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PERKINS, John Albert

MG 29, E 93

Finding Aid No. 1142 / Instrument de recherche no 1142

Prepared by Anita Penner  
of the Public Affairs  
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publiques.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Pages</u>
Inventory Entry .....	i
File list of papers .....	1
Descriptive list of correspondence .....	2-7

MG 29 PERKINS, John Albert (1877-1954). Soldier.  
E 93

Originals, 1899-1900, 1950-1954. 7 cm. Finding Aid No. 1142.

Born in Fredericton, New Brunswick in 1877, Perkins served with the 71st Battalion Band, and Nos. 4 and 7 Companies, 1893-1899. He enlisted in the 2nd Special Service Battalion, R.C.R., in October 1899 as a private, and served in the South Africa Campaign until November 3, 1900. He was decorated with the Queen's Medal with four clasps. He returned to civilian life as a merchant in Sussex, New Brunswick. Perkins maintained an interest in music through various organized bands. He died on June 10, 1954.

Presented in 1978 by Mrs. Sara Schofield of Oakville, Ont.

Finding Aid No. 1142 is a descriptive list.

Correspondence, diary entries, clippings, and a card, 1899-1900, 1950-54, relating to Perkins' service with the 2nd Special Service Battalion, Royal Canadian Regiment, in the South African War.

John Albert Perkins

MG 29, E 93

File List

File Folder #1 and #2. (See also descriptive list beginning page 3).

36 letters, originals, 16 November, 1899 - 9 September, 1900, c. 1954. 196 pages  
2 letter cards, originals, 5 January and 12 January, 1900. 2 pages  
1 telegram, original, November, 1899. 1 page

File Folder #3

Diary, typescript, 30 November, 1899 - 29 April, 1900. 40 pages

File Folder #4

Diary, original, 25 August, 1900 - 31 October, 1900. 105 pages

File Folder #5

Newspaper clippings of:  
- Perkins diary entries, 5 February - 14 March, 1900. 3 pages

File Folder #6

Newspaper clippings of:  
- Perkins letters 16 November, 1899 - 13 July, 1900, 14 pages

File Folder #7

Miscellaneous newspaper clippings:  
- return of troops to Fredericton, 3 November, 1900. 2 pages  
- 50th anniversary of Battle of Paardeberg, 1900. 2 pages  
- Obituary of J. Albert Perkins [11?] June, 1954, 2 pages  
- 5 contemporary South African War clippings concerning various actions of British, Canadian and Australian troops, n.d. 5 pages  
- 5 newsclippings concerning Schofield family (c. 1950s). 5 pages

File Folder #8

- One Christmas greeting card from the "Soldiers' Wives League" of St. John [This card was sent with Christmas parcels which reached the troops on 6 April, 1900]. 1 page  
- Two envelopes, with post marks. [Stamps removed prior to shipment to Archives]. 17 August, 1900; May, 1900. 2 pages

File Folder #9

- Newspaper clippings of:  
Two letters of Pte. John Wilson, G. Company 2nd S.S. Battalion, R.C.R.; 29 April, 6 July, 1900. 2 pages

Descriptive list of Perkins letters November, 1899 - 9 September, 1900; 1954.

Note this is a descriptive list of letters found in files #1 and #2.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Content of Letter</u>	<u>Pages</u>
October <u>/1899/</u>	Quebec	(telegram) Description of holiday mood of troops prior to embarkation.	1
16 November, <u>/1899/</u>	Atlantic	Letters 16 November - 30 November describe ocean passage and daily routine on board transport ship. Comments on pastimes- musical band, boxing, gambling and problems of sea sickness and theft.	
19 November, <u>/1899/</u>	Atlantic		
23 November, <u>/1899/</u>	Atlantic		
25 November, <u>/1899/</u>	Atlantic		
28 November, <u>/1899/</u>	Atlantic		
29 November, <u>/1899/</u>	Atlantic		
30 November, <u>/1899/</u>	Atlantic		20
19 December, 1899	Belmont	Description of battle drill, terrain, sentry duty and comments on problems of sand, flies, lack of water and dysentery.	6
2 January, 1900	Belmont	Describes sentry duty, rations, scarcity of firewood and climate. Gives opinions of Lt. Col. Otter and Maj. Buchan. Includes small sketch and very brief account of Sunnyside battle.	8
18 January, 1900	Belmont	Comments on view from Scotch Ridge, weather, locusts, flies, rations, price of fruit, sick soldiers, daily marches. Describes recreational activity (baseball). Comments on Capt. McDonnell and "G" Company.	8



