

Bostwick, James Montgomery
Major
Royal Hamilton Light Infantry
A Compagnie
Royal Canadian Infantry Corps



Semper Paratus- 'Always Ready'

James Montgomery Bostwick was born on Saturday, May 26, 1917 in Hamilton, a city in the southern province of Ontario, Canada. Son of Henry Montgomery Bostwick, born December 6, 1877 in Ithaca, New York, USA, and Edna Clarkson Bostwick (Hoodless), born July 7, 1882 in Hamilton, Ontario. They got married on Wednesday, October 9, 1907 in the Church of Ascension, Hamilton, Wentworth, Ontario, Canada. The Bostwick family also consisted of eldest daughter Muriel Isabel Bostwick, born on July 15, 1912 in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. She was named after her aunt, and worked as a secretary for the City's Crown Attorney. Mother Edna was active for the Red Cross, The Victorian Order of Nurses and on the local council of women. She liked playing golf. By faith, the Bostwick family belonged to the Church of England and resided at 1 Ravenscliffe Avenue in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.

After primary education, James attended the High School at Upper Canada College in Toronto for four years. It was also here that in 1906 General Harry Crerar, who commanded the 1st Canadian Army, graduated and also General-Major Bruce Matthews, who commanded the 2nd Canadian Division. After that, James went to America to study in his father's hometown, Ithaca, at the Cornell University, majoring in Economics. Mother Edna also studied at this university.

In addition to English, James Montgomery also spoke French. His hobbies were photography, hunting, playing golf, and he had a motorcycle license. In 1933 he and his mother Edna won a provincial golf tournament for parent and child. He had brown eyes and black hair. He weighed 159 pounds and was 5 ft.9 tall.

He used to wear glasses, and at the age of three he had an inguinal hernia (Herniotomy) that left him with a scar from the operation. He was a healthy young man now with well-maintained teeth. James had a clear and instructive way of doing things. James articulated his ideas very well, learned quickly, was respectful, helpful, considerate and cooperative, was self-assured and quickly instilled confidence and was very reliable.

On December 16, 1940, he enlisted in the Canadian Army in Toronto, Canada. He was assigned to the No 2 District Depot Canadian Active Service Force, Royal Hamilton Light Infantry Wing in Toronto in the rank of 2nd Lieutenant.



On January 9, 1941, he was assigned to Camp Borden, where he was trained until November 11 that year. On March 12, 1941 he was promoted to Lieutenant.



On March 15, 1941 James Montgomery Bostwick married Jean Soule in Saint Albans, Franklin, Vermont, USA. She was born on February 23, 1920 in Burlington, Vermont, USA, and was the daughter of Everett Ingalls Soule and Christine Soule (Stranahan).

Hamilton Spectator

SATURDAY WEDDING—Of special interest was the wedding in the Church of the Ascension on Saturday afternoon, when Jean, charming daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Everett Ingalls Soule, of St. Albans, Vermont, became the wife of Lieut. James Montgomery Bostwick, son of Mrs. Bostwick and the late Mr. H. M. Bostwick. The bride and groom, caught by the Spectator cameraman emerging from the church after the ceremony, smile happily.

He went overseas to England and arrived there on November 23. In England he followed various combat training courses and learned, among other things, how to handle small arms. From December 1941 to August 1942 he was posted with the 2nd Division Infantry Reinforcement Unit. He then returned to the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry. In March 1943 he was promoted to A/Captain and on June 19, 1943 to Captain. He attended various training courses until July 1944. On July 12, James made the crossing to France and arrived at the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry, which was near Norrey and Bessin then. They had set foot in France on 5 July 1944. The regiment wanted to move to the vicinity of Rots, but the area there had to be cleared of landmines first.



Patrols were conducted but they had to retreat due to enemy fire. Finally after the mine clearing they headed towards Verson. On July 25, the regiment was in the vicinity of Verrières. They moved further into France and participated in the Falaise Pocket.

Via Elbeuf they went to Belleville, near Dieppe, where they arrived on September 1, 1944. The men enjoyed meals with fresh eggs that the locals had hidden from the Germans. A memorial service was held at the Canadian soldiers' cemetery at 11 a.m. on September 3 in honor of the victims of 1942.

As the night before was celebrated with joy, this morning was spent in reverence and silence for those who fell on the Dieppe beach. On September 9, they crossed the border into Belgium and went to the seaside resort of Nieuwpoort. On September 17 they crossed the border into the Netherlands and took part in the Battle of the Scheldt.

