

The Personal History Of John Aldworth West
As Told By His Son Phil A West
written by Steven Blackhouse

My great grandfather John Aldworth West was born to William Westall West & Sarah Aldworth on May 25th 1881. William West was a Baptist ~~preacher~~ preacher & strongly brought up John for the first 17 yrs of his life.

After 17 yrs John thought himself old enough to join the army although his father did not approve. He secretly signed up for the British Army.

When John was called for duty his father greatly disapproved & in a hurry raised enough money to buy his son ~~out~~ out of the army.

Within a few months, John signed up for the army once more & this time was sent to South Africa where he would be absent for the Boer War.

As a scout John would ride his horse up to the front & discover where the enemy was hiding, from there he would race back to the camp & report, then he would then be sent out for the surprise attack.

Once while spying on the Boers (Dutch) John came so close to the enemy he was spotted & shot (firing distance of a rifle was about 250 yds) in the leg. He was so intent at running into the enemy that he didn't feel the shot. He the enemy watch from the enemy canton but had not could feel ~~the shot~~ in time to investigate.

As young West got off his horse to report he noticed blood out of a sizable hole in his leg & only then felt the tremendous pain from the rifle shot.

~~Sight~~ Thanks to John's swiftness, the British won yet another another battle against the Boers.

Shipped home after the war John was awarded medals & a gold pocket watch (that still works) by Queen Victoria herself.

John moved to Canada after the war but could not resist the temptation of the gold rush. While waiting for a north-bound ship a waterfront beer-parlour caught his eye. After having a few drinks John was shipped a "Mickey-fin" & when he awoke the next afternoon was far out at sea. Twenty-one year old John Aldworth West had been shanghaied.

Sailing on short handed cargo vessels John rounded the horn (treacherous water meet at this point at the bottom of Africa and eventually sailed to England.

While the ship was unloading at an English port, John jumped ship & found his way back to Abingdon Village, Berkshire County, his hometown.

By the time he was 28 he had been married had 2 kids & found his way to Edmonton, Canada. where he signed up for the Canadian Army.

By the year 1914 John was sent overseas with the Canadian army but was sent home because of rheumatic fever he had contracted.

Even this couldn't keep John out of the action for as soon as his condition improved the slightest bit he went into world war I as a first line sapper. While building a front line

bridge, John, along with the rest of the troop was gassed badly.

The enemy would discharge great quantities of deadly gas into the air & the wind would carry it over to the opposing troops.

Now 36, John was sent back to Canada once more for hospitalization, this time for one full year.

The gassing greatly crippled John's heart but nevertheless he moved to Vancouver in 1918 where he settled as a carpenter.

At the age of 66 (1957) John officially retired & began boat building as a hobby.

John made several 35' to 40' yachts & after spending much time enjoying them sold them off & began the building of new ones.

John made his final visit to England in 1937 after seeing much of the world already he started touring such places as Jamaica, Bermuda, Caribbean, Hawaii etc.

Since about 1950 John spent 2 or 3 of the winter months in Hawaii or similar warm places every single year.

The most memorable time with Grandpa in 1970 at his 89th Birthday Party, I was in his room & he was telling me about his life while eating toffee with no teeth.

During the last three years of his life Grandpa was gardening at his waterfront home at Boundary Bay, BC.

After spending 5 weeks in Traugott Hospital grandpa passed away of cancer in October 1973, 92 yrs old and a hell of a proud man!