

ON THE WAY TO BERLIN

John Edward de Hertel (1863-1945)

In May 1916, when the 1,000 man 130th Lanark & Renfrew Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) marched through the streets of Perth, from their fairground drill field to the CPR station and onward to the trenches of France, they were led by their home-grown commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel John Edward de Hertel.



Descendant of a Canadian family dating back to Jacque Hertel (1603-1651) and Marie Marguerite (1620-1700), who arrived in New France from Normandie in the mid-1600s, John Edward de Hertel Jr. was born at Perth on September 29, 1863 to Jean-Edouard de Hertel Sr. (1831-1868) and Jane E. Douglas (1839-1916).

His father was born at Rigaud, Quebec, where the Quebec-Ontario border intersects the Ottawa River. He went to work in the square timber trade and, in the mid-1850s, arrived in the Perth area as an agent of the Gillies Lumber Company. The Gillies company had begun as a small Lanark Township sawmill built in 1840 on the Clyde River, but by the 1850's John Gillies (1811-1888), in partnership with Peter McLaren (1831-1919), owned 300 square miles of timber limits on the upper Mississippi River covering the greater part of six townships¹. At Perth, in 1859,

¹ Palmerston, Barrie, Angelsea, Clarendon, Olden and Oso.

Jean-Edouard de Hertel Sr. married Jane E. Douglas², the daughter of Robert Douglas (1818-1886) and Caroline Cox (1819-1868). Jean-Edouard and Jane de Hertel had four children born at Perth, but all died as infants except John Edward Jr. In 1868, when his son was just five years of age, Jean-Edouard Sr. died, aged 37, at Pembroke.

Raised by his widowed mother, John Edward Jr. was educated at Perth Public School and Perth Collegiate Institute. As a teenager, he “went to Montreal and entered the service of the Hudson Bay Company, serving directly under the late Sir Donald A. Smith [1820-1914]³. He later went to the far north country where he was factor for the company at a number of posts”⁴ During the 1885 Northwest Rebellion, while assigned to the HBC post at Lonely Lake, NWT,⁵ southwest of Battleford, he was briefly taken prisoner by Cree Chief Big Bear (c1825-1888). In describing this incident three decades later the *Perth Courier* reported that “de Hertel has in his possession the pipe of peace and the tobacco bag which was presented to him by Big Pierre [Bear]⁶ at the settlement of the rebellion”⁷.



Big Bear (c1825-1888)

De Hertel left the Hudson Bay Company for a position with the newly formed Canadian Trade Commissioner Service⁸ in the West Indies and a few years later went to work for H. Shorey & Co. of Montreal, a clothing manufacturing and wholesale firm. It was during his years in Montreal, first with the HBC and later with H. Shorey & Co. that John Edward de Hertel began his military career as a part-time soldier, serving seven years with the 3rd Victoria Rifles Militia Regiment. When he returned to Perth in 1898, he transferred into the 42nd Lanark & Renfrew Militia, a regiment with which he would be affiliated for 26 years.

The 1899 Perth Directory described de Hertel's occupation as 'Commercial Traveler' but in that year he also partnered with F. G. Campbell to establish 'Campbell & de Hertel', “Gents Furnishings & Fine Tailoring” at 76 Foster Street, a shop identifiable by its “Yellow Front”⁹. 'Campbell & de Hertel' would be in business through 1910.

² Jane Douglas-de Hertel's sister, Caroline Douglas (1841-1900), married John Graham Haggart (1836-1913). Haggart was mayor of Perth in 1861–64, and 1871–72, and MP for Lanark South 1872-1913. Haggart was an infamous womanizer and he and his wife lived separate lives from about 1870.

³ 1st Baron Strathcona and Mount Royal.

⁴ Obituary, *Perth Courier*, January 3, 1946.

⁵ Now Saskatchewan at 52°31' N. / 109°18' W.

