SIR MARIE-JOSEPH-EUGÈNE FISET

Knight of the Order of St. Michael & St. George (KCMG)

In the very first Ottawa Hunt, Inc. Membership Book of 1909, one individual is listed as "Fiset, Col. E., D.S.O" (Distinguished Service Order). This member appears to be the same person who had a long and successful military and political career and later became Major General Sir Marie-Joseph-Eugène Fiset KCMG (March 15, 1874 – June 8, 1951). Much of the following is taken from the website "Canadian Military Gateway" [1].

Sir Marie Joseph Eugene Fiset was a Canadian physician, military officer, Deputy Minister of Militia and Defence, Member of Parliament, the 18th Lieutenant Governor of Quebec, and the 3rd Canadian Surgeon General.

Born in Rimouski, Quebec, Fiset was educated at Rimouski College and received a Bachelor of Arts degree and M.D. from Laval University. In 1899, he succeeded his father as surgeon to the 89th Regiment Rimouski but, a few months later, joined the Second (Special Service) Battalion of The Royal Canadian Regiment with the rank of Major and went to South Africa where he fought in the Boer War.

On 18 February 1900, Fiset distinguished himself in the Battle of Paardeberg when he assisted a fellow officer struck by a bullet to the head. Three stretcher-bearers tried to get to the wounded officer but were themselves wounded. Fiset reached the officer, bandaged him on the spot and brought him back behind the firing line. Fiset was mentioned three times for his acts of gallantry in dispatches and was awarded the Queen's Medal along with the Distinguished Service Order. He rose to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel.

When his tour of duty ended in late 1900, Fiset spent a year interning at London's Nose and Throat Hospital and at Paris's Hôpital Saint-Antoine. Back in Canada, he practiced for eight months in Rimouski before being appointed, on 1 November 1902, to the position of Adjutant in the Army Medical Service. Several months later, on 1 July 1903, he was promoted to the rank of Colonel and became Director General of the Service. On 22 December 1906, he was named Deputy Minister of Militia and Defence. In 1909, he appears to have been a member of the Ottawa Hunt Club.

When the First World War broke out in 1914, Fiset was promoted to the military rank of Major General and served in various capacities with the allies. In recognition, England made him first a Companion and then a Knight of the Order St Michael and St George, and France named him a Chevalier of the Legion of Honour.

Fiset retired as Deputy Minister in 1923 after serving as a senior civil servant for 17 years under seven consecutive Ministers of Militia and Defence and the governments of four different Prime Ministers. The next year, Fiset embarked on a political career that would be almost as long as his administrative one: from 1924 to 1939 he sat in the Commons as Liberal MP for Rimouski.

On 30 December 1939, Fiset was named Lieutenant Governor of Quebec, taking as his motto 'J'ai servi." In January 1941 and again in February 1942 he departed from protocol by opening the legislative session in his khaki major general's uniform rather than the ceremonial garb of a lieutenant governor to demonstrate his support for a greater Canadian war effort. As Lieutenant Governor, following custom, he received a number of honours: honorary doctorates from Université Laval in 1940, Bishop's College in 1941 and Université de Montréal in 1943. He was made a Knight of the Order of St John of Jerusalem in 1941 and a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons Canada in 1943.

Fiset retired as Lieutenant Governor on 1 October 1950 and died a short time later, on 8 June 1951, at Rivière-du-Loup.

Figure 1 Headstone of Sir Eugene Fiset Rimouski
Sources:
[1] *Canadian Military Gateway*, http://www.cmhg.gc.ca/cmh/page-739-eng.asp, Accessed 2016-12-12.

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