

# Manitoba History

The Journal of the  
Manitoba Historical  
Society



## Western Canada at War



## Manitoba History

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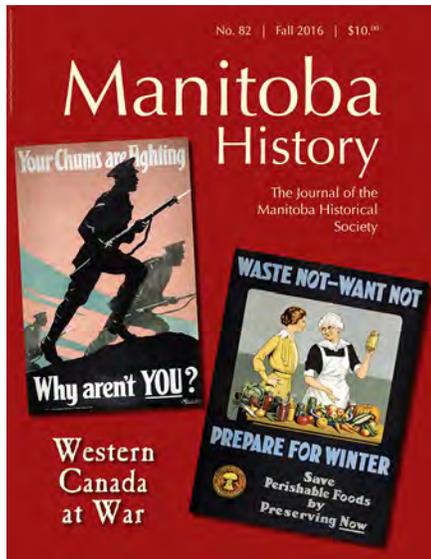
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# Manitoba History

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## First World War Posters

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*"My friend, you would not tell with such high zest  
To children ardent for some desperate glory,  
The old Lie; Dulce et Decorum est  
Pro patria mori."*

From *Dulce et Decorum est* by poet and soldier Wilfred Owen. Thought to have been written between October 1917 and March 1918, published posthumously in 1920.

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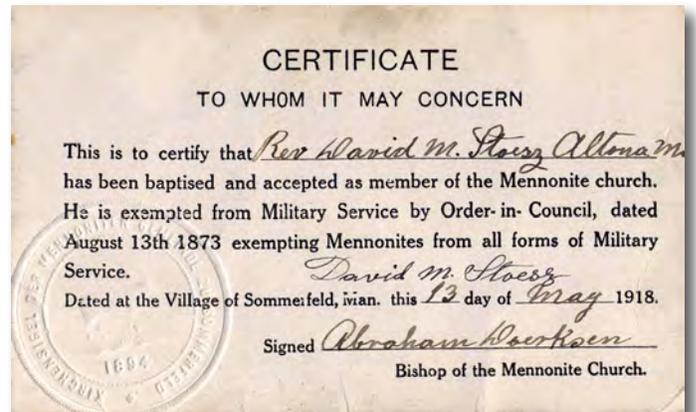
# Western Canada at War: Introduction

In fall 2016, we are at the half-way mark commemorating Canada's First World War centenary. One hundred years ago, peace was a distant dream. This special issue of *Manitoba History* explores the wartime experience of prairie westerners. Any writing about the First World War must ask not only 'what happened,' but also 'how do we remember what happened and why?' The answers to these historical questions are simultaneously deeply personal, and of societal consequence, as our authors attest. In this issue we tell personal stories of the home front and the battlefield, of those who fought and their loved ones, of those who supported Canada's war effort from farm and city, and of those who were conscientious objectors. We explore the tensions between immigrants and the state arising during the influenza pandemic as Armistice finally arrived; and the conflicted experience of indigenous soldiers. Contributors explore the evolution of art and literature in response to the war effort, the creation of war memorials, and the chronicling of it all by public media.

In their article "'Are You 'Doing Your Bit'?: Edith Robertson, Letter-Writing, and Women's Contributions in First-World-War Winnipeg," Andrea Martin and Tyyne Petrowski explore the experiences of young women in the west through letters sent to Edith Robertson, a young teacher and volunteer, by her fiancé at the front. Through women such as Edith, and others like her, we see both the private and public, individual and collective, experiences of war.

Not all in western Canada agreed with the bugle call of war. Amy Shaw writes about those Manitobans who rejected conscription; the men who claimed exemption from military service on conscientious grounds—religious or ethical—that prohibited them from engaging in combat and killing. Her study of the public reaction to conscientious objection in Manitoba offers insights into how western Canadians during the First World War saw minority rights, religious freedom, and the responsibilities of citizenship and masculine behaviour. In a similar vein, Vanessa Quiring in "Manitoba Mennonites and the State" studies the appearance of influenza in a pacifist Manitoba Mennonite community near the end of the war and how the pandemic was managed by the Canadian state in the midst of a wave of anti-German sentiment. As Quiring argues, the Great War served to alienate Mennonites, reinforcing the perceived necessity for communities such as Hanover to reject the intrusion of the "outside" world.

