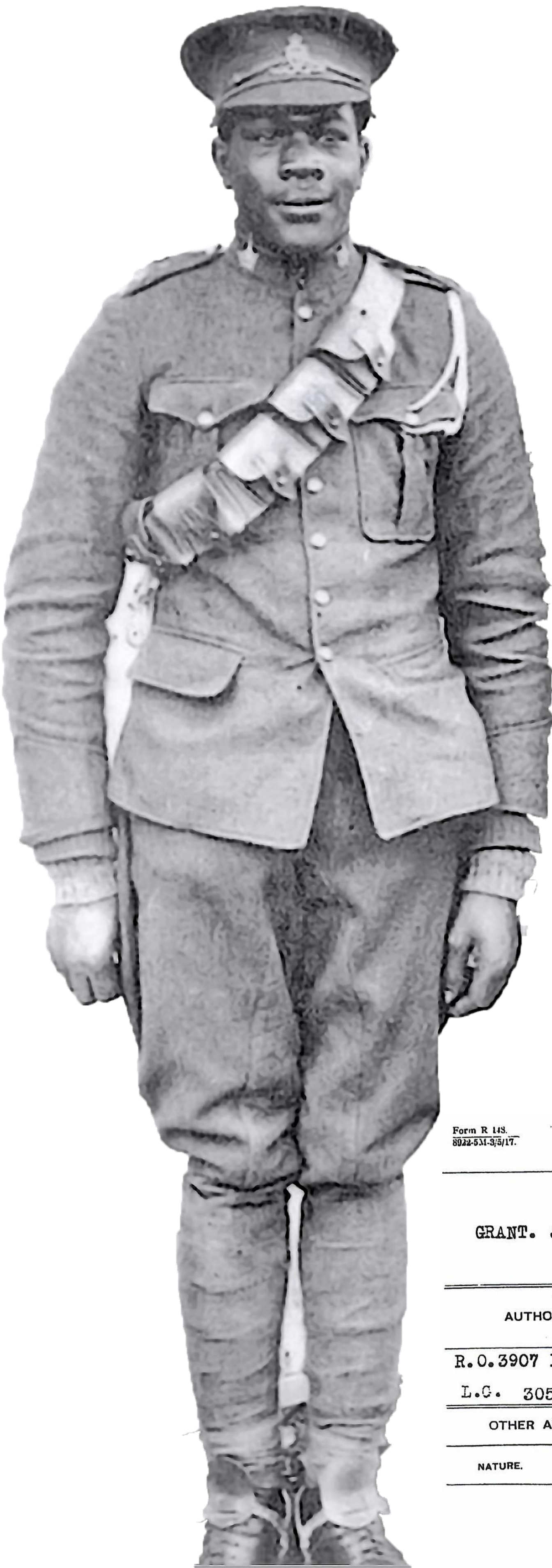


JAMES GRANT MM 317909



February 23, 1918: St. Catharines, Ontario’s local James Grant, field artillery horse team driver, is awarded the Military Medal for "bravery in the field" in Zonnebeke, Belgium, at the heart of the Ypres Salient during the Battle of Passchendaele.

James Grant was the first Black Canadian to be awarded with the Military Medal in the First World War

Private James Grant was born 29 April 1897, son of George and Mary Grant of 51 Page Street in St. Catharines, Ontario. His brother John Grant served with No. 2 Construction Battalion. Grant was a labourer who enlisted on 16 January 1916 at the age of 18, measuring 6’ (1.8 m) tall and weighing 185 lbs (84 kg).

On 11 September 1916 Grant embarked from Halifax, Nova Scotia disembarking 22 September 1916 at Liverpool. After training at Milford and other camps, on March 18, 1917 he arrived in France as reinforcement with the 23rd Howitzer Battery. James was a gunner who later became a driver. He served for 38 months with the Royal Canadian Artillery, first in the 49th Battery and finally with the 23rd Howitzer Battery.



