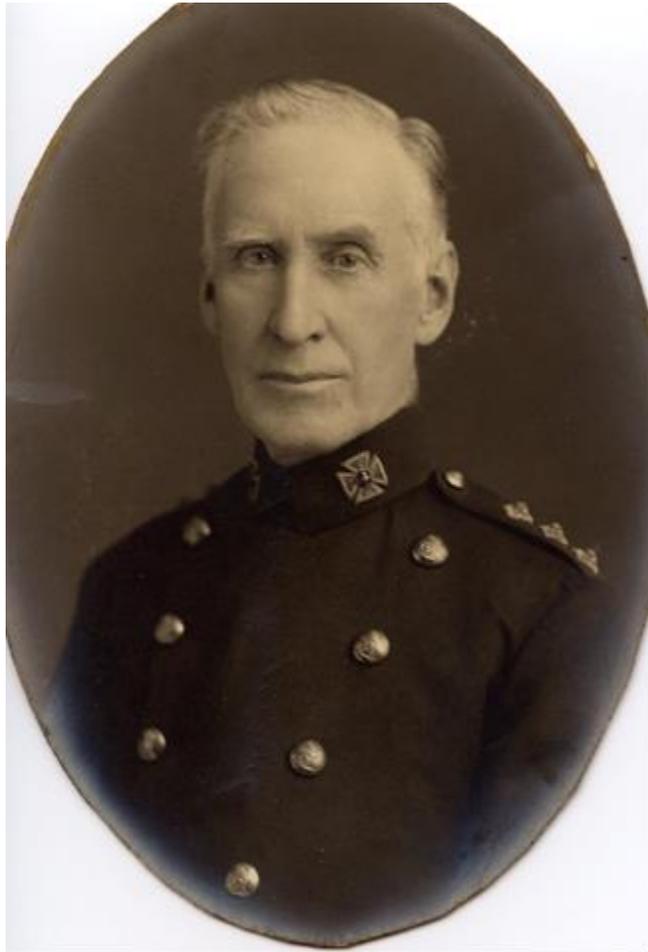


W.O. Raymond – Smallpox Outbreak 1901-02



My paternal great-grandfather, the Ven. William O. Raymond, was an Anglican clergyman during a deadly outbreak of smallpox that hit the port city of Saint John, New Brunswick in 1901-02. It left that city's meagre health resources severely strained. The clergy – Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish – were hard-pressed to meet the needs of their respective congregations as so many fell ill and died. So, they decided to pool their resources in a most ingenious way: they set about to learn each others' respective prayers for the sick and dying, so that they could cover each other off.

The outbreak required them to wear black outfits with hoods (called 'plague clothes') that covered them from head to foot and muffled their voices so they were not recognizable (the children called them 'the black Santa Clauses'). The clothes did little to protect them from the deadly illness and they put themselves at great risk with selfless disregard for their own personal safety. There is something quite wonderful about the idea of my great-grandfather, or his Christian colleagues, saying the 'Mourners Kaddish' (the Jewish prayer for the dead), while a Rabbi may have had to administer the last rites of the church.

George McNeillie