Continuing with the topic of how western Canadian groups approached participation in the war, Karine Duhamel and Matthew McRae from the Canadian Museum of Human Rights have employed photos, letters, reports and artefacts to show how Indigenous people



Mennonite Heritage Centre, volume 1561, file 43.

**Conscientious card.** An example of an exemption card from military service for conscientious objectors during the First World War, this one for the Rev. David Stoesz of Altona, Manitoba dated 13 May 1918. Canada had recognized conscientious objector status since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century but individuals claiming it during the First World War sometimes had difficulty convincing military tribunals that their grounds for exemption were genuine. See Amy Shaw's article on conscientious objection in this issue.

had different motivations for their participation in the Great War, different at least from the official line of the Department of Indian Affairs which viewed Indigenous participation on the battlefield and the home front as a testimony to its success in its mission of assimilation. But as Duhamel and McRae point out, the contributions of Indigenous service people had more to do with treaty commitments, their relationship with the Crown, as well as family obligations and socio-economic pressures. In fact, Indigenous people, they argue, "had not acquiesced to the project of colonization; for many, their service was in fact a re-assertion of the original relationship established with the crown over the past three centuries".

While we are well aware of the propaganda of war, David Gallant examines how western Canadian newspapers often viewed the war in apocalyptic terms, especially at its outbreak. In his article "Armageddon: Western Canadian newspapers at the Outbreak of the Great War", Gallant reveals how many headlines and articles characterized the coming days as an overwhelming disaster, "the end of which no man can foresee and the horrors of which baffle human imagination." While newspapers between 1914 and 1918 reflected emotions ranging from patriotic enthusiasm to anxiety, Gallant's portrayal of the media of the time chronicles how the nation's destiny was altered in "the abyss of war".

Much of this special issue of *Manitoba History* deals with life on the home front, especially among the women



Archives of Manitoba, N16802.

**“Sock Shower for Soldiers.”** Support on the home front in western Canada was an important part of the war effort. These women, members of the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire in Winnipeg, are knitting socks for soldiers at the front.

of the west who helped to maintain the families, farms and factories that contributed to the war effort. In looking at specific contributions, the Royal Alberta Museum’s Sean Moir and Anthony Worman tell the story of the 1917 fundraising signature quilt by the women of Waskatenau, Alberta. If, as they write, the role of women in conflicts has changed dramatically since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the making of quilts to comfort the injured, dying and displaced continues. With the 1917 Waskatenau quilt we see the contributions of the women of a small prairie town and the legacy of their assistance to the war effort recorded and preserved.

This issue would not be complete without a look at the legacy of the First World War, and specifically its art memorials. In “Shifting Memories, Shifting Meanings” Eric Story examines the various values represented by the collection of the Nutana Collegiate Memorial Art Gallery in Saskatoon. He explores the history of a memorial in a local community, providing insights into the collection and popular memory of the Great War in the 1920s. Story reveals how a war memorial later evolved into a multi-faceted cultural object, and how competing strands of meaning came to influence commemoration and memory.

The issue is rounded out with a number of book reviews that deal with the First World War from the

battlefront to the home front, from personal memoirs to an analysis of war in art and literature. In “Cool Things in the Collection”, Wayne Chen writes about the Canon Wilmot Collection in the University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections.

With funding support from the Department of Canadian Heritage and co-sponsors in three provinces, *Manitoba History* has organized “Western Canada At War” public events across the prairies, with additional events coming in early 2017. A number of speakers, some of whom are contributors to this issue, will address a variety of topics related to the war and the home front in western Canada. We wish to thank our many presenters, local organizers and supporters, and our Project Coordinators, Krista Walters and Andrea Smorang. A list of these events is shown on the back cover of this issue.

We would like to thank our many contributors to this special issue of *Manitoba History*. Their articles and reviews remind us that the legacy of the “Great War” remains with us in our sense of community, in our views of nation and region, in our art and literature, and above all in family memory. Their articles also remind us that then, as now, as Margaret Atwood once wrote, “war is what happens when language fails.”