⁶ There was no Cree Chief named 'Big Pierre' involved in the 1885 rebellion. This is a reference to 'Big Bear' or Mistahimaskwa. Following the rebellion Big Bear was sentenced to three years in prison. He served half of his term at the Stony Mountain Penitentiary in Manitoba. Released in February 1887 due to ill health, he died 1888.

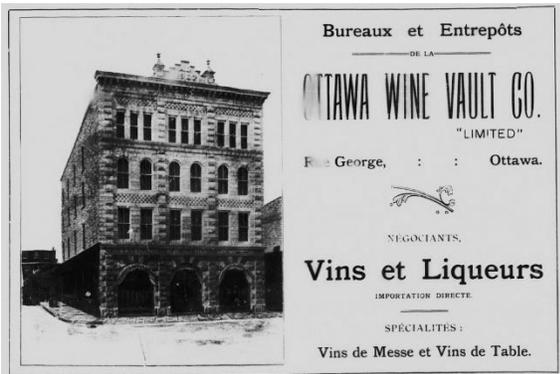
⁷ *Perth Courier*, December 10, 1915. Doubtless a somewhat exaggerated description of de Hertel's souvenirs of his time with the HBC in the NWT.

⁸ Founded in 1894.

⁹ The Merchants, Professionals and Tradespeople of Perth, by Gus Quattrocchi (1998).

In 1902 de Hertel also joined in partnership with 'O'Hara Brothers'¹⁰ to open the Perth Creamery Company, located on Park Avenue¹¹. From its establishment, until it was sold in 1929¹², the de Hertel & O'Hara plant at Perth processed and average of 20,000 lbs. of milk into 1,500 lbs. of butter daily.

Also, in 1902, shortly after the December 1901 death of Whiskey King John A. McLaren (1831-1901), de Hertel was recruited by McLaren inheritor John A. Stewart (1867-1922)¹³ to manage the 'McLaren Distillery', where he worked for the next 15 years.



In addition to his responsibilities at the McLaren Distillery, in August 1905 the *Perth Courier* announced that yet another partnership, 'Wilson & de Hertel', had been appointed sole local agents for Empress ladies' shoes, manufactured by 'Walker-Parker Co. Ltd.' of Toronto. Over the first decade of the 20th century de Hertel also became a Director of the 'Ottawa Wine Vaults Co.'¹⁴, importers and wholesalers of table and mass wines, and of the 'Cecil Investment Company', both of Ottawa.

De Hertel also invested in local real estate. Between 1900 and the outbreak of WW1 he purchased several residential properties in Perth and, in 1916, acquired the commercial block at 81 Foster Street, at the corner of Wilson Street¹⁵, which he owned until at least 1928.

In the public sphere, John Edward de Hertel sat on Perth Town Council 1900-1902 and served a single term as Mayor in 1925-1926. He was an enthusiastic participant in, and leader of, local sporting clubs and cultural activities; figure skater, lacrosse player, curler, charter member of the Links O'Tay Golf Club, bicycle club president, Commodore of the Rideau Ferry Regatta, driving force behind creation of a town swimming pool, and valued member the Perth Citizen's Band for which he composed several original pieces. He was also a Mason and member of the International Order of Foresters.

On October 10, 1911 de Hertel married Susan Rothwell Balderson (1875-1935), daughter of Robert Hewitt Balderson (1828-1917) and Susan Morris (1838-1900). His bride was the sister of local lawyer and commanding officer of the 42nd Regiment, Lieutenant Colonel James Morris Balderson K.C. (1862-1943), under whose command de Hertel was then serving as Quartermaster at the rank of Captain. John Edward and Susan de Hertel would have one daughter, Roberta Denise (1914-2005)¹⁶.

¹⁰ James Arthur O'Hara (1884-1973) and George Leonard Riley O'Hara (1887-1921), both were born at Lascelles, Les Collines-de-l'Outaouais, Quebec and both died at Perth.

¹¹ Rogers Road at Harvey Street.

¹² Sold to Mack Robertson and Peter McNevin of Belleville, who changed the name to Land O' Lanark Creameries.

