

Corporal Launcelot Gange Spooner®

Regimental Number: 1015830

72nd Canadian Infantry Battalion

born: 22 September 1898 – died: 15 November 1918

Corporal¹ Launcelot Gange Spooner was born on 22 September 1898 in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, the son of Francis Woodbury and Clara Gertrude Spooner.² His parents were both new immigrants to Canada.

His father, Francis Spooner, was born on 22 June 1873 in Inglesham, Wiltshire,³ the son of George Woodberry Spooner (an Anglican vicar)⁴ and Mary Ann (nee Wheeler).⁵ In 1890, Francis was bound as an apprentice for five years in “fitting and turning” on the Great Western Railway.⁶ After his apprenticeship he immigrated to Canada in 1895,⁷ settling in Saskatchewan. On 18 June 1895, *The Prince Albert Times* identified him as one of the most recent arrivals from England.⁸ A few months later, he was looking after cattle to help a neighbour and was described as lonely.⁹ He and Clara did not marry until a few years later.

Launcelot’s mother, Clara Gertrude Gange (who was also called Daisy), was born in Cotham, Gloucestershire, in 1869,¹⁰ the daughter of Edwin Gersuch Gange, a Baptist minister, and Annie Hackett.¹¹ In 1888, Clara married Harry Weston in Bristol¹² and had two sons—Norman Ewart, born in 1889,¹³ and Stephen Lawrence Mortimer (known usually as Lawrence), born in 1890.¹⁴ The family moved to Hammersmith, London,¹⁵ and were living there when Henry, a draper, died on 31 January 1893 at the British Hotel in St. Helier’s in Jersey.¹⁶

Clara also immigrated to Canada in 1895¹⁷ and her father Edwin visited her in Canada in August 1896. It is not clear whether Francis and Clara immigrated together, but it is likely that the families knew each other before immigrating to Canada, since in 1891 Francis was boarding in the house next door to Clara’s two brothers, Edwin and William Gange.¹⁸ William, like Francis, was an apprentice with the Great Western Railway. In any case, the couple did not marry until 18 September 1898 in Red Deer Hill, Saskatchewan.¹⁹ Launcelot was their first child, born in 1898 in Saskatchewan, and a second son followed three years later. Alan Ronald was born on 6 May 1902, also in Prince Albert.²⁰

In 1901, Launcelot was living in Red Deer Hill with his parents and two step-brothers, Norman and Lawrence. His father Francis was a farmer and Clara’s brother William was living with them.²¹ Five years later, the family had moved 60 kilometres away to Rosthern, Saskatchewan.²² Launcelot’s step-brother Norman was still at home, but Lawrence was no longer there; he was working as a hired man on the farm of Robert Morran.²³

In 1910, the family returned to England²⁴ and the following year was living at 81 Chesterfield Road, Bristol.²⁵ Francis was working as a bacon curer and both boys were in school. Launcelot’s step-brother Norman had returned with the family and was living in Cotham, Bristol, with his grandmother Amelia Weston, where he was working as a printer’s clerk.²⁶ His other step-brother Lawrence had remained in Canada and, in 1911, was living with his uncle William Gange in Prince Albert.²⁷

The family went back to Canada in 1914. Francis left from Liverpool and arrived in Quebec on 28 May 1914.²⁸ Clara and the two boys followed, sailing from Liverpool and arriving in New York on 9

October 1914.²⁹ On their return, they appear to have settled in British Columbia, where Francis was a painter. Norman remained in England.

When Launcelot enlisted in August 1916, at the age of 18, he was a bank clerk and was living with his family at 1120A Pender Street in West Vancouver.³⁰ He was 5' 8¼" tall, with a fair complexion, light hair and blue eyes. He was considered fit for service with the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force (CEF). His father, Francis, then an engineer, enlisted the same day, at the age of 43.³¹ He was about the same height and colouring as his son. He had previously served for five years with the Duke of Edinburgh's Second Wiltshire Regiment.

Both father and son left Halifax on 10 April 1917 to sail to Liverpool. From there, they spent some time at the Canadian camp in Seaford, East Sussex, before transferring to the 72nd Battalion (Seaforth Highlanders) of Canada and going to France on 23 May.

The Seaforth Highlanders were formed in 1910 in Vancouver by people of Scottish descent as the "72nd Highlanders of Canada." Eventually, the unit was renamed the 72nd Regiment Seaforth Highlanders of Canada in 1912. The Highlanders left for France in 1916 as the 72nd Battalion of the CEF and served at Vimy Ridge and at Passchendaele.³²

Francis was appointed a lance corporal in November 1917. In late December, both Launcelot and Francis were granted 14 days leave in England. They went to visit family in Bristol where, unfortunately, Francis' brother had the mumps. As a result, both were quarantined in the home until 26 January 1918 and did not return to France until 27 January; they rejoined their unit the following day.