Esyllt Jones & Robert Coutts, Editors

# “Are You ‘Doing Your Bit’?”: Edith Robertson, Letter-Writing, and Women’s Contributions in First-World-War Winnipeg

by Andrea Martin, Manitoba Government and General Employees’ Union  
and Tyyne Petrowski, Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Winnipeg Archives

Are You ‘Doing Your Bit’? Are you ready to share the burden that will fall upon their shoulders? Are you properly fitted to take his place?

Advertisement, *The Winnipeg Evening Tribune*,  
23 June 1917, p. 3<sup>1</sup>

**D**uring the Great War, Manitoban women laboured on the home front both physically and emotionally. Like young men of the same era, young women’s lives were changed drastically during the war years. The war not only afforded women opportunities to work in aid of the war effort in both public and private spaces, but they were encouraged to do so. The quotation above, part of an advertisement for Dominion Business College in 1917, captures the attitude towards women moving into more public work. Additionally, through volunteerism and personal occupations such as letter writing, many women found their private lives consumed with war-focussed activity.

To explore the experiences of young women during the years of the First World War, we approach wartime in Winnipeg and the prairies through Edith Robertson. Edith was at once a university student, teacher, engaged

citizen, volunteer, as well as fiancée and correspondent to soldier Frederick Baragar who served with the Canadian army overseas during the First World War. Through these roles Edith, and women like her, directly influenced individual and collective experiences of the war. The war simultaneously shaped women’s university experiences, political agency, careers, and relationships.

The complex story of women’s lives on Manitoba’s home front is evident through individual women’s stories, exemplified in this study that combines local archival material, historical Winnipeg newspapers, and personal letters sent to Edith Robertson. Here, Edith’s story is woven through the greater war experience to contextualize her story within the larger Manitoban experience. Archival records about women in the First World War era, particularly records in their own voices, can be difficult to find as archival silences created by historical record-keeping practices tend to exclude marginal groups.<sup>2</sup> Records from the war period reflect the dominant systems of the time, which privileged white middle- and upper-class men. Throughout our researches, we endeavoured to read archives “against the grain” by examining records for what they omit or reveal indirectly.<sup>3</sup> Using this method we track the experiences of young women in Manitoba within private, academic, and public spheres during the war era.

Our key source for uncovering the experiences of Edith Robertson is through the letters written to her by Frederick D. Baragar throughout the war. The couple met while Fred was in his final year at Wesley College (which was at that time affiliated with the University of Manitoba), and Edith in her first. They became engaged while Fred was on leave from military training in Kingston, Ontario. The day of their engagement was the last time Edith and Fred saw each other before Fred returned to Manitoba in 1919. The couple corresponded throughout Fred’s training and war front service; and through Edith’s university career, graduation, and entry into the workforce. The letters span almost the entire war period, starting in November 1914 and ending in April 1919 when Fred arrived home at the family farm in Elm Creek, Manitoba. The letters which make up our study



*Andrea Martin and Tyyne Petrowski are graduates of the University of Manitoba’s Archival Studies MA program, and co-authors of From the Somewhere (fromthesomewhere.tumblr.com), a First World War memorial blog which features the letters of Canadian soldier Frederick D. Baragar held at the University of Manitoba Archives & Special*

*Collections. Andrea is currently working in records management for the Manitoba Government and General Employees’ Union. Tyyne has worked at the University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections, the Archives of the International Federation of Red Cross & Red Crescent Societies, and is now the Director of Archives for the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Winnipeg.*

## Young Women on Manitoba's Home Front

showcase the experiences of a young, white, Anglophone, Protestant, middle-class, university-educated couple, and we acknowledge that the wartime realities of individuals from other economic, social, ethnic, religious, or age groups are likely to have been different in a variety of ways. Edith Robertson was born 8 March 1885 to John and Christine Robertson, Scottish immigrants who moved to Canada by 1883. Among the ten children of the Winnipeg-based Presbyterian family Edith was third eldest. When Britain declared war on Germany, Edith was preparing to enter year two of an Arts degree at Wesley College. Like many privileged young women who were politically active during the war, she was academically successful, socially active, and volunteered regularly. Edith's narrative provides a glimpse into how these experiences were lived out during the years of the First World War in Winnipeg.