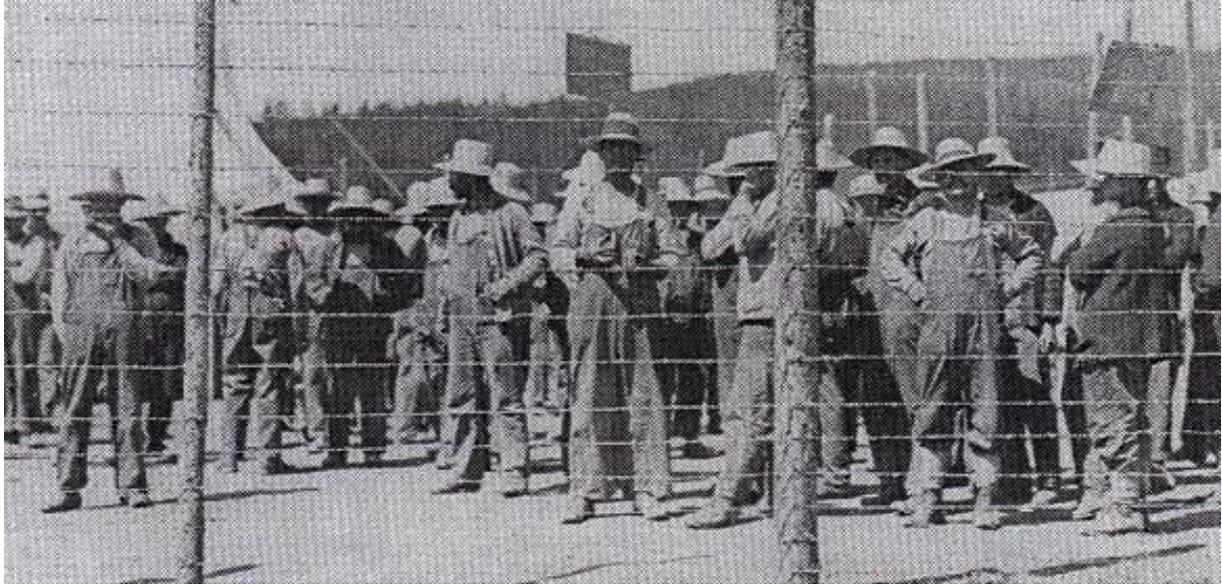
¹³ John A. Stewart, KC, Perth Mayor 1900-1904, MP South Lanark 1918-1922, Minister of Railways.

¹⁴ Located at 35-37 George Street, Ottawa, Ontario, now the Ottawa School of Art.

¹⁵ Where the 'Father & Son Barber Shop' is located in 2019.

¹⁶ Married, 1940, Sherald Edward 'Ned' Stewart, s/o Hon. & Mrs. H. A. Stewart of Brockville.

Shortly after Canada found itself at war on August 4, 1914, de Hertel's first active involvement in the conflict came on December 17th when the *Arnprior Chronicle* reported that, "Col. J. M. Balderson and Major¹⁷ J. E. de Hertel arrived at Petawawa with 50 men of the 42nd Regiment to guard 400 POWs".



Prisoner of War Camp-33, Petawawa, Ontario, 1914

A few weeks later de Hertel was appointed Chief Recruiting Officer for Lanark and Renfrew Counties. Over the following year he recruited 3,800 men for the war effort and then, on November 15, 1915, the Militia Department promoted him Lieutenant Colonel with orders to raise another 1,200 men to create the 130th Lanark & Renfrew Battalion CEF, which he would command.

When Lieutenant Colonel de Hertel undertook to raise the 130th Battalion, and nine months later led them in parade along Gore Street on their departure for France, he was marching in the boot steps of generations of de Hertel soldiers. His great-great-grandfather, Joseph-Hippolyte de Hertel (1738-1781), was one of five brothers who fought in the army of Louis XV.

