



Lieutenant Frederick Courtney Mellor (Regimental Number 91*) lies in Knightsbridge Cemetery – Grave reference B. 9.

**Officers who were eventually promoted from the ranks may be identified from their Regimental Number. Other officers who were not from the ranks received the King's Commission, or in the case of those in the Newfoundland Regiment, an Imperial Commission, and were not considered as enlisted. These officers thus had no Regimental Number allotted to them.*

(continued)

And since officers did not enlist, they were not then required to re-enlist ‘for the duration’, even though, at the beginning, as a private, they had volunteered their services for only a limited time – twelve months.

His occupation prior to enlistment recorded as that of a *cable operator* with the *Cuckold’s Cove Cable Company*, and earning an annual salary of one thousand dollars, Frederick Courtney Mellor was to be a recruit of the First Draft.

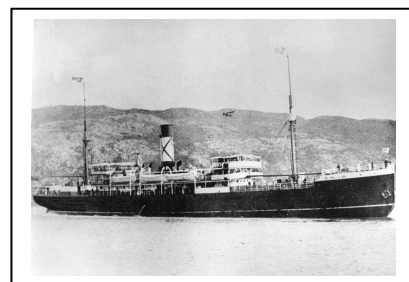
He presented himself on August 25 of 1914, exactly three weeks after the *Declaration of War*, for medical examination at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury* on Harvey Road in St. John’s, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland. It was a procedure which was to pronounce him to be...*Fit for foreign service.*

Courtney Mellor subsequently enlisted and was attested on September 2, 1914* – engaged at the private soldier’s rate of \$1.10 per diem, this including a daily ten-cent field allowance. After a further thirty-one days spent in training on the shores of Quidi Vidi Lake in the east end of St. John’s, he embarked on October 3 onto the *Bowring Brothers* vessel *Florizel* awaiting the first Newfoundland contingent – to become known to history as the *First Five Hundred* and also as the *Blue Puttees* - in St. John’s Harbour.

****Although a second source cites October 1 as the day, a date on which a large number of the new recruits were to take their oath.***

The ship would not sail for the United Kingdom until the following day, October 4, as, off the southern coast of the Island, it was to rendezvous with the convoy carrying the 1st Canadian Division overseas.

(Right: *The image of Florizel at anchor in the harbour at St. John’s is by courtesy of Admiralty House Museum.*)

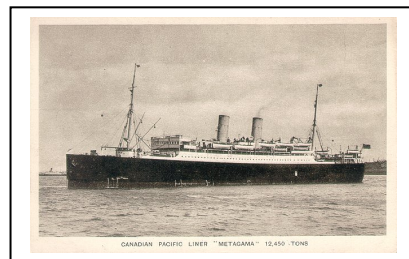


(Right below: *Fort George, constructed in the latter half of the eighteenth century, still serves the British Army to this day. – photograph from 2011*)

In the United Kingdom the Newfoundland contingent was to train in several venues: firstly in southern England on the Salisbury Plain; then in Scotland firstly at Fort George – on the Moray Firth close to Inverness; at Edinburgh where it was to garrison the Castle, the first troops from outside the British Isles to do so; and later again at the tented *Stobs Camp* near the town of Hawick to the south-east of Edinburgh.



However, on April 22, Private Mellor was to receive an Imperial Commission accompanied by an appointment to the rank of second lieutenant and would not serve with the Newfoundland unit for the entirety of this period to be spent in the United Kingdom. In fact he was to leave the contingent on the morrow of his promotion.



(continued)

Second Lieutenant Mellor was to take ship in Liverpool on the following day, April 23 - this time onto His Majesty's Transport *Metagama* - for the return journey to Newfoundland, although he was disembark at Montreal (or Quebec City). The journey appears to have taken him some thirteen days altogether – Quebec, Truro and Sydney documented as stops on his way home - before his arrival back in St. John's on May 5 or 6.

The reason for the voyage – and that of other officers travelling at the same time - appears to be undocumented, although in other such cases it was to escort further drafts from Newfoundland to the United Kingdom.