At the places of Oorderen and Wilmarsdonk, close to Antwerp, the regiment put up a fierce battle. On October 17, 1944 they entered Ossendrecht. The B Company area came under heavy mortar fire, but fortunately there were no casualties.

During the rest of the afternoon and evening the battalion was fired at intermittently, but everyone was well entrenched and there were no casualties. On the same day, James Montgomery Bostwick was promoted to A/Major of the A Company.

Via Woensdrecht, Zuid-Beveland they crossed the border back to Belgium and headed for Mechelen. The Royal Hamilton Light Infantry arrived at Mechelen.



There was some confusion about company areas, due to the late assignment by the battalion. However, the headquarters were located in Mertens, in a large furniture factory. The manager was very helpful and provided them with a spacious modern office. The companies were scattered throughout the city and it took some time to reach them all.

Communication was handled via local telephones and many amusing incidents occurred if civilians answered the phone and a combination of Belgian, French, broken English was spoken and the help of a few interpreters was needed to get everyone of the company on the phone. The A Company was headquartered in a corset shop, so they were up to date on the latest fashion. They received new orders and on November 9 they went towards Groesbeek/Grave. There were many patrols and they had found shelter among other things in a number of Horsha gliders used during Market Garden.

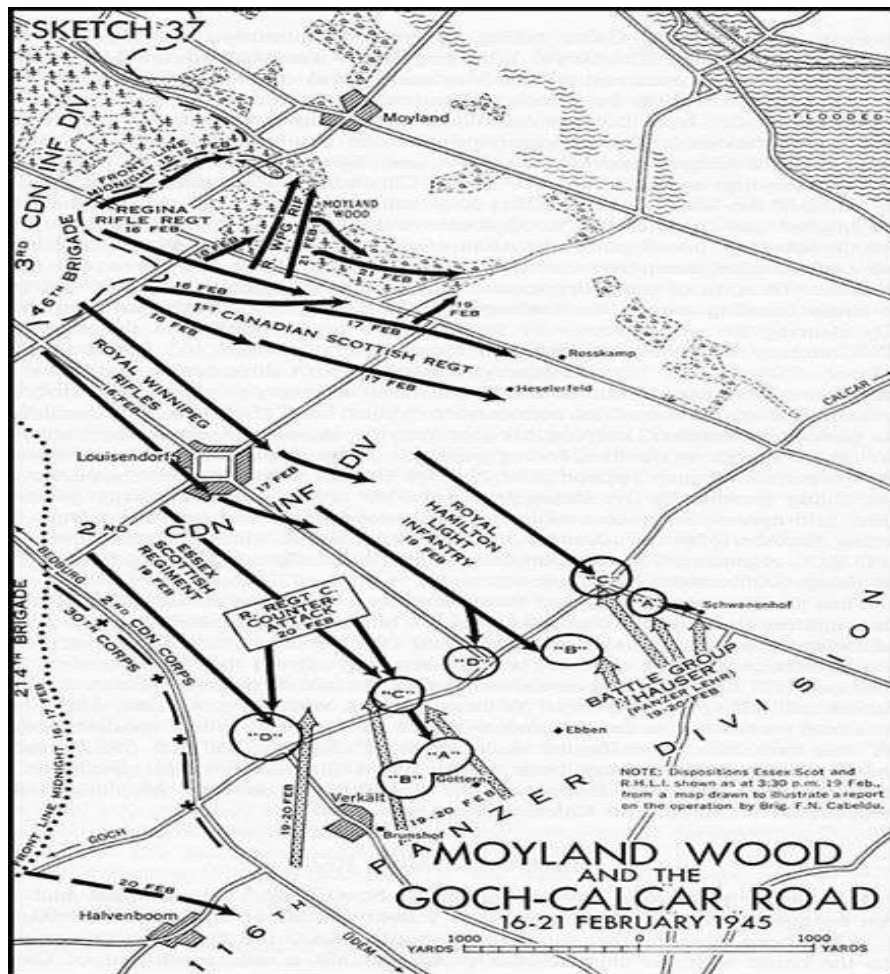
Enemy positions were in most cases no more than a hundred yards from the forward positions and the Germans used police dogs to send out on patrols. On November 15, Major James Montgomery Bostwick reported that a German police dog had been killed and a house had been set ablaze with phosphorus during a patrol. The following day James Montgomery Bostwick was given 48 hours leave and he returned to the A Company on November 18 at 11pm. On November 23, they received orders to head in the direction of Mook. The next day the men enjoyed a Canadian Show in Nijmegen or in the Beaver Club in Grave. On November 25, the area was under shell and mortar fire from the enemy. Fortunately there were no casualties. In the evening there was a party in the officers' mess attended by all officers of the unit.