... as a French junior officer in the Seven Years' War, [he] witnessing Braddock's defeat on the Monongahela in 1755. But he reconciled with British authorities after the Conquest, serving as an interpreter¹⁸ in the Indian Department and helping to quell Pontiac's Rebellion [1763-1766]. Joseph-Hippolyte again rallied to his adopted flag to repel the American invasion of Canada in 1775, only to be captured at the fall of Fort St. Jean [1775]. Exchanged two years later, he died in 1781.

Not all of the 130th Battalion Commander's military ancestors enjoyed equally honorable careers, however. Joseph-Hippolyte de Hertel's son, and John Edward de Hertel's great-grandfather, Louis-Hippolyte de Hertel (1771-1802)¹⁹, served as a Lieutenant in the Royal

¹⁷ De Hertel had been promoted Major in 1913.

¹⁸ Ranked as Captain.

¹⁹ One of five brothers to have active military careers.

Canadian Volunteers²⁰. His advancement in the British Army suffered a serious reverse in 1799, however, when he was tried by general court martial at Montreal for using “*sedition language, assault, plotting to desert and advising others to desert*”.²¹ Louis was convicted but apparently granted a pardon.

The military career of Louis-Hippolyte’s elder son, and John Edward de Hertel’s great-uncle, Hippolyte-Jean de Hertel (1795-1822), proved to be even less stellar. Hippolyte-Jean enlisted with the Canadian Regiment of Fencible Infantry as an Ensign in 1812, was promoted Lieutenant in 1814 and was involved in some minor actions during the War of 1812. In 1815, while stationed at Fort York (Toronto), he was court martialed for an assault on fellow Lieutenant, John Carroll Peach. The barrack-room incident itself was minor enough but at his trial, rather than present a reasoned defense, de Hertel grossly offended the court by unleashing a lengthy, bitter, blistering, vitriolic tirade against Peach and other officers of the regiment. When the court demanded that he withdraw his “*violent and indecent language*”, he refused. Found guilty of “*scandalous and infamous conduct*” he was sentenced to public reprimand and a six-month suspension from rank and pay. When the Regimental Court’s findings were sent up the chain of command for confirmation, Lieutenant General Gordon Drummond at Quebec Headquarters concluded the sentence was “*inadequate to the ends of justice and the circumstances of the case*”. He refused to approve and sent de Hertel’s dossier on for final disposition by the Prince Regent in England. The future King George IV ruled Lieutenant Hippolyte-Jean de Hertel “*an unfit person to remain in the army*” and ordered him dismissed from His Majesty’s Service.²²

Daniel-Joseph de Hertel (1797-1866), younger brother of the cashiered Hippolyte-Jean, and John Edward’s grandfather, also served in the War of 1812. He enlisted as a teenager with Major Charles-Michel de Salaberry’s Voltigeurs de Québec and fought with honor at the Battles of Crysler’s Farm (November 11, 1813) and Plattsburg (6-11 September 1814). Following the war, he remained active in the Quebec Militia and in 1827 became Lieutenant-Colonel of the 2nd Battalion Argenteuil²³ Militia.²⁴ His son, John Edouard de Hertel Sr. (1831-1868), father of Lieutenant Colonel Jean Edward de Hertel Jr. of Perth, also served as a junior officer in the Argenteuil Militia.



Argenteuil Militia, St. Andrew’s, Quebec, c1862

²⁰ Recruited into the British Army in 1793 the 1st Battalion of the Royal Canadian Volunteers was manned by francophones and posted at Quebec City while the 2nd Battalion was manned by anglophones and posted at Montreal.

²¹ *Such Want of Gentlemanly Conduct: The General Court Martial of Lieutenant John de Hertel*, by Eamonn O’Keeffe (2016), *Canadian Military History*: Vol. 25: Iss.2, Article 2.

²² Ibid.

²³ Argenteuil County, Quebec, lying along the Ottawa River opposite Hawksbury, Ontario.

²⁴ He died on his way home from delivering a farewell speech to militia companies called up at the time of the 1866 Fenian raids.

By early 1916 Lieutenant Colonel John Edward de Hertel had become a full-time soldier. The *Perth Courier* of January 14th announced;

Mr. W. J. Bostod C.E. is now manager of the John A. McLaren distillery, in place of Lt. Col. J. E. de Hertel whose whole time is taken up with his military duties.

