

Gates, Fenwick Douglas

Age: 22

Nationality: Canadian

Rank: AC1

Unit: RCAF Patricia Bay

Occupation: General Duties

Service No: R/76468

Birth: 18 July 1920
Blandford, N.S., Canada

Home Town: Chester, N.S., Canada

Death: 7 October 1942
Natural Causes
Shaugnessy Military Hospital, Vancouver, BC, Canada

Burial: St. Stephens Anglican Cemetery, Chester, N.S., Canada



Biography

Fenwick Gates was the youngest of three children of David Daniel Gates, a labourer, and Margaret L. Cleveland. He was born 18 July 1920 in Blandford, Lunenburg, Nova Scotia. Like many of the local families, the Gates were of German descent. Fenwick had a brother, Ross, and a sister, Marie.

Although he was described as '*intelligent*' when he applied to the RCAF, Fenwick had little schooling, having left school at the end of grade 8 when he was 15. For a couple of years he found odd jobs, mostly labouring and then found regular work for two years as a chauffeur. When this job came to an end he was unemployed until 1940 when he was hired full time as a labourer. He left this job to join the RCAF in Halifax in January 1941.

The RCAF liked his neat appearance and decided he was a good candidate for General Duties. He was sent immediately to Brandon, Manitoba and a month later to McLeod, Alberta. Fenwick was enlisted as AC2 but almost immediately promoted to AC1 and six months later to LAC. In August 1941, in McLeod, he earned himself 14 days confined to barracks, and four days of pay deducted by being absent without leave for just over four days. A month later, he was demoted to AC2. In November of 1941, Fenwick was posted to Vancouver and two weeks later to Patricia Bay. He was promoted back to AC1 after four months there.

In August 1942, Fenwick was in the Station Hospital for eight days and was diagnosed with Right Bell's Palsy. He was expected to recover and discharged. A month later, he was readmitted with continuous headaches and after seven days, on October 6th, was transferred to Shaugnessy Military Hospital in Vancouver, BC. His examination on admission showed that as well as the headaches, he had difficulty turning his head to the right or looking to the right. A provisional diagnosis was made of atypical encephalitis and he was booked for a lumbar puncture and urinalysis the following morning. In the early hours of that morning Fenwick died. An autopsy was performed which found a cerebellar abscess on the right side. There was no known origin of the abscess.

Fenwick was buried in the St. Stephen's Anglican cemetery in his home town of Chester, Nova Scotia.