(Preceding page: The image of 'Metagama' is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site. She was a new ship of the Canadian Pacific Line, her maiden voyage having taken place only a month before that of Second Lieutenant Mellor. She would not be requisitioned during the Great War although she was often to carry Canadian military personnel on her scheduled services. Unlike her sister-ship 'Missanabie', 'Metagama' survived the conflict, only to become a victim of the Great Depression some ten years later. She was broken up in 1934.)

Having departed the Dominion of Newfoundland once again for the United Kingdom some six weeks later, on June 17, and having arrived there on the 27th of that same month* – he appears to have chosen not to travel with the 'F' Company draft which was to leave St. John's on or about June 19 - he was posted to the Regimental Depot in the town of Ayr where he became a full lieutenant on October 16.

**Perhaps he travelled on board 'Scandinavian' which sailed from Montreal on June 17, but this is only speculation. 'F' Company, on the other hand, was to sail from St. John's days later on board 'Calgarian' – requisitioned as an Armed Merchant Cruiser at the time; this however was to be a voyage of some three weeks' duration and 'F' Company was not to arrive at Stobs Camp until the second week of July.*

The Depot, at the Royal Borough of Ayr on the west coast of Scotland, had been by the time of Lieutenant Mellor's arrival only in the throes of being established. In fact, he must have been one of the first to be posted there (see further below). Ayr was thereupon to serve as the overseas base for the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion from where – as of November of 1915 up until January of 1918 - re-enforcement drafts would be despatched to bolster the 1st Battalion's numbers (also see further below), at first to the Middle East and then later to the *Western Front*.

(Right: An aerial view of Ayr – probably from the period between the Wars: Newton-on Ayr, where the 'other ranks' were to be billeted, is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough, where were housed the officers, is to the right. – by courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr)

Lieutenant Mellor was to remain posted at the Depot for some eight months before he would be ordered to join the Newfoundland Battalion, by that time serving on the Continent (see further below).



(Right: *The High Street in Ayr as shown on a postcard of the time, the imposing Wallace Tower: it stands to this day (2017) - dominating the scene. – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs Lillian Tibbo)*



The 3rd Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr, Lieutenant Mellor one of its officers, travelled to and passed through the English south-coast port-city of Southampton en route to Rouen, capital city of Normandy, on March 28. It landed there from His Majesty's Transport *Archangel* two days later, on the 30th.

(Right: *The image of HMT Archangel laden with troops is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.)*



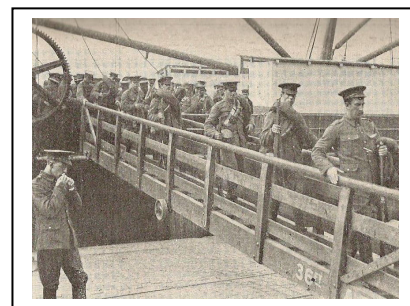
From Rouen, after several days of final training and organization* there at the British Expeditionary Force Base Depot, the majority of the personnel of the 3rd Draft was despatched to report to duty with the 1st Battalion at the village of Englebelmer, at some three kilometres behind the Front.

The two officers – Lieutenants Mellor** and Cashin – and the two-hundred eleven other ranks they were accompanying, arrived there on April 15.

(Right below: *British troops disembark at Rouen en route to the Western Front. - from Illustration)*

*Apparently the standard length of time for this final training was ten days – although this was to become more and more flexible as the War progressed - in areas near Rouen, Étaples, LeHavre and Harfleur that became known to the troops as the Bull Rings.

**It is possible that Lieutenant Mellor preceded the 3rd Draft to France, as he is also recorded as having arrived in Rouen on March 23. But he surely travelled with it from Rouen to Englebelmer.



* * * * *

After Second Lieutenant Mellor's departure on April 23 from the Newfoundland contingent stationed at Edinburgh Castle, the unit had remained posted there for just more than a further two weeks.

On May 11 the Newfoundlanders – by now totaling five companies – had been posted to Stobs Camp near the Scottish town of Hawick, south-east of the Scottish capital, where they were subsequently to remain under canvas and to undergo further training until the end of July.