James Grant MM

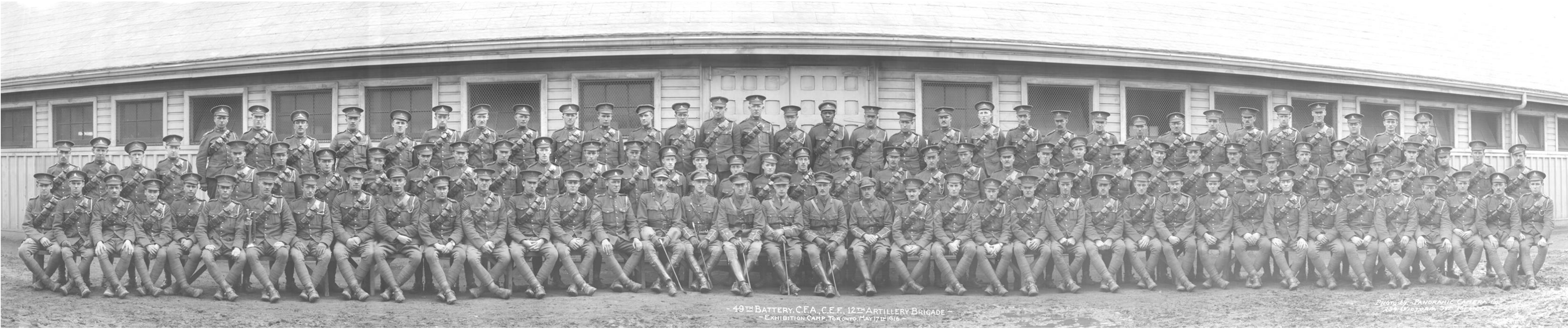
In January 1918 he was trained at Artillery School returning to the field 18 February 1918 and shortly after awarded the Military Medal followed by receiving his General Service Badge in May 1918. On 14 September 1918 Grant was wounded by a gas shell spending time at a rest camps and Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp in France until rejoining the unit in the field on 5 October 1918. On 15 April 1919 Grant left France to proceed to England. He served in France and was discharged on 29 May 1919 from 23rd Battery due to demobilization.

Grant participated in some of Canada's greatest battles of the First World War including Vimy Ridge and Passchendaele. Grant was known as “old General” Grant by those he served with and known for his low bass voice by the quartet he belonged to. After serving for 3 years, 4 months Grant returned home. At the age of 23, in 1920, he married 18-year-old Sadie Summers. They had five sons. In 1927 the family moved to Niagara Falls, NY where Grant worked as a foreman on the street work crew for the City of Niagara Falls, NY. Grant died at the age of 61 on 12 August 1959.

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|---------------------------------|------------|---|--------|-------------|--------------------|---|
| Form R 148. 8022-531-3/3/17. | | NAME. | RANK. | NUMBER. | UNIT. | HONOUR OR AWARD. |
| | | GRANT. J. | Driver | 317909 | D/23 Bty C.F.A. | MILITARY MEDAL |
| | | MEDAL LEADER FOLIOS | | DETAILS. | | MENTIONED IN DESPATCHES AUTHORITY. DATE. |
| AUTHORITY. | | DATE. | | RECEIPT NO. | | TO BE CONTINUED ON BACK OF CARD IF NECESSARY. |
| R.O. 3907 Burstall | | 28-11-17 | | L.C. 30540 | | 23-2-18 |
| OTHER AWARDS. | | | | | | |
| NATURE. | AUTHORITY. | DATE. | | | | |
| | | MILITARY MEDAL. For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty on November 4th near Zonnebeke. The only road was under extremely heavy shell fire all morning and the men sent up to pack ammunition were all made casualties or sent back by the traffic controller except this man, who knowing the battery was short of ammunition pushed through despite the intense shelling, he came back, and although the shelling still exceptionally heavy made a second trip to the battery. AFW.3121.15-11-1 | | | | |

Military Medal (MM)

The medal is awarded for individual acts of bravery in the field on the recommendation of a Commander-in-Chief.



49th Battery, 12th Artillery Brigade, Toronto, May 17, 1916: James Grant is in the back row, center, the only Black soldier in the brigade

James Grant and James W. Johnson

James Wesley Johnson was in the same unit as Grant, the 23rd Howitzer Battery. Both were wounded on 9 September 1918 from a mustard gas attack and sent for recovery at Wimereux Hospital, France. Prior to service Johnson was a papermaker who lived in Merritton, Ontario with his wife Emma and their three children, Clarence, Catharine and Doris. It is no wonder Grant and Johnson remained friends throughout their lives.

Left: James Grant with James W. Johnson, right



Major Edward Lancaster, Commanding Officer

In the First World prejudiced attitudes made it very difficult for Black men to join the Canadian Army. Although there was no law in place, it was left up to the commanding officers of each military unit. Some 619,636 Canadians enlisted with the Canadian Expeditionary Force during the war, and only from about 1,200 to 2,000 of these men were Black.

Major Edward Lancaster, Commanding Officer, accepted James Grant's enlistment. Lancaster, and all ranks, had the highest regard for Grant as a man and as a soldier. They developed a close relationship and remained friends until Grant's death in 1959.

