

Frederick Lee



Date of Birth: 19 November 1895

Place of Birth: Kamloops, B.C.

Enlistment: 13 March 1916 Kamloops, British Columbia

Service Number: 687931

Rank: Private

Units: - 172nd Battalion (Rocky Mountain Rangers)
- 47th Battalion (Royal Westminster Regiment)

Killed in Action: 21 August 1917 at the Battle of Hill 70

Frederick Lee was born and raised in Kamloops, British Columbia. A first generation Canadian, his parents were both immigrants to Canada from southern China. As a high school honour roll student, Lee was considered to be a bright up and coming youth. His family was also highly regarded in the local community. Yet this was not the norm for many in the Chinese Canadian community who were often subject to the racial prejudices that are frequently directed at ethnic minorities who immigrate to a new country. For example, despite having been born in Canada, Canadians of Chinese descent were not permitted to vote in federal elections until 1947.

Determined to prove his worth as citizen of this country Frederick Lee volunteered for the Canadian Expeditionary Force with the 172nd Battalion (Rocky Mountain Rangers) in March 1916. After being trained as a machine gunner, Lee was sent via troop ship to England before being deployed to France in February 1917 where he was assigned to the 47th Battalion. Two months later he fought at the Battle of Vimy Ridge. Having survived Vimy, he next took part in the Battle of Hill 70, where sadly he was killed in action on August 21, 1917.

Several things make Frederic Lee's service to Canada highly notable. Having enlisted in 1916, it can be ascertained that he joined up as a volunteer since national conscription was only enacted in September 1917, after the Battle of Hill 70 had occurred. His patriotism for his country is therefore unquestionable. Moreover being of Chinese descent, he was one of only a small number of Chinese Canadians who were accepted into the Canadian Corps during the Great War. Finally it should be noted that Lee's 47th Battalion was in the thick of the fighting at Hill 70. It was here that one of his fellow soldiers from his unit, Acting Corporal Filip Konowal, (another recent immigrant to Canada from Ukraine) won the Victoria Cross.

Frederick Lee has no known final resting place. His commemoration at the Hill 70 Memorial is therefore symbolic of the 1,877 Canadians who gave their lives for their country at the Battle of Hill 70 and truly representative of the over 11,000 Canadian soldiers in the Great War whose remains were never found.