

## **Cst. Willmett G.F.**



**WILLMETT GEORGE E. CST. Regimental No. 4582**

**April 12, 1908 - Frank, Alberta Age:23**

**This is another story from the early days of the Force that illustrates the old adage: "The Mounties always get their man!"**

**At 7:00 am on the morning of April 12, 1908, 25 year old Cst. George Willmett was found dead in the alley behind the Imperial Hotel in the small mining town of Frank, Alberta. He was in his first year as a member of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police. Unmarried and new to Canada, the young policeman was buried in a lonely plot in the Macleod Cemetery, far from his grieving parents in Derby, England. His fellow Mounties vowed to catch his killer.**

**Cst. Willmett had been on special night duty patrolling an area in town that had recently experienced a series of break-ins and thefts. He was killed at close range by a shotgun blast to his neck and face. There was no sign of a struggle. There were no witnesses to his killing and few clues to his murder. His mysterious, cold-blooded murder incensed the RNWMP Commissioner at the time, A. Bowen Perry, who had every possible resource brought to bear in an attempt to catch his killer. A \$200.00 reward was posted. Bloodhounds were brought in. A legion of Mounties was organized to scour the town, door-to-door. They conducted house-to-house interviews in an attempt to find a clue to the killing or to locate the murder weapon. Unsuccessful in Frank, the search extended to neighbouring towns along what is now Highway #3, the route through the Crow's Nest Pass.**

**When this still brought no results, Pinkerton Agents were brought in to follow leads that extended through British Columbia and down into the United States. Many were followed but none led to a solution of the mystery of Willmett's murder.**

**Over three years after Willmett's death, S/Sgt. J. S. Piper of the RNWMP got a solid lead from a woman in Michel, British Columbia, which led to the arrest of two German immigrants named Mathias Jasbec and "Fritz" Eberts (alias Charlie Stephen). Almost immediately, Jasbec offered a written confession that charged Eberts with the sole execution of the crime. On the night of Willmett's murder, Jasbec claimed that he and Eberts had gone out together in Frank to steal some provisions from local stores. Eberts suggested that he take along Jasbec's shotgun for protection. They tried unsuccessfully to break into several stores, but split up when they saw a movement in the shadows.**

**As Eberts slipped furtively into the alley behind the Imperial Hotel, he was confronted unexpectedly by Cst. Willmett, in plain clothes. When the constable pointed his revolver at Eberts and asked, "What are you doing?" Eberts fired his shotgun and hit the officer in the neck from less than eight feet away. Jasbec further informed the police that he and Eberts had originally been questioned by the police searchers and when asked to produce their guns, Eberts showed them a broken single barrel shotgun and Jasbec satisfied them with an old army rifle.**

Eberts' trial lasted five days and, at its conclusion, he was found guilty of murder and was sentenced to be hanged on June 1, 1912. He received two reprieves to allow for appeals and, on October 29, had his sentence commuted to life imprisonment in Stony Mountain Penitentiary. While in Stony Mountain, Eberts convinced a death-row convict, named Sam Wilinsky, who was scheduled to die on July 26, 1912, for the murder of George Lakatocz, to confess to also having killed Cst. Willmet. Wilinsky complied, and his statement initially caused the authorities some consternation. Unfortunately for Eberts, the plan was unravelled by a death-watch guard. He found Eberts' notes to Wilinsky, giving the details of the Willmet killing. Eberts had scribbled them in pencil on pieces of toilet paper. This discovery alone was enough to foil Eberts' plans. Even more devastating was Wilinsky's final act of contrition. The night before Wilinsky's execution, the condemned man dictated a full confession of his murder of George Lakatocz and retracted his previous statement of having killed Cst. Willmet.

The next day, it is reported that Sam Wilinsky, with a clear conscience, threw back a shot of brandy and went to the gallows without flinching. Eberts' "alibi" died with him.