The new battalion-in-the-making was headquartered at Perth on the second floor of the Drennan Block, 12 Gore Street East, with its recruiting office next door to the Cecil Hotel, 64 Gore Street East, and a club room for the recruits established at Ferrier Hall²⁵.

Even before he began enlisting men for the 130th, the *Perth Courier* had reported that “Lieutenant Colonel de Hertel ranks the highest in the Dominion in point of securing recruits”.²⁶ In part De Hertel earned his top ranking by routinely accepting underage volunteers and enlisting men that his own Medical Officer, Captain Edward Christopher Consitt (1881-1929), ruled unfit. If Consitt would not pass a recruit, de Hertel took him to “outlying points and got them through there by civilian practitioners who were not familiar with the work”.²⁷



De Hertel was a hands-on officer, taking interest in every detail of his new command. He personally designed the regimental hat badges; a circle surmounted with a crown, surrounded with maple leaves and the number of the battalion in the center. Reflecting his long-time enthusiasm for band music, de Hertel manned the 130th Battalion with two bands, a 30-piece brass band and a 10-piece bugle band, and personally composed the battalion’s marching song, ‘130th March Past’.

*We'll never let the old flag fail,
For we love it the best of all,
We don't want to fight, to show our might,
But when we start, we'll fight, fight, fight.
In peace or war, you'll hear us sing,
God save the flag, God save the King,
At the end of the world, our flag unfurled,
We'll never let the old flag down.*

Even before the 130th began recruiting, more than 6,000 young men from the counties of Lanark and Renfrew had already donned khaki. Nevertheless, by January 1916 the strength of the new Battalion stood at 500, in March 900, and by June had surpassed its authorized strength of 1,200 officers and men. The battalion had also enlisted four white Bull Terriers as mascots.

Calling in its companies from towns and villages across Lanark and Renfrew Counties, the 130th Battalion CEF mustered for the first time as a full unit on May 20, 1916 at Perth and went into camp at the fairgrounds. On Friday June 2nd the battalion paraded for inspection and mobilization by Colonel Thomas D. R. Hemming (1862-1919), commander of the 3rd Military District, and to receive its battalion colors²⁸. The product and gift of the Perth-Upon-Tay Chapter of the International Order of the Daughters of the Empire, the colors were presented by IODE

²⁵ Perhaps 40-42 Gore Street East.

²⁶ *Perth Courier*, November 1915.

²⁷ *Unwanted Warriors: The Rejected Volunteers of the Canadian Expeditionary Force*, by Nicholas J. Clarke (2009), PHD Thesis, University of Ottawa, Department of History, quoting GOC MD3 to the Secretary, Militia Council, January 6, 1917.

²⁸ The colors did not go to Europe with the battalion but remained at Perth in the keeping of St. James Anglican Church.

Chapter Regent Jessie Henderson-Stewart (1868-1956). Stewart told the men and several thousand assembled spectators, that Perth felt,

... a special interest in this battalion for the reason that the commanding officer was born in Perth and has always been an interested citizen. He has occupied a prominent part in our business life and has been interested in everything for the advancement of the town.

Colonel de Hertel, in his present position, is but perpetuating the history of a military family. Both his family history and his wife's family bristle with swords and glitter with bayonets, His father held a commission in the Canadian Militia and his grandfather was Colonel de Hertel of St. Andrews, Quebec, one of Canada's pioneers. His wife is a descendant of one of Wellington's fighting men²⁹ and her brother the commanding officer of our own 42nd.

... Britain is fighting for the same principles of liberty and civilization which prevailed on the battlefield of Waterloo 101 years ago. After that great struggle many of those who had fought in the Napoleonic Wars, sought homes in this great Canada of ours, and this month we are celebrating the one hundredth anniversary of the settlement of this town as a military colony ... What could be more fitting than this scene today – descendants of the same men ready to go forth and fight for the self-same principles.



