

Clayton Dotzert



Clayton Dotzert was a pilot and a postmaster. He was a glove maker, a tree planter and the man who gave us the Waterloo Siskins Junior B hockey team.

His life – which began on October 13, 1896 – was devoted to service to his community. Before he died in 1988, he told a local reporter, “*I’m gonna live ‘til I die.*”

As a young man he worked for the Snyder Desk Company and the Globe Furniture Company in Waterloo. When he enlisted in 1915, he joked that signing up for the war was safer than working with the sharp machinery in the local furniture factory.

Dotzert, who was of German ancestry, served overseas as a pilot in the Royal Flying Corps until the end of the First World War. When he returned to Waterloo in 1919, he opened the Quality Glove Company with his brother-in-law.

In 1923 he went out on his own, heading up the Dotzert Glove Company which produced high-grade leather work gloves and mitts. The business was located in part of the building owned by the Doering Trunk Company on William Street East in Waterloo. At its height, there were warehouses in Winnipeg and Calgary and salesmen across Canada.

He is remembered as a supporter of Waterloo’s first outdoor skating and hockey rink in 1929, and in 1934 he helped establish the Waterloo Siskins, naming the team after an English airplane used in the First World War.

The year before he founded the local hockey team, Dotzert was named the Waterloo postmaster. He took his role as a civil servant seriously, remaining in the position until 1961. As a postmaster he went above and beyond the call of duty on many occasions. There is one story where a Vancouver man wrote a letter to the “Postmaster of Waterloo.” The B.C. man had seen a photograph of Mennonites in *Life* magazine and wondered where he might get some wheels for his own buggy.

Dotzert personally went out to see a millwright in Heidelberg and had the wheels made and shipped out to British Columbia. Dotzert later received a note of thanks. It read, “Thank you for your work. I got my wheels. Now I can drive.”

Dotzert was also proud of the fact that a Hungarian-Canadian family from Woodstock traveled all the way to the Waterloo post office to mail their packages because of the German-speaking postmaster and his polite staff.

Dotzert, who was paid \$1,400 a year during the Great Depression, said once, “We were a service to the people. We were at the beck and call of everyone.”

In the 1950s, Dotzert was behind a plan to beautify the City by planting 3,000 maple trees. In addition to beautifying Waterloo, he was also a community builder. One of his proudest accomplishments happened in 1959 when he helped get the German and Canadian veterans together for the ceremonies to mark Remembrance Day in Waterloo. It was a controversial move but Dotzert was determined, saying that West Germany was a good ally. Dotzert was a member of Wing 404 RCAF and a former commanding officer of the K-W 80th Air Cadet Squadron.

During a birthday celebration, “various speakers noted how Dotzert has always been a gentle man, one willing to contribute to the good of the community and ready to set a fine example.”

Photo courtesy of the Waterloo Public Library