<u>Date</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Content of Letter</u>	<u>Pages</u>
5 January, 1900	Belmont	(letter card). Describes booty captured at Douglas [by Col. Pilcher's column?]. Comments on recent appointment of Capt. McDonnell as C.O. of "G" Company.	1
12 January, 1900	Belmont	(letter card). Comments on daily marches recently initiated by the Col. [Otter], and a recent British engagement at Ladysmith.	1
26 January, 1900	Wayland's Farm (Richmond)	Describes Wayland's Farm area and comments on Capt. McDonnell. Describes guard duty. Comments on fighting in kopje terrain; telegraphic communications; local Kaffirs; army rations; conditions in their camp. Describes local flora and fauna. Comments on lack of detailed news and appreciation of newspapers from home.	12
2 February, 1900	Richmond	Outlines recent movements, size of his unit. Describes his breakfast and present state of some soldiers' clothing. Describes local Boer raid. Briefly mentions camp conditions postage and pay.	4
28 February, 1900	Modder's Rift	Outlines movements of his unit and the experiences of "G" Company in recent battle [Paardeberg.]	4
16 March, 1900	Bloemfontein	Describes march into Orange Free State, the changing scenery, rations and footwear, and various rumours.	4
21 March, 1900	Bloemfontein	Describes weather and camp conditions. Comments on quantity of mail, town of Bloemfontein, variety of British units and quality of bread rations.	
29 March, 1900	Bloemfontein	Comments on camp routine, sickness among troops, lack of news, letter from General Hutton. Closes letter with instructions to his parents concerning his personal finances.	4

<u>Date</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Content of Letter</u>	<u>Pages</u>
25 March, 1900	Bloemfontein	Gives information concerning condition of various town friends in the Contingent. Comments on weather, illness among troops, clothing and camp conditions.	4
30 March, 1900	Bloemfontein	(Tiny covering letter) "Dear Mother - Please keep this for me" (enclosed item (?) not included)	1
30 March, 1900	Bloemfontein	Writes to say he expects hard march early tomorrow - 21 miles with 50 rds ammo. and 4 days rations - doesn't know direction of march. He is fit although a number have become sick.	1
7 April, 1900	Bloemfontein	Comments on recent marches, camp conditions, arrival of Xmas boxes, sickness in "G" Company, visit and remarks of General Hutton.	3
10-11 April, 1900	Bloemfontein	Comments on camp conditions, need for new clothing and blankets, the reception of a gift and letter from friend in England. Mentions items posted to Canada, enclosure with letter, new officers and weather.	4
20 April, 1900	Bloemfontein	Recounts an amusing incident. Mentions receipt of a gift box from England, the arrival of first men of 2nd Contingent, arms and ammunition captured at Paardeberg, scarcity of "Kruger money". Describes delicious pork and beans supper. Criticizes boastful letters of a fellow soldier.	9
23-29 April, 1900	Springfield	Describes the passage of a British column, the concentration of troops at Springfield and Kaffir women. Outlines position, responsibility and strength of his unit. Describes movements and actions of his unit on 24 - 29 April.	14