Both father and son continued to progress in the army: Francis was appointed a corporal in March 1918, and Launcelot was made a lance corporal in August and then a corporal on 3 November 1918.

On 12 August 1918, Francis received gunshot wounds to his left leg. The damage was slight, but he was admitted to the General Hospital in Trouville. He rejoined his unit in mid-September.

When the Armistice was signed on 11 November 1918, the 72nd Battalion was near Valenciennes in northern France. The news of the Armistice was received with elation by the men, as they contemplated the end of hostilities and an early return to Canada.³³ However, on 12 November, the unit received word that the Canadian Corps would be part of the army of occupation and would soon begin the march to the Rhine. Training continued to ensure that everything would be in order when the time came. But the war was over for Launcelot.

Launcelot was wounded, perhaps as early as 1 November, and admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station on 12 November 1918 with shrapnel wounds to his left leg.³⁴ No. 1 CCCS war diaries recount the great efforts made to save Launcelot's life:



Gravestone for L. G. Spooner,
Auberchicourt Cemetery
Source: Author

Concentrated ATS [anti-tetanus serum] required for Sgt Spooner and very difficult to get. This Sgt was slightly wounded at the same time as his father also a Sergeant. The father went to the dressing station and received the ATS. The son did not and developed tetanus. The bulk of our supply had been called in. We used what we had and applied to every Adv Depot Medical Stores and CCS within reach. None had it. Was then discovered that No 1 CCS (British) had obtained the last from the stores. This CCS was then found to be proceeding towards Mons. With difficulty during the night the 12 Bde (near Valenciennes) were reached by phone with request to send a D.R. [despatch rider] to Mons to find 1 CCS and get the serum. As the Bde Mjr knew both Sgts (father [*sic*] and son) he despatched the D.R. Serum was received about 8 AM 15th after a very long and adventurous ride by the D.R. Also he had been held three hours under arrest in Mons through some misunderstanding. Serum arrived before dose was due but unfortunately was of no avail.³⁵

Launcelot died on 15 November and was buried the next day in the British Military Cemetery at Auberchicourt (Plot 1, Row A, Grave 16) with the Canadian chaplain W. O'Neill Fisher presiding.³⁶ His father, who was identified as his next-of-kin, was possibly there. Francis was granted two weeks leave to the UK the day his son was buried.

Launcelot was awarded posthumously the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre). His father received the same medals; however, he also received both the Military Medal and the Distinguished Conduct Medal. The MM was awarded in January 1919 and the DCM in April 1919, for actions just before the death of his son:

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty near and in Valenciennes on 1st November 1918. During the attack he established an observation post on the high ground immediately the attacking troops had passed through, and maintained this with telephone connection under heavy enemy shell and machine-gun fire. His reports were exceedingly valuable in directing the attack, and it was due to his splendid example that the post was maintained. 25.2.20³⁷

Lancelot's father was appointed as a temporary lieutenant a few months before he returned to Canada. He sailed from Southampton and arrived in Halifax on 13 June 1919. By 1921, Francis and Clara were living at 5789 Pyfesse Street, Point Grey, near Vancouver.³⁸ Francis was a stationary engineer. Clara died in August 1945 in Victoria, British Columbia³⁹ and Francis died in Saanich, British Columbia in April 1967.⁴⁰

Launcelot's brother Alan Ronald was too young to serve in the CEF. He became a bank manager.⁴¹ He married (Hilda May) and died on 23 January 1989. He was buried in Shady Creek Church Cemetery in Saanich.⁴²

Launcelot's step-brother Lawrence also served in the CEF, signing up before both Launcelot and his father.⁴³ He was a teamster when he enlisted in June 1915 in Vernon, British Columbia, and joined the Canadian Army Medical Corps (regimental number 400179). He arrived in England in September 1915. He had two bouts of illness—influenza and bronchitis—a few months after he arrived; they were followed by two disciplinary offences, for overstaying his leave and being absent from duty because he was drunk. He did not go overseas until September 1917 and joined the 11th Canadian Field Ambulance the next month. He probably stayed with this unit until April 1919. He sailed home to Canada in May 1919 and was discharged in Toronto on 2 June. He probably met his future wife, Ellen Winifred Pocknall, in England during the war, because she immigrated to Canada in 1920 and they were married on 18 August 1920 in Vancouver. In 1921, they were living in New

Westminster, British Columbia, where Lawrence was a farmer.⁴⁴ He died on 24 August 1973 at the Shaughnessy Hospital in Vancouver.⁴⁵