Before she had graduated from university, Edith Robertson was already a paid teacher and an active citizen of her city, province, country, and empire. Her experiences reflect a combination of urban and rural prairie life in Canada during the First World War, and more broadly, life in the British Empire. Edith's story provides a glimpse into her life as a young working woman and a patriotic British-Canadian citizen during the war period, one who was privileged enough to have been a university student as well. Working women in Manitoba, as elsewhere in Canada, were often channelled into unskilled, semi-skilled, and low-paying jobs. Some families relied on working daughters' extra income but the wages earned by these young women were typically too small to allow independent living.<sup>4</sup> Typically in the war era young women would begin their adult lives in the workforce, with the expectation they would leave paid employment when they married.<sup>5</sup> This was the case with Edith who, despite her fiancé Fred being impressed with her 1918 teaching salary, was listed as having no occupation in the 1921 census following their marriage.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Edith's mother had no occupation listed on the 1911 and 1916 censuses alongside her father's job as a carpenter.<sup>7</sup>

Edith Robertson began her teaching career at one-room schools in rural Saskatchewan during the summer months away from university. In analyzing female teachers at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and during the first years of the 20<sup>th</sup>, Eric Sager argued that: "Despite the hierarchy in urban schools and the subordination of women teachers, the occupation was associated with the possession of authority, with a degree of independence, and with a portion of workplace control and discretion not afforded by work in factories, the service sector, or sales."<sup>8</sup> As such, Edith was employed in a field that allowed her a certain amount

of autonomy when compared to many occupations of her time, particularly in her years teaching in rural schools. Edith taught in Flacks, Saskatchewan from May to October 1915, where students attended school while the roads were clear of snow.<sup>9</sup> Winnipeg-raised Edith reported learning about country life including driving oxen, milking a cow, and using a scythe.<sup>10</sup> She participated in local Red Cross fundraisers and reflected on "the thoughtful bachelors who went out of their way to see that my precious mail was delivered quickly, for they knew that my fiancé was serving overseas."<sup>11</sup> In 1916 Edith taught in a newly opened school in Loverna, Saskatchewan, and in Brombury, Saskatchewan following graduation from university in 1917.<sup>12</sup>

The employment landscape changed by necessity during the war, but public opinion continued to resist women doing what was considered men's employment.

"MAN, LOOK OUT FOR YOUR JOB OR SOME WOMAN WILL GET IT! SCORES INVADE MALE'S SPHERE," shouted a headline from the 18 August 1917 issue of *The Winnipeg Evening Tribune*.<sup>13</sup> In the article Carolyn Cornell described increased output from munitions factories after women were hired, and noted the improved working conditions, still a concern in the Great War era since factories were considered dirty, airless places unfit for middle-class women.<sup>14</sup> Fred Baragar wrote to discourage Edith from working in a factory, despite his characteristic support of all of her endeavours. Specifically, he pleaded from his training camp in Kingston, Ontario, "Edith, I understand your desire to go



University of Winnipeg Archives, SC-2-1B\_15701.

**Edith Anne Robertson (1895–1988)** in her photo from the 1917 graduating class in Arts at Wesley College in Winnipeg.

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to work even in a factory, and yes, it would be experience, but please don't if anything else comes to hand."<sup>15</sup> Cornell discussed other, non-factory work done by women, much of which was new territory. The jobs included mail delivery, truck driving, elevator operation, clerk and teller positions at banks, soda fountain operation, and storefront positions in shops.<sup>16</sup> In terms of patriotic volunteer labour, Cornell pointed to "several orders of Daughters of the Empire", church groups, and other community organizations who had done work such as planting "win the war" gardens, which were used to grow potatoes that would be sold for \$2 a bushel to put towards the war effort.

The Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE) was one of several volunteer groups through which Canadian women directly contributed to war work. In Manitoba, this included fundraising, knitting socks and blankets, providing aid to soldiers' wives, and supporting sick and disabled veterans after the war.<sup>17</sup> This organization, through for example its production of Britain-centric curriculum guides and learning materials, fostered British nationalism and patriotism for the war effort.<sup>18</sup> As a teacher and British-Canadian patriot, Edith would likely have been familiar with, even used, such materials in her own teaching career. In addition to the IODE, Canadian politicians and media propagandized Canada's role in Britain's war to encourage enlistment and support. These advertisements relied heavily on imperialist sentiments and imagery to mobilize Canadians.<sup>19</sup> This theme, emphasizing Canada's colonial relationship to Britain and encouraging imperialism, was used to rally people in support of the war, and it continued afterward.<sup>20</sup> Canada's second most popular Great War charity, with many groups operative in Manitoba, was the Canadian Red Cross—the Canadian Patriotic fund that supported soldiers' wives and dependants held the top place.<sup>21</sup> The services provided by the Red Cross' transatlantic network in Britain, France, and on various home fronts, were offered almost exclusively through unpaid work. Yet the Red Cross acknowledged that the creation of items sent to the front, particularly garments, had real monetary value.<sup>22</sup> While much of the dialogue in the historiography around these volunteer activities is described as motherly care, in the case of university students and young women, we should consider their attitude as one of sisterly solidarity; the female students described the goal of their work as "to help our toiling brother[s]".<sup>23</sup>

While middle- and upper-class women had the financial resources to be able to donate their time to volunteer labour, women of all classes also participated in paid work to fill positions vacated by men who went off to fight on the front lines. Even for traditionally paid tasks, women's war work came in the forms of both paid and unpaid labour, and the entirety of women's work developed a militaristic aura that raised the tone of patriotism to a new level.

This new ideology of female militarism described a kind of virtual soldiering, equating women's

work on the home front to the work of soldiers in the trenches. The ideology served to justify the new visibility of women as well as the long hours spent away from home in voluntary war activities or in the paid workforce of the munitions factory.<sup>24</sup>

Some men's reactionary behaviour towards women taking on new roles was still very evident, despite developing patriotic attitudes towards women working. For instance, on the front page of *The Winnipeg Evening Tribune* in March 1916, a bread delivery man challenged the ability of women to do his work and questioned their "womanliness" in doing so.<sup>25</sup> In response to this letter, one woman provided her qualifications to the Women's Registration Bureau to take his job so that he could enlist.<sup>26</sup> Increased attention appears to have been drawn to the Citizen's Recruiting Office and its Women's Registration Bureau around that time. Women came to recommend themselves for positions as telegraphers, insurance agents, milk and bread delivery drivers, elevator operators, bank clerks, post office workers, street car conductors, and clothing manufacture "cutters", and for general clerical work as well as farm work.<sup>27</sup>

Some young women even made their way to the front lines. At least two female students were listed among those serving at the front in the 1918 University of Manitoba "Roll of Honour": Nurse Margaret Angus and Miss M. Robb.<sup>28</sup> The *Vox Wesleyana* provides a more detailed story of MA graduate Lieutenant Maurine Robb, who joined the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps and obtained an officer's commission. Robb graduated from Wesley College only two years prior to Edith Robertson and was "drafted to Boulogne to take the place of quartermistress," where she

**'Lady Can Have My Job' Says Bread Wagon Man**

**Driver Offers to Enlist if Woman Can Do His Work But, He Declares, She Can't Do It**

WANTED—A strong lady to drive bread wagon. If she is competent present male holder of job will give it to her and enlist in the army. But he is sure no lady can manage the job.

Where is that Winnipeg lady who registered a day or two ago at the Women's Registration Bureau as willing to take a job as bread-wagon driver to relieve some man for military service?

She can have such a job if she still wants it and can hold it. A Tribune reader, male, driver of a bread-wagon, makes the offer of his position in a letter given to The Tribune today for publication.

**"She Can't Hold It"**

"She can have my job if she can hold it—but she can't hold it," he writes.

Here is his letter:

To the Editor—I see in today's issue a paragraph referring to the activities of a number of married women of this city, who evidently are very anxious to drive milk and bread wagons. The writer, who happens to be a bread salesman, questions the ability of these women to do the job. I am a married man and have god reasons for not enlisting, but if any of these women,

(Continued on Page Three)

*Winnipeg Tribune*, 25 March 1916, page 1.