<u>Date</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Content of Letter</u>	<u>Pages</u>
6 May, 1900	Winburg	Mentions new divisional commander's orders and outlines Lord Roberts praise of Canadian regiment. Comments on remarks of Col. Buchan, condition and morale of regiment. Outlines recent movements and engagements of his unit.	6
13 May, 1900	Kroonstaad	Outlines Zand River battle and good work of British big guns. Comments on general desire of men to see end of war. Notes General Hamilton's praise of Canadians.	8
31 May 1900	The Rand	Outlines recent movements of his unit and the crossing of the river Vaal. Comments on rations, numerical strength of his section and the possibility of advance to Pretoria.	2
22, 24 June, 1900	Springs Transval	Outlines recent movements and duties of his unit. Describes weather. Mentions lack of pay and mail. Describes a black "war dance". Comments on rations. Describes capture of young Boer lad. Describes camp conditions, arrival and departure of other units. Outlines prices of certain foods. Describes local black coal miners.	17
1 July, 1900	Springs	Comments on weather. Outlines recent events - a concert interrupted by escort duty to Elandsfontein, raid by Boers on camp at Springs, imprisonment of some natives, arrival of reinforcements in camp. Comments on rations and effect of war on food prices. Comments on declining Boer fortunes and likelihood of peace.	8
6 July, 1900	Springs	Mentions arrival of reinforcements. Comments on latest rumour re-reformation of his brigade. States numerical strength of his regiment. Discusses his latest correspondence from home. Mentions latest rumours and supply problems.	2
11 July, 1900	Springs	Mentions weather, arrival of additional troops, reconnaissance patrol, guard duty, armoured train escort duty, Canadian Mounted Rifles casualties, rumours of return home.	



<u>Date</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Content of Letter</u>	<u>Pages</u>
12 July, 1900	?	Mentions guard duty. Comments on relief of Mafeking. Describes a native musician and his instrument (sketch). Mentions recent engagement.	4
19 July, 1900	Springs	Recounts joke re regimental water cart. Mentions arrival of mail, movement of troops. Recounts latest war news and also rumours current among the Boers. Mentions use of Transvaal postage stamps, publication of his letters, new issue of clothes, "Kruger" money.	7
25 July, 1900	Elandsfontein	Mentions that he is now at Elandsfontein and preparing to go on patrol duty in an armoured train.	2
29 July, 1900	Rhenoster River	Describes his latest movements. Mentions mail he has received.	6
9 August, 1900	Vereeniging	Describes his latest movements. Recounts rumours about De Witt. Describes armoured train. Purchases stamps as souvenirs. Mentions family matters. Mentions he was paid. (Top line on each page of letter cut off)	4
9 August, 1900	Vereeniging	Mentions black labourers constructing a short railway line to Johannesburg. Speculates on when he will be sent home. Discusses the weather. Speculates on what he would do if he was home.	2
15 August, 1900	Verenniging	Outlines repairs being made to railway bridge over Vaal River. (sketch included) States he will forward some Kruger money home. Mentions a mix-up in the mail.	2
16 August, 1900	Vereeniging	Little news. Column passed through today. Some R.C.R. men left on a train.	1

<u>Date</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Content of Letter</u>	<u>Pages</u>
25 August, 1900	Roodeval Siding	Does not feel like writing lately. Describes recent enemy activity - Boers blew up telegraph line, blew up an armoured train, fired on a train containing Americans including U.S. Consul. Recounts latest news concerning De Witt and British attempts to persuade him to surrender. Little activity in camp. Played a number of ball games. Speculates on his return home soon. Recounts briefly the recent history of this locality.	6
7 September, 1900	Klip River	Enquires as to correct address of Miss Bessie Dyke. (Written on last page of Miss Dyke's letter to his parents, which has been forwarded to him). (Miss Duke's letter - 16 July, 1900 Hotel Oxford <u>Manchester</u> - After excuses for her boldness, she enquires about Albert. They met in England, corresponded for a while, but she has not heard from him lately.	1 3
9 September, 1900	Klip River	Thanks mother for forwarding Miss Dyke's letter. Recounts his latest movements. States he is presently stationed at Klip River, also some of Royal Irish Rifles (formerly P.O.W.s ) there too. Mentions he was able to retrieve some personal effects of a wounded friend from battlefield. Mentions he hasn't written home as often lately. Comments on heavy railway traffic, arrival of a column engaged in mopping up operations, badges, his health. Describes layout of their position. Speculates on bringing a pet home. States "no fever here. Weigh 169".	6
n.d.	(?)	(Letter written at Sussex, N.B. late in his life, probably shortly before his death) Thanks his daughter Sara for a wonderful visit. Indicates that he is watching his health, feeling well and working only limited hours each day in the store.	2