Lt. Colonel John Edward de Hertel, extreme left, leads the 130th Lanark & Renfrew Battalion down Gore Street, June 1916.

²⁹ Susan Rothwell Balderson-de Hertel's grandfather was Sergeant John Balderson (1784-1852) of the 76th Regiment of Foot who fought under Wellington in Spain and France and during the War of 1812 at the Battle of Plattsburg. He settled on concession-8 in Drummond Township and the Drummond-Bathurst hamlet of Balderson bears his name.

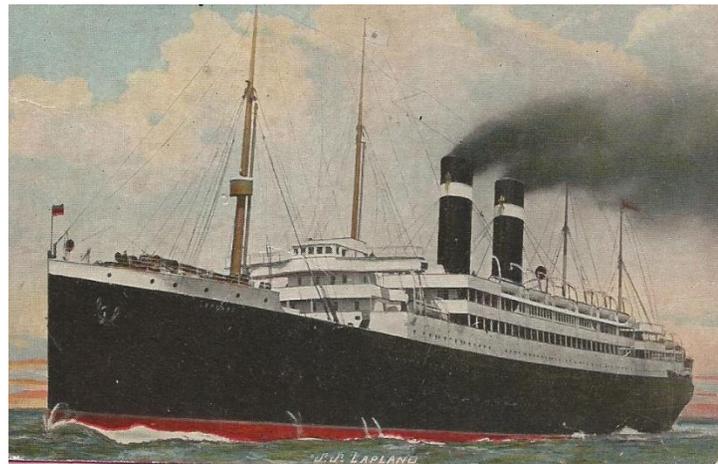
Early on June 7th the battalion boarded a troop train and by noon had joined nearly 10,000 other recruits at Barriefield Camp on the outskirts of Kingston, Ontario. After three weeks training at Barriefield the 130th took what their Colonel called “another step on the way to Berlin”³⁰, when they moved to the huge assembly and training camp at Valcartier, Quebec.



CEF Base Valcartier, Québec, 1916

By the time the battalion arrived at Valcartier, illness and some desertions had reduced its strength to 969 officers and men. A month later, having been “worked hard at musketry and bayonet fighting in order to qualify to go over seas”, its strength had fallen to 850 “due largely to many men not being able to pass the medical inspections at Valcartier and several others deserting”.³¹ Lieutenant Colonel de Hertel’s cavalier attitude toward medical examination had caught up with him.

On September 21st the battalion was ordered to England. Transported by rail to Halifax they boarded the troop transport SS *Lapland* on September 23th together with the 150th and 189th Battalions, 70 men from the Signal Corps and a draft from the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery. The 130th sailed on September 27, 1916, at a strength that had fallen to 616 officers, NCOs and enlisted men.³² Lieutenant Colonel de Hertel was placed in command of all troops aboard the *Lapland* for the duration of the Atlantic passage.



Red Star Line, SS Lapland

³⁰ *Perth Courier*, June 30, 1916.

³¹ *Perth Courier* July 21, 1916.

³² <https://militaryandfamilyhistory.blog/2016/04/18/nominal-rolls-of-the-canadian-expeditionary-force/>

The battalion disembarked at Liverpool on October 6th and was taken by rail to West Sandling Camp in Kent, on the southeast English coast. Just three days later, on October 9, 1916, the 130th Lanark & Renfrew Battalion CEF ceased to exist. Its men were transferred en masse into the 12th Reserve Battalion³³ and the 130th disbanded. From the 12th Reserve Battalion the Lanark and Renfrew men were fed piecemeal as replacements into under-strength Canadian infantry units already fighting in France and Belgium.



