

Robert Halbgewachs, A German Who Fought Against the Germans

By Jan Braakman ©2024



Robert Halbgewachs. Source: Informatiecentrum Canadese Begraafplaats Holten

Robert Halbgewachs was born a German but fought against German oppression and paid for it with his life in the Netherlands. Halbgewachs is buried at the Canadian War Cemetery in Holten. He was a member of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment and died on April 3, 1945, near Delden (Overijssel). A day later, he would have celebrated his birthday; he was born on April 4, 1923. Initially buried in Delden, his remains were later reinterred in Holten.

Robert's parents emigrated to Canada in the 1920s after marrying in Germany. His father, Gottlob Halbgewachs, arrived in Canada on March 28, 1924, aboard the passenger ship *Montrose*.

A farmer in Buoch, a small village in Württemberg, Gottlob sought better opportunities in Canada. He followed a friend, Ferdinand Unger, who had already settled in Saskatchewan. On his

"Declaration of Passenger to Canada" (see attached illustration), Gottlob stated that he intended to work as a farm laborer but had no plans to remain in Canada.

Fate decided otherwise. A year later, on April 12, 1925, his wife Emma and their son Robert joined him, traveling on the same ship. Emma noted that she was heading to her husband, who was now living in Kingsville, Ontario. Gottlob was reunited with his wife and son.

The family grew in Canada. Gottlob and Emma had seven more children: John, David, Mary, Dorothy, Hanna, and Freida. Their baby daughter, Elsie, passed away in infancy. Gottlob began calling himself Carl and settled with his family in Cottam, Essex County, Ontario. He worked as a farmhand, and Robert seemed to follow in his footsteps, though he also had a strong interest in cars. When Robert enlisted in the military, he listed repairing cars as his hobby.

In 1937, Robert suffered a car accident that caused a skull injury. However, by the time he enlisted six years later, the injury no longer affected him.

Date of Setting 1936 Germany 555

DECLARATION OF PASSENGER TO CANADA

1. NAME HALBGEWACHS Gottlob 27
(PRINT IN BLOCK LETTERS, FAMILY NAME FIRST)

2. Sex male Are you married, single, widowed or divorced? married
 If married, are you accompanied by husband or wife? If so give name of husband or wife

3. Present occupation farmer Intended occupation farmer

4. Birthplace Germany Race or People German

5. Citizenship German Religion evangl.
(IF PROTESTANT STATE DENOMINATION)

6. Object in going to Canada to work a farm

7. Do you intend to remain permanently in Canada? no

8. Have you ever lived in Canada? no
If you have give date

Declaration of Passenger to Canada of Gottlob Halbgewachs, father of Robert Ernest Halbgewachs. Source:Ancestry.ca

In 1936, the Halbgewachs family was naturalized as Canadian citizens. Despite this, Robert's German heritage raised concerns within the army. In 1943, he was evaluated to ensure his loyalty.

Lieutenant J.H. Erwin reported that "there is no reason to think his attitude is not British. He likes soldiering, especially Recce Training." His commanding officer described him as a "well-liked and good soldier."

On October 14, 1944, Robert was deployed from Canada to Britain. After a brief period of acclimatization and training, he began actively participating in the liberation of Western Europe on January 5, 1945. As a driver and mechanic for the Lincoln and Welland Regiment, his service lasted until April 3, when he was killed during the crossing of the Twente Canal near Delden.

Robert Halbgewachs is buried at the Canadian War Cemetery in Holten, plot IX, row G, grave number 6.

Sources:

- Library and Archives Canada; Ottawa, Canada; Service Files of the Second World War - War Dead, 1939-1947; Series: RG 24; Volume: 26034
- ancestry.ca

Translation by ChatGPT