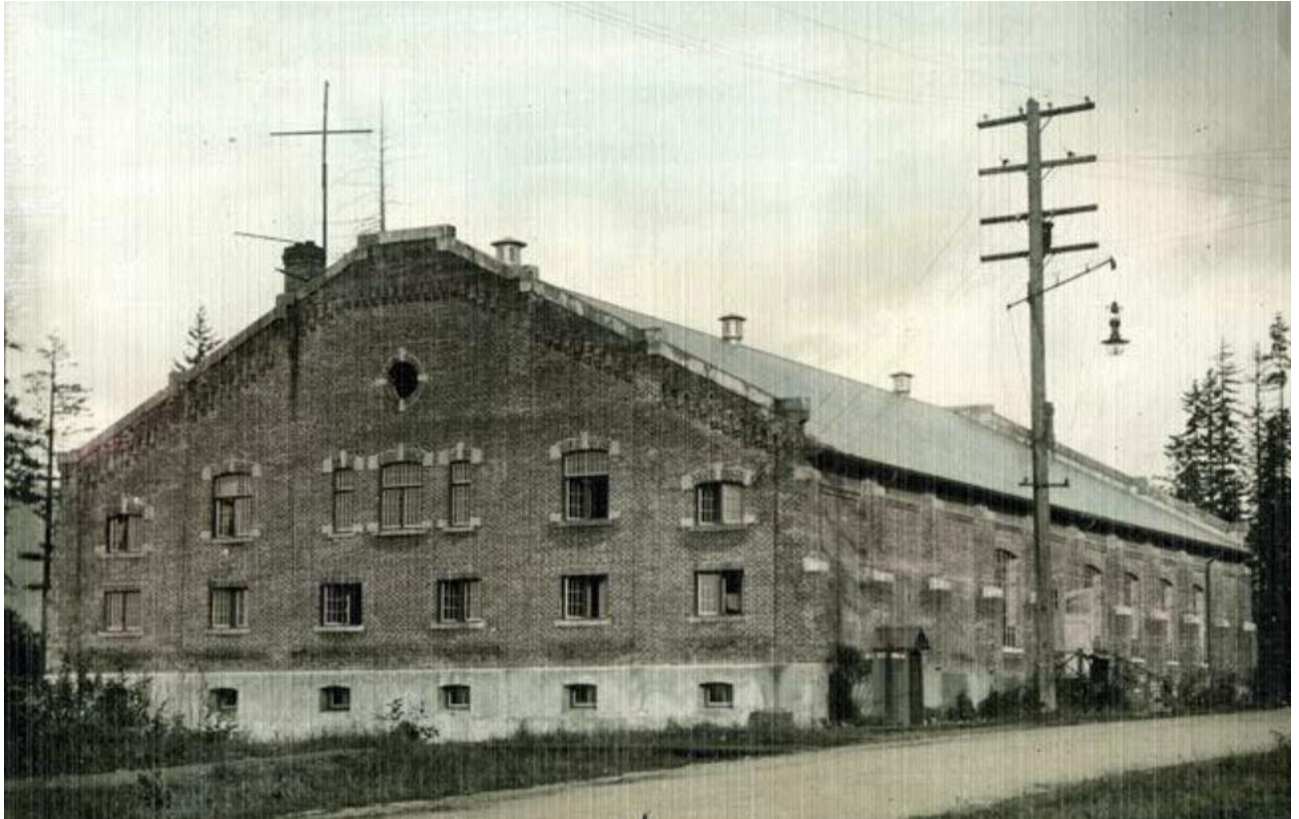


History of Lt Col J.P. Fell Armoury



Construction of the Armoury -- 1913 - 1914

Authorized in 1913 at a cost of \$80,000 the armoury is a standard 100 man militia drill hall from the First World War. Dominion Government Resident Architect was William Henderson. Superintendent of Construction was H. Blackadder of Blackadder & McKay Built by Campbell and Wilkie of Vancouver. Site clearance started in Mid March 1914. Completed and occupied in Mid April 1915. The Armoury is about 120 ft by 80 ft. The structure is built of unreinforced brick with a wood plank roof supported by bolted steel trusses. The main parade floor is of maple wood plank on wood joists and beams. The building was originally heated by a number of small coal fired stoves. When first built the top floor was occupied by the officers, sergeants and men's messes. The main floor contained the offices and classrooms. The basement was only partially excavated and contained the stables, storerooms and indoor range.

The Armoury in World War I

Built as a 100 man drill hall the structure was far too small to meet the demands of the war. In order to meet these needs a tented camp for the recruits was built to the north. Workshops, training areas and a dining hall were built to the west and north. At the start of WW I, the 6th was mobilized and sent overseas. Those members who did not go overseas were tasked to run an Engineer training centre. During the four years of the war the 6th and later Number 11 Engineer Training Depot (which replaced the 6th in 1918) trained over 3900 soldiers for the Engineer, Forestry and Railway Corps. Of these over 200 were to die on active duty, many in

France and Belgium. Hundreds more were wounded. At the end of the war Number 11 Engineer Training Depot was shut down, the 6th was deactivated and the armoury was closed. For the next two years the armouries remained closed, the only occupants being two caretakers. It was not until 1921 that a number of former 6 Field Company members were able to reactivate their unit.



6 Field Company Royal Canadian Engineers -- 1937-1946

Renamed in 1937, the unit was activated in September 1939 for World War II. In 1941 the unit went to England and on 6 June 1944 landed in Normandy as part of the 3rd Canadian Division. It served in France, Belgium, Holland and Germany. 29 were killed and 57 wounded. 6 Field Squadron Royal Canadian Engineers -- (1946 -1975) Returning to Canada the unit reverted to being a militia unit. It survived the big cuts to the militia in the 1960s.

Major Renovations to the Armoury -- 1939 -1940

The first major work on the building occurred in the winter of 1939-1940. The unit decided that the basement could be expanded and completed the excavation of the crawlspace on the east side of the basement at that time. Concrete slabs were poured and the basement rearranged, with the rifle range being moved to the east side of the basement.

1985

Constructed in 1985 the vehicle repair facility was designed to mirror the main architectural features of the armouries.

1991

In the early 1990s a major renovation of the structure was undertaken. Budgeted for \$1.7 million the work included a new roof, new windows and a rebuilt basement. Electrical, telephone, plumbing and heating systems were replaced. A fire sprinkler system was installed. New fire exits, fire escapes and a wheel-chair ramp were installed. Every attempt was to maintain the building's historic character while still meeting the new code requirements.



Lieutenant Colonel James Pemberton Fell

Born in England James Pemberton Fell immigrated to BC in the early part of the century. He was extensively involved in land development on the north shore of Burrard inlet. In 1912 he became the 6th's first commanding officer. Major Fell sailed from Canada with the first contingent of the Canadian Expeditionary Force in September 1914. He first saw action in February 1915. On 16 February 1916 he took command of the 1st Field Company Canadian Engineers, and in October of the same year the 7th Field Company. In March 1917 he left the front for the Canadian Engineer Training Depot in southern England where he assumed command of "A" Company and latter became the Second-in-Command of the Depot. Before the end of the war he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel. Upon the end of the war, he returned to BC and resumed his civilian career. He later served as the commander of 11 District Engineers (BC) from 1921 to 1926.