Lt. Col, John Edward de Hertel (1863-1945)

Lieutenant Colonel John Edward de Hertel would never lead his men, or any men, in combat. On December 18th he was admitted to St. Helena Hospital at Shorncliffe suffering a “*severe attack of influenza*”.³⁴ He was discharged on January 2, 1917 but listed as “*unfit for any service, one month*”.³⁵ By the end of March 1917, he had recovered sufficiently to be attached to the 18th Battalion Canadian Infantry for the purpose of a 10-day “*tour of inspection*”³⁶ of the battlefields in France. On his return to England he was classed by the Canadian Military authorities as “*surplus to establishment*”³⁷ (i.e. an officer without a command) and placed at the “*disposal of the Adjutant General, Ottawa*”³⁸. De Hertel sailed from Liverpool for Canada via the troopship *SS Olympic*, on May 12, 1917.

*Colonel de Hertel returned to Perth from overseas on Saturday last and is on three months leave. He was in France for a month [sic] attached to the 18th Battalion, 2nd Division, 4th Brigade, and left France just previous to the Vimy Ridge engagement. The 130th Battalion was in England but a short time. Practically all the fit men were in France within one month after landing in England.*³⁹

While de Hertel was on leave, the Military Service Act came into effect on August 29, 1917. It introduced compulsory military service (the draft) for all able-bodied male citizens aged 20 to 45 who were bachelors or widowers without children, but allowed exemptions for religious pacifists, those engaged in essential war-work or who could make a case for particular hardship. At the expiration of his leave, de Hertel was appointed a Compulsory Service Exemption Officer assigned to Deseronto, Ontario.

³³ The 130th was officially disbanded by Privy Council Order the following June 4, 1917.

³⁴ Personnel records of CEF WW1, Library & Archives Canada, Lieutenant Colonel J. E. de Hertel, 130th Battalion.

³⁵ Proceedings of Medical Board January 2, 1917.

³⁶ Personnel records of CEF WW1, Library & Archives Canada, Lieutenant Colonel J. E. de Hertel, 130th Battalion.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ *Perth Courier*, June 1, 1917.

*Brig. General T. D. P. Hemming, general officer commanding Military District No. 3, has approved of the appointments of military representatives for the district in connection with the tribunals for administration of the Military Service Act. All application for exemption will be referred to the military representatives by the tribunals for investigation and report – Lieut. Col. deHertel at Deseronto, Hastings, County.*⁴⁰



Balderson Theatre, 18 Gore Street East

When the war ended in November 1918 de Hertel returned to Perth. In 1921 he became manager of the Balderson Theatre, owned by his brother-in-law James Morris Balderson.⁴¹ Although the theatre's regular fare was repertory stage plays and 'vaudeville' acts, from its opening in 1915 the theatre exhibited 'movies' two nights per week. In the autumn of 1922 the *Perth Courier* enthusiastically reported that,

⁴⁰ *Perth Courier*, November 2, 1917.

⁴¹ Built by Balderson in 1915, the theatre had 1,200 seats, and was then the largest theatre between Toronto and Montreal. The theatre was closed in 1958.

Due to the keen foresight of Manager de Hertel of the Balderson Theatre, Perth is to enjoy the rare privilege of seeing the cream of screen production during the coming season. Following extensive negotiations, extensive because of the large amount of money involved, Manager de Hertel has signed a contract through the medium of which the entire output of the William Fox Studios for the season of 1922-23 will be presented at the Balderson Theatre starting this week and every Wednesday and Thursday thereafter.

The contract just signed by Col. De Hertel is the greatest single stroke of business of that nature ever consummated by a theatrical or motion picture exhibitor in the town's history.

"It is indeed gratifying to me to be able to make this announcement", said Manager de Hertel, "for to offer this extensive programme to the motion picture loving public of Perth is to present the cream of screen production. Eager and always on the alert for the best the market affords, I lost no time in affixing my signature to the contract for the entire Fox programme and I am sure the public will keenly appreciate the action I have taken."⁴²

John Edward de Hertel retired from the Balderson Theatre in 1928 and from his other business interests in 1935, the year his wife, Susan Balderson-de Hertel, died at Perth. Lieutenant Colonel John Edward de Hertel died at Perth on December 29, 1945 and was buried in Elmwood Cemetery (Plot C1-22).

- Ron W. Shaw (2019)

⁴² *Perth Courier*, October 13, 1922