



**Private Francis Picco (Regimental Number 5863) lies in Plymouth (Efford) Cemetery: Grave reference, C. 3478. R.C. Ground.**

**His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a fisherman, Francis Picco was a recruit of the 15<sup>th</sup>(?) Draft. He presented himself for medical examination at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury\**, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, on July 29, 1918. It was a procedure which found him...*Fit for Foreign Service.***

**(continued)**

***\*The building was to serve as the Regimental Headquarters in Newfoundland for the duration of the conflict.***

It was to be on the day of that medical assessment, July 29, and at the same venue, that Francis Picco was now to be enlisted. He was engaged...***for the duration of the war\****...at the daily private soldier's rate of a single dollar to which was to be appended a ten-cent per diem Field Allowance.

***\*At the outset of the War, perhaps because it was felt by the authorities that it would be a conflict of short duration, the recruits enlisted for only a single year. As the War progressed, however, this was obviously going to cause problems and the men were encouraged to re-enlist. Later recruits – as of or about May of 1916 - signed on for the 'Duration' at the time of their original enlistment.***

Only a further few hours were then to go by before there came to pass, while still at the ***CLB Armoury*** on Harvey Road, the final formality of his enlistment: attestation. On that same twenty-ninth day of that July\* he pledged his allegiance to the reigning monarch, George V, whereupon, at that moment, Francis Picco became...***a soldier of the King.***

***\*It had been two months prior to this that the Newfoundland Military Service Act (conscriptio had come into effect. From May 11 through to the end of the Great War, the Department of Militia was to call a total of 1,470 men into active service. No evidence found among his documents suggests that John Butler was or was not one of those to be conscripted.***

Many of the recruits during this period are recorded as having been granted several days of a final furlough before departure for overseas service. Private Picco, Number 5863, was to be one of those to receive these several days of leave, his records showing that following some initial training he was granted home leave to the Burin Peninsula community of Rushoon in the District of Placentia & St. Mary's from August 13 to 26 before returning to St. John's and accordingly reporting...***to duty.***

Following his enlistment it is likely that Private Picco reported...***to duty...to be quartered in the temporary barracks apparently established since 1915 in the St. John's curling rink and the Prince's Skating Rink in the eastern end of the city. He likely did likewise following his return from the aforesaid period of leave.***

***(Right: This photograph of the Prince's Rink in St. John's with military personnel, apparently attired in uniforms of Great War vintage, on parade is from the Ice Hockey Wiki web-site. There appears to be no further information a propos.)***



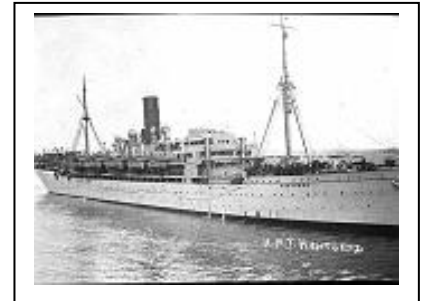
**(continued)**

The next record of Private Picco is the entry in his file a propos September 9 which documents him being posted for...*special duty*...to Mount Pearl – most likely at the wireless station (today *Admiralty House Museum*) being operated by the Intelligence Service of the British Admiralty. He was recalled from there on the 19<sup>th</sup> of the same month.



(Right: *Navy Men in front of His Majesty's Wireless Station Mount Pearl c. 1915-1922* – photograph courtesy of *Admiralty House Museum, Mount Pearl*)

Three days after his return from...*special duty*..., on September 22, Private Picco was one of the 24<sup>th</sup> Draft from Newfoundland which took the train from St. John's to Québec (his files say Halifax but – if the date of September 22 is correct - other information makes Québec almost certain – he likely travelled *via* Halifax). There the troops embarked onto His Majesty's Transport *Huntsend* and sailed for the United Kingdom on the 28<sup>th</sup>.



The three troopships in the convoy – *Victoria* and *City of Cairo* the two others - were infected with influenza: about one hundred men in all would die at sea and more were to expire after having arrived in England.

(Right above: *The former German ship Lützow, seized by the British in 1914 and re-named Huntsend.* – from *Old Ship Photos*)

Private Picco was evacuated from *Huntsend* upon the ship's arrival in Devonport on or about October 11, and was admitted into the 4<sup>th</sup> Southern (*Ford House*) General Hospital in Plymouth. Suffering from pneumonia, by October 23 he was considered as being *dangerously ill*.

The son of Stephen Picco (deceased from facial cancer on April 30, 1905) and of Charlotte Mary Picco (née *Pardy*) – to whom he had allotted a daily sixty cents from his pay - of Rushoon, he was brother to James, Leo, Lucy, (Mary?), Minnie, Philip and Alphonsus.

Private Picco was reported as having...*died of sickness...of pneumonia* - at hospital at five o'clock in the morning on that same October 23, 1918. He was buried in Plymouth two days later, on November 25.

Francis Picco had enlisted at the *declared* age of twenty-four years. Thus far the exact date of his birth has proved to be elusive.

Private Francis Picco was entitled to the British War Medal for his overseas service.

(continued)



**Note: The Wikipedia web-site has the ship carrying six-hundred forty-nine Canadians and continues to claim the following...five percent of the Canadians died before the troopship disembarked on October 11, 1918. Some, if not all, of these men were buried at Beaumont-Hamel Newfoundland Memorial, a memorial site...**

**Much of this is blatantly incorrect, of course: Firstly - any Newfoundlanders on board the ship were not Canadians; secondly – of those who died on board ship during the passage (such as the above Private Leonard Hynes and also Private Charles McCarthy) at least some, likely all of them, given the contagious and lethal nature of the disease, were buried at sea; thirdly – those sick while on board but who died after having disembarked were quickly buried for the same reason\*.**

**Their clothing and bed-linen was usually burned as soon as possible.**

**\*The vessel docked in Plymouth, England, while Beaumont-Hamel is, of course, in France. The memorial does, however, commemorate those whose bodies were committed to the waves.**

**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](mailto:criceadam@yahoo.ca). Last updated – January 31, 2023.**