

## Biography:

Major General, The Honourable **Sydney Chilton Mewburn** was called to the Bar in 1885, Partner in Mewburn & Ambrose in 1890, which ultimately became Mewburn & Marshall. He was appointed King's Council in 1910.

On May 5, 1881 The General joined the 13<sup>th</sup> Regiment, (now the RHLI) as a private and by 1917 rose to the rank of Major-General. During his military participation and law practice he married Mary Caroline Labatt from London Ontario. He and Mary had 3 children. Sons John Chilton, who was killed in action in 1916 at Courcellet, France; Charles Labatt, who also served in WW1 and died in 1973; and daughter Helen Mary. Through her we have descendants from the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> generations.

When war broke out in 1914, The General very much wanted to go overseas. However, the Ministry in Ottawa deemed him too valuable for his administrative skills and retained him in Canada. He became Commanding Officer of the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion based in Hamilton, and oversaw recruitment and training across the country. "Upwards of 75,000 men passed through his hands before he was called to Ottawa."

Prior to his election as MP for Hamilton East in December 1917, he was appointed to the Privy Council and given the portfolio of Minister of Militia and Defense, obtaining his final rank of Major-General. After the end of the war, with the task of carrying out demobilization almost completed, he resigned from that portfolio in 1920, as he "felt his contract had terminated and that the administration of the department should be handed over to someone else."

Remaining in the House of Commons, in that same year 1920, he was appointed Chairman of the Canadian Battlefields Memorial Commission. They established a competition, which was open to all Canadian architects, designers, sculptors and other artists. The final design selected for the Vimy monument was by Walter S. Allward of Toronto. The French government dedicated the land to Canada in perpetuity for the Memorial. The General attended the dedication and unveiling which took place on July 26<sup>th</sup>, 1936 by King Edward VIII.

When the Second World War broke out The General was 76 yrs old, but ready as ever to serve his country. He was appointed Honorary Chairman of the Hamilton Organization entrusted with promoting the Dominion of Canada's Victory Loans of 1941. He continued his closest ties with his old regiment and was a keen supporter of both sports and the arts, a Director of many corporations and a member of several clubs. "But perhaps the greatest tribute to The General's work, stands high on a hill in Northern France," The Vimy Ridge Monument.

A truly significant Canadian who gave his all to family, friends, business, and his country, so that those of us here today continue to enjoy what The General's generation did for us.

*Source: Speech by David and Sydney Hamber, great grandsons of General Mewburn, at the Tamahaac Club, Ancaster, Ontario, April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017.*

