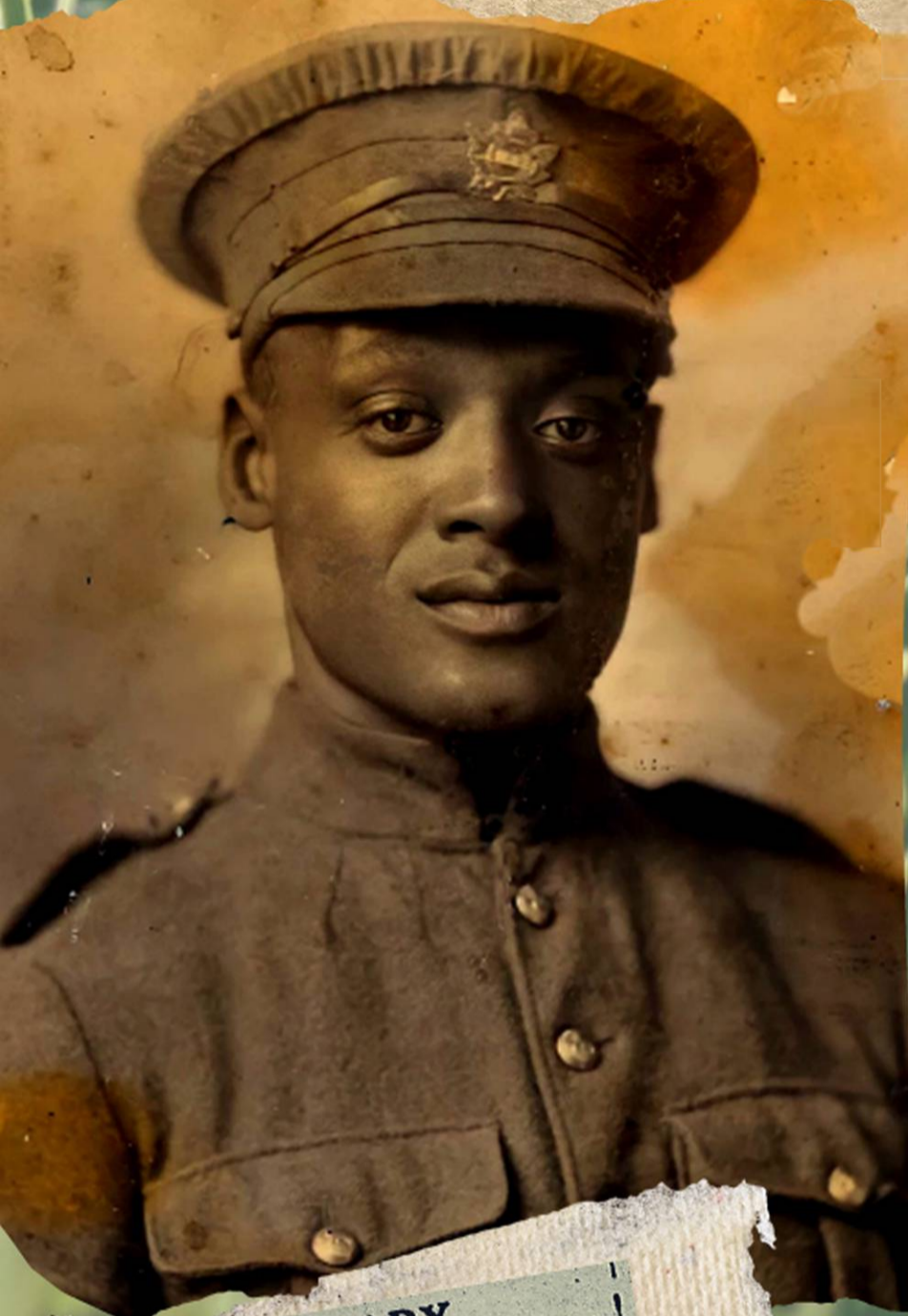


Black History Month: Ingersoll

Charles Kelly 1892-1933



Charles Edward "Charlie" Kelly was born on 29 August 1892 in Ingersoll. He was raised at 140 Carroll Street, one of two sons to Arabella Henderson and Charles Henry Kelly.

As a child he displayed a natural athleticism. When he enlisted in the 168th Battalion on 2 February 1916, he described his occupation as "athlete." Private Kelly sailed with No. 2 Construction Battalion to England in March 1917. Besides infantry training, soldiers also played sports to provide exercise and entertainment. Here Private Kelly's baseball abilities caught the eye of officers. He was recruited for the Canadian Forestry Corps team to play in a small Canadian league in England. Kelly became their stand-out pitcher. Surprisingly, this was an integrated team at a time when Black soldiers were often made unwelcome by other soldiers. King George V enjoyed baseball but only watched two games during the war. The first of these was on 8 September 1917, played at Windsor Castle. The game pitted the Canadian Forestry Corps "Foresters" against a team from Orpington Hospital. Private Kelly pitched an outstanding game. He scored the team's first run in the bottom of the 8th inning to "deafening" applause. After the game the King came onto the field and shook hands with the players, including Charlie Kelly's. On 8 October 1918, Private Kelly finally had his chance to contribute more substantially to the war effort. He was transferred to No. 8 Company of the Canadian Forestry Corps. This company was composed largely of Black soldiers. Its role was to repair and improve airfields for the Royal Air Force (RAF) in France and Belgium. After the war, Kelly would become the star pitcher for the Ingersoll baseball team.

Above prepared by Black Canadian Veterans Stories, with the assistance of the Ingersoll Cheese & Agricultural Museum.

OBITUARY

CHARLES KELLY

One of the stars of the Ingersoll baseball team for years and an athlete proficient in other realms of sport, Charles Kelly, passed away at the family residence, 140 Carroll Street, on Friday afternoon, April 28th. Deceased had been ill for some time, but was only confined to his bed for short periods up until the last week.

Deceased who was in his 40th year had been a lifelong resident of Ingersoll. He enlisted with the 168th Battalion and served overseas with the Canadian forces during the Great War. He had the distinction of pitching for the Canadian Army team in an exhibition game played before King George while he was overseas. Besides his widow, he leaves three sons, Charles, Jr.; Patrick, and Lloyst also one daughter, Reita. A brother, Fred Kelly, London, also survives, as does his mother.

He was buried with full military honors, the funeral being held from the family residence, 140 Carroll street, on Monday afternoon, where service was conducted at 3 o'clock, by Rev. W. E. V. McMillen, rector of St. James' Anglican Church, assisted by Commandant W. H. Carroll, O.B.E., of the Salvation Army, Toronto. The funeral was very largely attended and there were many beautiful floral tributes, testifying to the esteem in which deceased was held.

Ingersoll Tribune, 4 May 1933