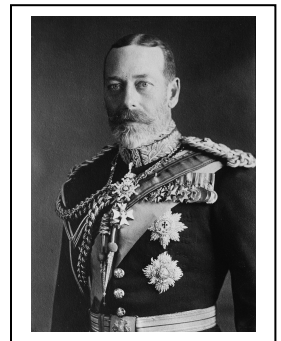


(Preceding page: *The Newfoundland Regiment on parade at Stobs Camp and about to be presented with its Colours on June 10, 1915* – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo)

At the beginning of that August of 1915, the four senior Companies, 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', had then been sent south from *Stobs Camp* to undergo a final two weeks of training, as well as an inspection by the King, at Aldershot. Meanwhile the two junior Companies, the later-arrived 'E' and then 'F', were ordered stationed to Scotland's west coast, to Ayr, where they were to provide the nucleus of the newly-forming 2nd (Reserve) Battalion*.

Whether Second Lieutenant Mellor was ever to report to *Stobs Camp* or if he would proceed directly to Ayr is not clear; but if indeed he went to the former, it was to be for only a matter of, at most, weeks.

(Right: *George V, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, King, Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India* – photograph from *Bain News Services* via *Wikipedia*)



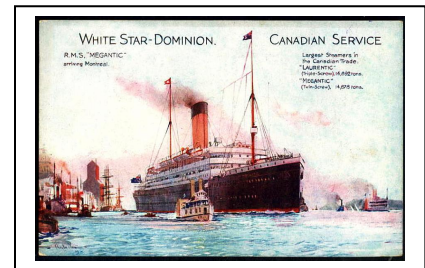
*On July 10, 1915, 'F' Company had arrived at *Stobs Camp* from Newfoundland, its personnel raising the numbers of the unit to establishment battalion strength and thus permitting it to be ordered to active service.

Having thus trained as aforementioned at Aldershot for that two-week period in early August, the by-now 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment - comprising those four Companies, 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', and already attached to the 88th Brigade of the 29th Division of the (British) Mediterranean Expeditionary Force – had thereupon been ordered onto active service.



(Right above: *Some of the personnel of 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' Companies of the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment at Aldershot in August of 1915* – from *The Fighting Newfoundlander* by Col. G.W.L. Nicholson, C.D.)

(Right: *The image of Megantic, here in her peace-time colours of a 'White Star Line' vessel, is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.*)



On August 20 of 1915, the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment had embarked in the Royal Navy Harbour of Devonport onto the requisitioned passenger-liner *Megantic* for passage to the Middle East and to the fighting against the Turks where, a month later – having spent two weeks billeted in British barracks in the Egyptian capital, Cairo - on the night of September 19-20, the Newfoundland force was to land at *Suvla Bay* on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.

(Right: Kangaroo Beach, where the officers and men of the 1st Battalion, Newfoundland Regiment, landed on the night of September 19-20, 1915, is to be seen in the distance at the far end of Suvla Bay. The remains of a landing-craft are still clearly visible in the foreground on 'A' Beach. – photograph taken in 2011)



(Right: Newfoundland troops on board a troop-ship anchored at Mudros: either Megantic on August 29, Ausonia on September 18, or Prince Abbas on September 19 – Whichever the case, they were yet to land on Gallipoli. – from Provincial Archives)



(Right below: A century later, the area, little changed from those far-off days, of the Newfoundland positions at Suvla, and where the 1st Battalion was to serve during the autumn of 1915 – photograph from 2011)



Not only in the area where the Newfoundland Battalion was to serve but, even since the very first days of the operation in April of 1915, the entire *Gallipoli Campaign*, including the operation at *Suvla Bay*, would prove to be little more than a debacle: Flies, dust, disease, the frost-bite and the floods – and of course the casualties inflicted by an enemy who was to fight a great deal better than the British High Command* had ever anticipated – were eventually to overwhelm the British-led forces and those of the French, and it would finally be decided to abandon not only *Suvla Bay* but the entire *Gallipoli* venture.