This was the first time that all the officers of the battalion had been together in the officers' mess since their arrival in France, and the opportunity arose to introduce the officers to each other, as there had been so many changes in the staffing of the officers since the battalion had been in action.

A delicious buffet lunch was served and the evening was considered a success, making the junior officers feel at home and getting them to know the senior officers of the battalion. In December 1944 new orders followed to return to the Groesbeek area. As the A Company moved into the new area, it came under enemy shellfire and suffered six casualties. The unit spent the next day clearing their company areas and improving their dugouts and cutting through trenches.

All companies reported that their areas were in a filthy state, especially the B Company where garbage and old army gear were everywhere. The next days were spent on patrols and the enemy was active with snipers and mortar fire. Until Christmas Day 1944 they stayed in the vicinity of Groesbeek until they received orders to go to Driehuizen where the men enjoyed a well-deserved Christmas dinner. On December 29 orders followed to go to Boxtel where they arrived at 11:30 pm. The Essex Scottish Regiment paraded there with their bagpipe band to celebrate the New Year 1945. These first days of the new year were enjoyed in rooms where men could read and watch movies. The condition of the troops was also maintained and the training of the new reinforcements was completed. On January 6 they left for the Driehuizen area again to the territory where they had been previously. There a training program for the companies was done with marches, weapons training and a series of lectures.

On January 17, 1945, James Montgomery Bostwick was promoted to Major. The time was used to gather strength for Operation Veritable, which erupted on February 8 with massive artillery fire. It was the largest attack ever made from Dutch territory. Operation Veritable was part of a larger plan, the Rhineland Offensive, to capture the left flank of the River Rhine, then cross the Rhine and advance further into Germany. The regiment moved towards Nijmegen on February 12. On February 14 there were orders to cross the border and go to Kalkar and Xanten.



Because of rising water and shell and mortar fire the regiment's next operation, on February 17, to clear the forest of the enemy at Goch/Kalkar, was delayed for 48 hours. On February 19, at 11 am, the attack was launched with A and B Companies sitting on Kangaroos, followed by the C and D Companies on foot, and by a platoon of Carriers supporting the flanks with Bren machine guns and flamethrowers. The attack was successful despite the loss of a number of officers and soldiers who were buried in the Bedburg cemetery.

"During these heavy operations against the German army, the morale of the troops has been exceptionally high and a huge factor in its success. This battalion has been fortunate to have officers as company commanders who have been with us in England and during the campaigns in Europe. Their leadership has been of the highest order and it is deeply regretted that some will no longer be with us in the future," their War Diaries said on February 28, 1945.

On March 1 the battalion was put on readiness to move to the Hochwald but that was postponed due to heavy opposition that the Essex Scottish experienced. The next morning they were ordered to head towards the Hochwald and 60 German soldiers were taken prisoner of war.

On March 5, a temporary rest was held and the troops could catch their breath. On March 6, they received orders to prepare and move to a concentration area near Xanten at 1 p.m.

On March 8, 1945, the Canadian artillery put down a very effective barrage that lasted sixteen minutes and preceded the infantry attack on Xanten. The A and D Companies attacked, followed by the B and C Companies forming the second wave ten minutes later. The Germans used an effective form of tactics in their defense of this area by letting the two leading companies pass through their positions and then opening fire on them from behind with MG42 machine guns and field guns. This considerably slowed down the attack and caused many casualties on the Canadian side.

One of them was James Montgomery Bostwick, who died at the age of 27.

He was temporarily buried in Xanten and later, on August 21, 1945 was reburied in the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, grave reference **III. F. 1.**



Photo Alice van Bekkum

Jean Bostwick (Soule) got remarried after the war and had three more children, but always remembered her James. She passed away on April 1, 2006, at age of 86 in Lexington, Massachusetts, USA.

Major James Montgomery Bostwick awards:

- 1939-45 Star
- France & Germany Star
- War Medal 1939-45
- Defense Medal
- Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with clasp



Life story: Gijs Krist, Research Team Faces To Graves.

Sources:

Commonwealth War Graves

Library and Archives Canada

Canadiansoldiers.com

Information supplied by Project '44-The Road to Liberation'

Rob Schoonen

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* Do you have more photos of this soldier or additional information please contact info@facetograves.nl