

Happy-go-lucky guy never heard the locomotive

KATHLEEN POWELL

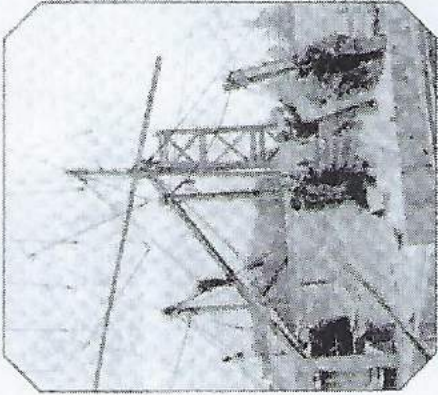
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John Patterson was described by his family as a happy-go-lucky guy. He enjoyed life and liked to whistle and sing while he worked. John grew up in Ireland and emigrated to the United States in 1885 with his brother James, where they joined their parents who were on a farm near Angelica in Allegany County, N.Y.

John Patterson never married and in 1913 decided to go north to find work. He worked for a time in Niagara Falls, N.Y., and applied for a permit to work in Canada. While at first his application was rejected, he did eventually make his way across the border and by November 1913 was working as a car repairer on the Welland Ship Canal construction works.

On August 5, 1914, John was working on the repair of a dump car on a railway siding. Having completed his repair, he set off along the track with a chain slung over his shoulder and, as usual, whistling as he went. Locomotive engine No. 6 happened to

WELLAND CANALS



FALLEN WORKERS

be moving along the track at the same time and Patterson was hit by a train car and killed instantly.

Details which came out at the inquest into the incident noted that the two men who were in the engine of the train did not see Patterson on the track as the dump cars were eight inches wider than the engine. For this reason, spotters were required ahead of the engine to warn the engineers of any danger. Another worked nearby, driller J. A. Sheppard, testified that he had seen Patterson walking along the track and tried to get his attention regarding the danger from the approaching train, but for some reason was not able to do so and was too far away to get to him in time.

The testimony of Nicola Verouquas, a track repairer working nearby at the time of the accident, made the most impact at the inquest. He spoke very dra-



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Construction trains are shown loaded with rock going to the Crushing Plant located near the Grand Trunk Railway Bridge on the Welland Canal.

matically and acted out the scene of the accident to the extent of even showing how the deceased had walked along the track. He then threw himself down on the ground to illustrate how Patterson fell when hit. He specifically noted that he and a workmate tried to get Patterson's attention but were not successful and he was knocked down by the train and killed instantly. Even though Verouquas spoke through an interpreter, his story was easily understood by the jury and made a significant impact.

The final determination of the Coroner's jury was that employees should be forbidden from walking along the tracks used by construction trains; that all employees of the works should be instructed in the dangers of the works and the importance of the

principle of "safety first"; and that each construction train should have a man whose duty it was to keep watch ahead of the train. John had never married. He left to mourn his loss his parents, Alexander and Elizabeth (Schoales) Patterson, as well as six brothers and two sisters. He was predeceased by two siblings in Ireland.

This article is part of a series highlighting the men whose lives were lost in the construction of the Welland Ship Canal. The Welland Canal Fallen Workers Memorial Task Force is a volunteer group established to finance, design, build and install a memorial to recognize workers who were killed while building the Welland Ship Canal. For more information about the memorial or to contribute to the project visit www.stcatharines.ca/CanalWorkersMemorial

PROFILE NO.3

John Alexander Patterson Jr.

Born: c. 1859 (Diocese of Cloness, Co. Monaghan, Ireland)

Died: August 5, 1914 (Section 3, Thorold)

Crushed by a Dump Car
Car Repairer, Confederation Construction Co.



Welland Canal
Fallen Workers Memorial

A PLACE TO REMEMBER

August 8, 2017

TASK FORCE CHAIR

Walter Sendzik
Mayor, St. Catharines

To the Patterson family and friends in Angelica, NY,

On behalf of the Welland Canal Fallen Workers Memorial Task Force, I would like to thank you for attending the commemoration of John A. Patterson's grave marker by Kirkpatrick Monuments.

CAMPAIGN CHAIR

Greg Wight

The construction of the Welland Ship Canal was one of the most monumental projects in Canadian history. It is a marvel of modern engineering, connecting two Great Lakes and two great countries. As the canal continues to carry thousands of vessels each year, it continues to be an economic driver for communities on both sides of the border.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Canadian Canal Society

Welland Canals Foundation

However the story of the Welland Canal is also a story of staggering loss of life for the men and the families whose lives were forever changed when their loved ones did not come home from work on the construction site - men like John A. Patterson. For many years, the sacrifices of the fallen workers have gone unrecognized and for some, no stone has marked their final resting place. With the support of Kirkpatrick Monuments of St. Catharines, each of the fallen workers with no gravestone will receive a beautiful and dignified grave marker.

Later this year we will unveil a memorial to all of the fallen workers who built the Welland Ship Canal at a site in St. Catharines, ON, beside Lock 3 of the Welland Canal. Designed by Dereck Revington Studios Inc., the memorial will be a special place for family members, descendants and our communities to gather to remember the fallen workers and reflect on the sacrifices they made in building of one of the most defining projects in our shared history.

On behalf of the Task Force, I would like to thank Kirkpatrick Monuments for undertaking this meaningful endeavour to provide grave markers for each of these fallen workers.

Kind Regards,

Walter Sendzik
Mayor of St. Catharines