(Right below: An un-identified Newfoundland soldier in the trenches at Suvla Bay – from the Provincial Archives)

****Many of the commanders chosen were second-rate, had been brought out of retirement, and had little idea of how to fight – let alone of how to win. One of the generals at Suvla, apparently, had handed in his resignation during the Campaign and had just gone home.***

November 26 had seen the nadir of the Newfoundland Battalion's fortunes during the *Gallipoli Campaign*. A freak rain-, snow- and ice-storm had struck the *Suvla Bay* area on that day and the subsequent floods had wreaked havoc amongst the forces of both sides. For several days, survival from the wrath of Nature rather than from that of the enemy was to be the priority.



(continued)

There were to be many casualties in both camps, some of them, surprised by the sudden inundation of their positions, fatalities who had drowned in their trenches – although no Newfoundlanders were to be among that number. Numerous were those afflicted by trench-foot and by frost-bite but the end of the *Gallipoli Campaign* was already in sight.

After the storm, the Newfoundlanders were to remain stationed at *Suvla Bay* for only a further twenty-five days, by which time they would have served there for exactly three months to the day.

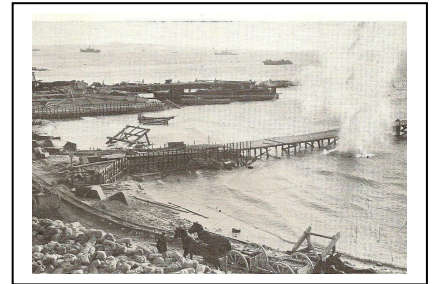
On the night of December 19-20, the British had abandoned the area of *Suvla Bay* – the Newfoundlanders, the only non-British unit to serve there, to form a part of the rear-guard.

Some of the Battalion personnel had been evacuated to the nearby island of *Imbros*, some to *Lemnos*, further away, but in neither case was the respite to be of a long duration; the 1st Battalion was to be transferred only two days later to the area of *Cape Helles*, on the western tip of the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.



(Right above: *Cape Helles as seen from the Turkish positions on the misnamed Achi Baba, positions which were never breached. The Newfoundland positions were to the right-hand side of the picture.* – photograph from 2011)

The British and the *Anzac* forces – the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps were also to serve at *Gallipoli* – were now only marking time until a complete withdrawal of the *Peninsula* was undertaken.



This operation would take place on the night of January 8-9, the Newfoundland Battalion to furnish part of the rear-guard on this second occasion also.

(Right above: *'W' Beach at Cape Helles as it was only days before the final British evacuation in January of 1916* – from *Illustration*)

**Lieutenant Owen Steele of St. John's, Newfoundland, is cited as having been the last soldier of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force to step into the final small boat to sail from the Gallipoli Peninsula.*

(Right: *The same 'W' Beach almost a century after its abandonment by British forces in that January of 1916 and by the Newfoundlanders who were to be the last soldiers off the beach: Vestiges of the wharves in the black-and-white picture are still to be seen.* – photograph from 2011)



When the British had evacuated the entire *Gallipoli Peninsula* in January of 1916, the Newfoundland Battalion was to be ordered to the Egyptian port-city *Alexandria*, having arrived there on the 15th of that month.

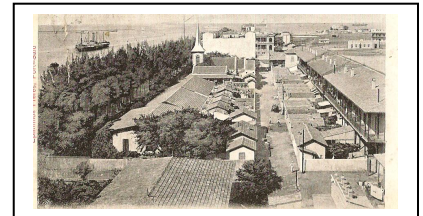
The Newfoundlanders were then to be immediately transferred southward to Suez, a port at the southern end of the Canal which bears the same name, there to await further orders since, at the time, the subsequent destination of the British 29th Division had yet to be decided*.

**Bulgaria had entered the conflict on the side of the Central Powers, and Salonika was soon to become a theatre of war.*



(Right above: *The British destroy their supplies during the final evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula. The men of the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment were among the last to leave on two occasions, at both Suvla Bay and Cape Helles. – photograph taken from the battleship Cornwallis from Illustration*)

After a two-month interim spent in the vicinity of Port Suez, the almost six-hundred officers and *other ranks* of the 1st Battalion had boarded His Majesty's Transport *Alaunia* at Port Tewfiq on March 14 to sail up through the *Suez Canal* en route to France. The Newfoundlanders would disembark eight days afterwards in the Mediterranean port-city of Marseilles, on March 22.