Launcelot's other step-brother Norman remained in England even after the family returned to Canada. It does not appear that he served in the Great War. In 1916, he was living in Bombay, India, where he joined the Truth Lodge of the United Grand Lodge of England Freemasons. He was employed as a commercial representative.⁴⁶ Whether he had been there for a long time is not known. He travelled back from Bombay after the war, arriving in London on 7 February 1919.⁴⁷ Perhaps he caught an illness while in the subcontinent, because he died soon after his return. When he died at Avonwood House in Clifton, Bristol on 27 February, he was an eastern traveller.⁴⁸

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¹ The No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station chaplains' journal in which Launcelot's death is recorded and the No. 1 CCCS war diary both indicate that he was a sergeant. The war diary also records his father Francis as a sergeant at the time of his son's death. However, there is no evidence in their CEF service files to suggest that either had been promoted to sergeant by November 1918. Launcelot was promoted to a corporal less than two weeks before he died and Francis corporal in March 1918.

² "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 12 March 2015), entry for Francis Woodbury [sic] Spooner, Registration district: Bristol, Registration district number: 319, Sub-registration district: Ashley, ED, institution, or vessel: 9, Household schedule number: 258; Piece: 15067; "Canada, Soldiers of the First World War, 1914–1918," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 12 March 2015), entry for Launcelot Gange Spooner.

³ "England & Wales Christening Records, 1530–1906," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 19 August 2016), entry for Francis Woodberry Spooner; "1881 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 27 January 2020), entry for Frank Spooner, Registration district: Highworth, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 11, Piece: 2014, Folio: 125, Page: 5.

⁴ "1881 England Census," entry for Frank Spooner,

⁵ "England, Select Marriages, 1538–1973," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 13 January 2020), entry for George Woodberry Spooner, FHL film number: 870051.

⁶ "UK, Railway Employment Records, 1833–1956," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 12 March 2015), entry for Francis Woodberry Spooner in the Register of Apprentices and Prospectives 1864–1891.

⁷ "1921 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 12 March 2015), entry for Francis Ward Gorg Spooner, Province or territory: British Columbia, District: Vancouver South, District number: 23, Sub-district: Point Grey (Municipality), Sub-district number: 3, City, town or village: Municipality Point Grey.

⁸ "Red Deer Hill," *The Prince Albert Times*, June 18, 1895, p. 1, "Peel's Prairie Provinces," *University of Alberta* (<http://peel.library.ualberta.ca/>; accessed 20 August 2016).

⁹ "Red Deer Hill," *The Prince Albert Times*, October 29, 1895, p. 4, "Peel's Prairie Provinces," *University of Alberta* (<http://peel.library.ualberta.ca/>; accessed 13 January 2020).

¹⁰ "1911 England Census," entry for Francis Woodbury Spooner; "GRO Online Index–Birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>; accessed 13 January 2020), entry for Gange, Clara Gertrude, Registration district: Clifton, Volume: 06A, Page: 146.

¹¹ "1881 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 20 August 2016), entry for Clara G. Gange, Registration district: Barton Regis, Sub-registration district: Westbury, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 2, Piece: 2502, Folio: 52, Page: 56; "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 16 January 2020), entry for Edwin Gorsinch [sic] Gange, Registration district: Newington, Inferred county: London, Volume: 1d, Page: 357

¹² "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 26 November 2020), entry for Clara Gertrude Gange, Registration district: Bristol, Inferred county: Gloucestershire, Volume: 6a, Page: 90.

