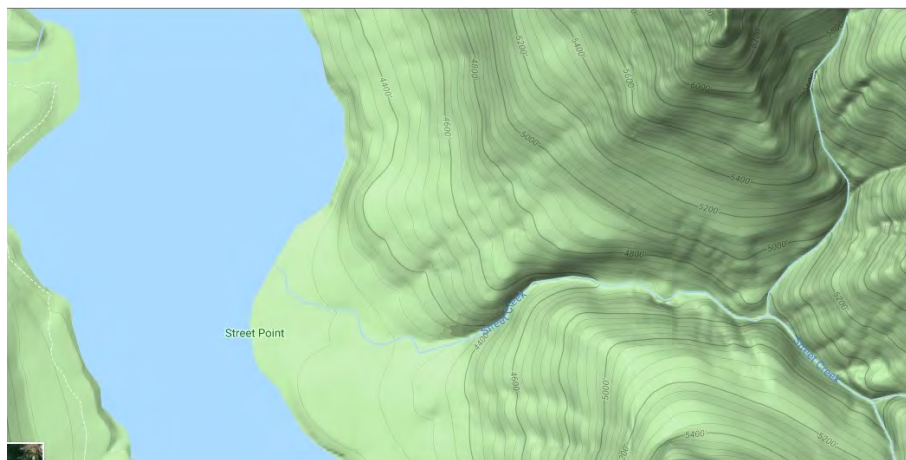
Other newspaper accounts of Street's accident were barely a paragraph or a few lines. But Joe Cosley's newspaper article was by far the most accurate account of Street's death. Although not mentioned for whatever reason, the Englishman being mentioned was determined to be John Reginal Redpath, of Montreal, Quebec and Redpath Sugar.

On the 18th February 1904, Jack Street and John Redpath were on a hunting expedition on Mount Boswell, Montana likely looking for mountain goats. He was the only person that was with Street on that fateful day when the avalanche accident occurred. There is no mention in the article of the name of the mountain where this happened. But after Street's death the locals began to call Mount Boswell, Street Mountain as sign of respect for the frontiersman and acknowledging where the tragic accident had occurred.



The creek that splits Mount Boswell and Goat Haunt Mountain, which is immediately to the south, flows into the east side of Waterton Lake was officially named by the US National Parks after Street. The small jut of land where the creek flows to is also named Street Point.

Images of Street Creek & Point from Google Maps



The Cosley news article commented that several people went to go looking for Street immediately after the accident. Redpath, after a quick search, went to find Mr. Howell at his cabin and from there Kootenia Brown was informed. Together with Redpath, the three went back to the accident scene and desperately tried to locate their beloved friend. According to Brown's diary, "Frenchie" Riviere went to help look for Street as well but he is not mentioned in the Cosley article. With tons of snow and ice covering where Street lied buried, it was forlorn hope to recover their friend's body. The search was halted but Brown likely made a vow to return and find the body of his close and dear friend.

George "Kootenia" Brown's diary stated Street's body was found on 11th July 1904. Importantly from Brown's diary of 12th July it states, "*Went to the slide and found the body and interred it.*" There is no mention of exactly where but it must be assumed that it is somewhere in the valley between Mount Boswell and Goat Haunt Mountain.

George "Kootenia" Brown likely buried Jack Street in a high elevation rockslide area, the south side of Mount Boswell. Although it cannot be positively determined if he did, it is highly doubtful that Brown moved the remains of Street any great distance for a burial at a lower elevation. Brown would have made the grave deep enough to make to protect it from predators and then mounded it with rocks. According to one legend, Brown marked the grave with a rifle, likely Street's firearm, and the shovel used to dig the grave to make a cross.

Since the death of John "Jack" Street many attempts have been made to find his grave but to no avail. The area of his death and subsequent burial is in a remote area of Glacier National Park, Montana. Therefore I wanted to give it a try to see if I could locate Street's grave and get it properly marked.

I made contact with an employee of Waterton Lakes National Park. Former park warden Edwin Knox, knew the area and Street's story quite well. He indicated to me that to access the area it would take some doing as the elevation increases rapidly from the lake. Climbing that area is not for the inexperienced hiker and from reviewing topographical maps, the elevation starts at 4400 ft and rises quickly to over 6400 ft.

The chances of finding an individual grave after 116 years would be virtually impossible. Over the last 100 years there has been and continue to be in the area rock slides and ground shifting. This would also make a starting point for a search team almost impossible to determine.

I then thought that maybe a grave marker could be placed in the general area of Street Point where Street Creek flows into Upper Waterton Lake. If a grave marker was erected in that area, the chances of anyone visiting the area would be slim at best. The point could be prone to flooding in the spring and other environmental issues which could disturb the headstone.

After much discussion with my Parks Canada contact, Edwin Knox, it was suggested that a plot could be obtained to place a marker for Street at the Waterton Lakes cemetery. The cemetery was under the control of the park and it has commanding scenery from the mountains that surround it.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police Veteran's Association is bound by a sense of duty to ensure the last resting place of each and every member that served in the Mounted Police is properly marked or identified. I approached several RCMP Veteran's Associations chapters

and as well as individuals for donations to help purchase a grave marker. A memorial company was approached in southern Alberta and a grave marker was made



In honour & memory of Cst. John "jack" Street, NWMP

Several phone calls and emails were made to dignitaries, local Legion, RCMP detachment, interested parties and were told about the Street story. Great cooperation with Parks Canada Waterton Lake helped to finalize a ceremony. As it stands, a memorial ceremony is planned for Sunday 12th July at Waterton Park Cemetery. But in wake of the COVID-19 crisis this may be postponed to a later date depending on the national situation.

This project started with the purchase of a North West Canada medal named to a member of the NWMP. After careful research, an amazing story of one man's life was unfolded but leading to an unlocated and unmarked grave in a remote area of northern Montana.

I hope this story will add another name to the Waterton Lakes National Park and the geographic features named for 1st World War CEF soldiers and battles.

If anyone from the club wishes to discuss this story further I would be happy to hear from them. Yours in collecting and research.

Regards

Tim Popp