(Right above: *Port Tewfiq at the south end of the Suez Canal just prior to the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)

(Right: *British troops march through the port area of the French city of Marseilles. – from a vintage post-card*)

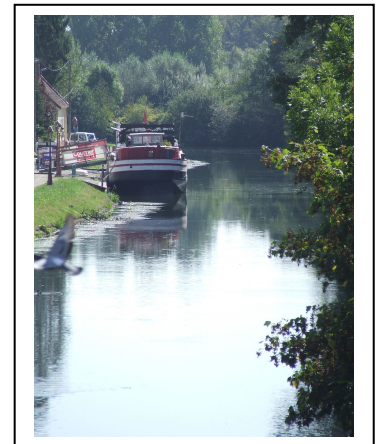
Some three days after the unit's disembarkation on March 22, the Newfoundland Battalion's train had found its way to the small provincial town of Pont-Rémy, a thousand kilometres to the north of Marseilles. It had been a cold, miserable journey, the blankets provided for the troops having travelled unused in a separate wagon.



Having de-trained at the local station at two o'clock in the morning, the Newfoundlanders were now still to endure the long, dark march ahead of them before they would reach their billets at Buigny l'Abbé.

It is doubtful if many of those tired soldiers were to pay much attention to the slow-moving stream flowing under the bridge over which they had then marched on their way from the station. But some three months later *the Somme* was to become a part of their history.

(Right: *A languid River Somme as seen from the bridge at Pont-Rémy – photograph from 2010*)



On April 13, the 1st Battalion had marched into the village of Englebelmer – perhaps some fifty kilometres in all from Pont-Rémy - where they would be billeted, would receive reinforcements from Scotland via Rouen and, in two days' time, would be introduced into the communication trenches of the *Western Front*.

The aforementioned...*re-enforcements from Scotland via Rouen*...had been those of which one of the officers had been Lieutenant Mellor. He was apparently thereupon attached to 'B' Company, to its 7th Platoon.

* * * * *

Just days following the Newfoundland Battalion's arrival on the *Western Front*, two of the four Companies – 'A', and Lieutenant Mellor's 'B' – were to take over several support positions from a British unit* before the entire Newfoundland unit was to then be ordered to move further up for the first time into forward positions on April 22.

(Right: *A part of the re-constructed trench system in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel* – photograph from 2007(?))



**It should be said that the Newfoundland Battalion and two-hundred men of the Bermuda Rifles who were serving at the time in the 2nd Lincolnshire Regiment Battalion, were the only units at the Somme from outside the British Isles - true also on the day of the attack on July 1.*

The Newfoundlanders were also soon to be preparing for the British campaign of that summer, to be fought on the ground named for the languid, meandering river, *the Somme*, that flowed – and still does so today – through the region.

If there is one name and date in Newfoundland history which is etched in the collective once-national memory, it is that of Beaumont-Hamel on July 1 of 1916; and if any numbers are remembered, they are those of the eight-hundred who went *over the top* in the third wave of the attack on that morning, and of the sixty-eight unwounded present at muster some twenty-four hours later*.

(Right above: *Beaumont-Hamel: Looking from the British lines down the hill to Y Ravine Cemetery which today stands atop part of the German front-line defences: The Danger Tree is to the right in the photograph.* – photograph taken in 2009)



(Right above: *Hawthorn Ridge Cemetery Number 2 in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel* – photograph from 2009(?))

(continued)

**Perhaps ironically, the majority of the Battalion's casualties was to be incurred during the advance from the third line of British trenches to the first line from where the attack proper was to be made, and while struggling through British wire laid to protect the British positions from any German attack.*

There are other numbers of course: the fifty-seven thousand British casualties incurred in four hours on that same morning of which nineteen-thousand were recorded as having been *killed in action or died of wounds*.

It was to be the largest disaster ever in the annals of the British Army...and, perhaps just as depressing, the butchery of *the Somme* was to continue for the next four and a half months.