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- ¹³ "GRO online index-birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 10 January 2020) entry for Weston, Norman Ewart, Registration district: Barton Regis, Volume: 06A, Page: 174.
- ¹⁴ "GRO online index-birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 10 January 2020), entry for Weston, Stephen Lawrence Mortimer, Registration district: Barton Regis, Volume: 06A, Page: 163.
- ¹⁵ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 27 January 2020), entry for Harry Weston, Registration district: Fulham, Sub-registration district: St. Paul Hammersmith, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 10, Folio: 37, Page: 81.
- ¹⁶ "England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858–1995," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 9 January 2020), entry for Harry Weston.
- ¹⁷ "1921 Census of Canada," *Ancestry*, entry for Francis Ward Gorg [sic] Spooner.
- ¹⁸ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 12 March 2015), entry for Francis Spooner, Registration district: Highworth, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 22, Piece: 1583, Folio: 47, Page: 2.
- ¹⁹ "Web: Alberta, Newspaper BMD Index, 1889–2012," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 10 January 2020), entry for Francis W Spooner, *Calgary Herald Weekly*, 13 October 1898.
- ²⁰ "Canada, Find a Grave Index, 1600s–Current," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 11 January 2020), entry for Alan Ronald Spooner.
- ²¹ "1901 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 20 August 2016), entry for Lanelot [sic] Spooner, Province: The Territories, District: Saskatchewan, District number: 205, Sub-district: Red Deer, Sub-district number: 1, Family number: 13.
- ²² "1906 Canada Census of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 9 January 2020), entry for Sancett [sic] Spooner, Province: Saskatchewan, District: Saskatchewan, Sub-district: Town of Rosthern, Sub-district number: 35.
- ²³ "1906 Canada Census of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 9 January 2020), entry for Lawrence Weston, Province: Saskatchewan, District: Saskatchewan, Sub-district number: 11.
- ²⁴ "Canadian Passenger Lists, 1865–1935," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 20 August 2016), entry for Frances [sic] W Spooner.
- ²⁵ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry*, entry for Francis Woodbury [sic] Spooner.
- ²⁶ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 9 January 2015), entry for Norman Weston, Registration district: Bristol, Registration district number: 319, Sub-registration district: Clifton, ED, institution, or vessel: 32, Household schedule number: 304; Piece: 14857.
- ²⁷ "1911 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 10 January 2020), entry for Lawrence Weston, Province: Saskatchewan, District: Prince Albert, District number: 212, Sub-district number: 17.
- ²⁸ "Canadian Passenger Lists, 1865–1935," *Ancestry*, entry for Frances [sic] W Spooner.
- ²⁹ "New York, Passenger Lists, 1820–1957," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 20 August 2016), entry for Launcelot Spooner.
- ³⁰ "Personnel Records of the First World War," *Library and Archives Canada* (<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/>: accessed 7 January 2020), entry for Launcelot Gange Spooner, Reference: RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 9201-15, Item number: 244590, Digitized service file–PDF format: B9201-S015. Unless otherwise noted, all information about Launcelot's military service comes from this source.
- ³¹ "Personnel Records of the First World War," *Library and Archives Canada* (<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/>: accessed 7 January 2020), entry for Francis Woodberry Spooner, Reference: RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 9201-1, Item number: 244576, Digitized service file–PDF format: B9201-S001. Unless otherwise noted, all information about Francis' military service comes from this source.
- ³² "Seaforth Highlanders of Canada," (<http://seaforthhighlanders.ca/history/>: accessed 12 March 2015).

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- ³³ "War diaries - 72nd Canadian Infantry Battalion 1916/08/13-1918/01/31," Library and Archives Canada (<http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/>: accessed 26 March 2020), RG9-III-D-3. Volume/box number: 4942. File number: 45.
- ³⁴ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 20 August 2019), entry for Spooner, L. C. [sic].
- ³⁵ "War Diaries of the First World War: 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station 1914/08/13-1919/03/31," *Library and Archives Canada* (<http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/>: accessed 20 August 2016), entry for 14 November 1918.
- ³⁶ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," entry for Spooner, L. C. [sic].
- ³⁷ "UK, Citations of the Distinguished Conduct Medal, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 March 2015), entry for F.W. Spooner.
- ³⁸ "1921 Census of Canada," *Ancestry*, entry for Francis Ward Gorg [sic] Spooner.
- ³⁹ "British Columbia, Canada, Death Index, 1872–1990," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 12 March 2015), entry for Clara Gertrude Spooner, Registration number: 1945-09-666985, BCA number: B13188, GSU number: 2032325.
- ⁴⁰ "British Columbia, Canada, Death Index, 1872–1990," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 12 March 2015), entry for Francis Woodbury Spooner, Registration number: 1967-09-004962, BCA number: B13282, GSU number: 2033858.
- ⁴¹ "Canada, Voters Lists, 1935–1980," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 12 March 2015), entry for Alan R. Spooner in 1974, Location: Esquimalt, Saanich, British Columbia, Canada, Electoral district: Esquimalt-Saanich.
- ⁴² "Canada, Find a Grave Index, 1600s–Current," entry for Alan Ronald Spooner.
- ⁴³ "Personnel Records of the First World War," *Library and Archives Canada* (<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/>: accessed 9 January 2020), entry for Lawrence Mortimer [sic] Weston, Reference: RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 10251-12, Item number: 289986, Digitized service file–PDF format: B9201-S001. Unless otherwise noted, all information about Lawrence's military service comes from this source.
- ⁴⁴ "1921 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 12 March 2015), entry for Laurence Stephen Mortimer Weston, Province or territory: British Columbia, District: New Westminster, District number: 2, Sub-district: Surrey, Sub-district number: 20, City, town or village: Surrey Municipality [sic].
- ⁴⁵ "Personnel Records of the First World War," *Library and Archives Canada*, entry for Lawrence Mortimer [sic] Weston.
- ⁴⁶ "England, United Grand Lodge of England Freemason Membership Registers, 1751–1921," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 12 January 2020), entry for Norman Ewart Waston [sic],
- ⁴⁷ "UK, Incoming Passenger Lists, 1878–1960," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 12 January 2020), entry for Mr. Norman E. Weston.
- ⁴⁸ "England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858–1995," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 12 January 2020), entry for Norman Ewart Weston.