(Right: *Beaumont-Hamel is a commune, not a village.* – photographs from 2010 and 2015)

In fact, Beaumont-Hamel was a commune – it still exists today – at the time comprising two communities: Beaumont, a village on the German side of the lines, and Hamel which was behind those of the British. No-Man's-Land, on which the Newfoundland Memorial Park lies partially today, was on land that separated Beaumont from Hamel.



(Right below: *A grim, grainy image purporting to be Newfoundland - dead awaiting burial after Beaumont-Hamel* – from...?)

The son of Reverend Thomas (also found as *Tomas*) Crewe Mellor, minister of the Church of England, and of Mary Louisa Mellor (née *Shaw*) of St Luke's Rectory, Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia, he had a brother, serving for the hostilities in the Canadian Engineers*, and two sisters, Mary-Elizabeth and Kathleen. While having been born in Nova Scotia, Lieutenant Mellor cited his address at the time of enlistment as Cuckold's Cove**, Newfoundland.



**His brother Lance Corporal William Elliott, Service Number 5542, served in both the 1st and 2nd Field Companies of the Canadian Engineers before transferring to the Royal Engineers. He survived the Great War.*

***A small cove adjacent to St. John's, in 1905 this was where two trans-Atlantic cables of the Commercial Cable Company – both from Nova Scotia: one to Ireland and the other to England - were diverted and brought ashore.*

(The photograph of Private Mellor is from the Provincial Archives.)



(continued)

The Battalion Signalling Officer, he was reported as having been *killed in action* on July 1, 1916, during the fighting on the first day of *the Somme*, on the field at Beaumont-Hamel. An eye-witness stated that of the 36 signallers in the Regiment only five, including himself, *had come out all right* and that Lieutenant Mellor was killed at the start of the attack, struck by machine-gun fire (see below).

Frederick Courtney Mellor had enlisted at a declared twenty-six years of age: Year of birth in Nova Scotia, 1888.

Lieutenant Frederick Courtney Mellor was entitled to the British War Medal and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal) (right).



a) Received in London September 7, 1916:

Lt. Mellor was a signalling officer for the Battalion, dark complexion and hair, and a dark moustache. Medium build, about 5 ft. 7 ins. About 27 years of age. The Newfoundland was with the 88th Brigade, and at exactly 9.10 a.m. on July 1st, left their trenches at St. John's Road, three miles from Maily. A few minutes after they had started informant got wounded. He crawled back to the trenches he had just left, and from there went to dressing station at Maily. While waiting there to be taken on down the line, a signaller from the Newfoundland Regt. (whose name informant has forgotten), came in wounded. He told informant out of the 36 signallers in the regiment, only 3 including himself had come out all right. He said that Lt. Mellor was killed almost at the start, outright by a machine gun bullet (sic).

The informant was Private Eric Burt (Service Number 1152) of the Newfoundland Regiment, who on August 28, when he related the above information, was in the Number 8 Stationary Hospital at Boulogne. Private Burt was later killed in action on October 9, 1918, while fighting at the Broembek during the wretched Third Battle of Ypres: Passchendaele.

b) (from a paper in Lieutenant Mellor's file)

Pioneer School, Reading.
April 2nd, 1917

Dear Sir,

Having heard that the grave of Lieut. F. C. Mellor of the 1st Newfoundland Regt., was seen in September 1916, I feel it my duty to state that I found a Body in the old "No Man's Land" opposite Beaumont Hamel on or about November 19th, 1916 with an identity disc on the left wrist on which was Lieut. F. C. Mellor, 1st Newfoundland Regt. I buried him in a shell hole and marked the grave. Some days later I gave the map reference of the site to the Divl. Graves Registration Officer and asked him if he could move the body to a cemetery. About a week after he told me that he had done so.

I swear on my oath that the above statements are true.

(Sgd) R.T. Smith,
2/Lieut., 2nd Seaforth Hldrs.

The above dossier has been researched, compiled and produced by Alistair Rice. Please email any suggested amendments or content revisions if desired to *criceadam@yahoo.ca*. Last updated – February 11, 2023.