"Lady Can Have My Job." In 1916, a bread truck driver in Winnipeg offered to enlist in the military if a women could prove herself capable of doing his job.

## Young Women on Manitoba's Home Front

was responsible for equipment and clothing for six hostels and camps.<sup>29</sup>

As outlined above, women stepped in to fill absences left by men serving in the military, volunteered their time and labour in fundraising, and made and sent items to the warfront, but they also did the emotional work of the war: providing emotional support for their loved ones overseas and for the nation at large. In a 1915 letter to Edith, Fred Baragar expressed a soldier's perception of women's emotional work in terms of their relationships with soldiers:

I have noticed this, that in general those who are thinking of a true woman far away, are living the best life here. Do you see, little girl, part of the work that has been given to women to do, and does it seem unworthy work?<sup>30</sup>

This emotional labour was partially done through correspondence. In addition to formally organized letter-writing campaigns, people like Edith took it upon themselves to write to soldiers, even relative strangers, to show support. In autumn 1915 Edith asked if Fred knew any fellow soldiers who received little mail and to whom she could write letters and send packages, if there were any of his fellow soldiers who were not receiving mail from home. Fred responded in December 1915 that he loved her expression of sympathy, but that he could not think of anyone at the time.<sup>31</sup> In February 1916 Fred wrote of this request again, noting that while he had "picked out a comrade", his arrival at the front lines meant he could no longer include names of Canadian soldiers in his letters due to the censorship rules.<sup>32</sup>

In reading about the emotional and physical labour done on the home front, one can recognise a microcosm of the trends in women's wartime work and volunteerism among college students in Winnipeg. Numbers of male students decreased throughout the war years and a military presence was introduced to the University of Manitoba campus through the establishment of the University of Manitoba Canadian Officers Training Corps (COTC).<sup>33</sup> Many female students worked to aid the war effort through campus-coordinated volunteerism. Organizations like the Red Cross actively recruited female university students attending school in Manitoba.<sup>34</sup> Wesley College and the larger University of Manitoba community developed student groups which provided aid to the war effort and comfort to soldiers, including Red Cross chapters and a Ladies Auxiliary. The localized home front patriotic work of these societies impacted female students' university experience during the war years.

The overall reaction of the university community to the turmoil of war mirrored that of Canadian society. The University of Manitoba's war response is described by J. M. Bumsted as "swift and one of total commitment," as both staff and students enlisted following the beginning of the war in 1914.<sup>35</sup> Canadian men signed up to serve during the first two years in relatively high numbers, and

women stepped in to support the war effort though wage and volunteer labour on the war front and at home.<sup>36</sup> The enlistment, and later conscription, of young men had a dramatic impact on Manitoba's student population. "Some parts of the university were virtually depopulated for the duration of the war" and by 1917 "there was not a single able-bodied male student over the age of eighteen" attending St. John's College.<sup>37</sup> Enrolment in the other colleges suffered a similar fate.<sup>38</sup>

Throughout her four-year degree Edith Robertson was an active participant in Wesley College and wider University of Manitoba extracurriculars. She participated on college debating teams and in her final year represented Wesley College on the University of Manitoba's debate team against Brandon College.<sup>39</sup> She was a competitive hockey player, one of eight women who "put forward" the 1916–1917 women's champion hockey team for Wesley College.<sup>40</sup> Amateur women's hockey teams were common in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and Wesley College was not the only institution to support a women's team.<sup>41</sup> A passion for hockey was something Edith shared with her fiancé Fred.<sup>42</sup> His letters demonstrate their interest through a discussion of the Manitoba Amateur Hockey Association's decision to hold a "Patriotic Series" to raise money for the war effort. This series used enlisted soldiers as players for the 1915–1916 season,<sup>43</sup> and the team that was assembled by Winnipeg's 61<sup>st</sup> Battalion went on to win the Allan Cup, the Canadian senior men's amateur championship for 1916.<sup>44</sup>

Edith excelled academically and socially during her time at Wesley College.<sup>45</sup> She declared a double major of English and History in autumn 1915, and was elected Lady Stick for her senior year (1916–1917).<sup>46</sup> Wesley College had already employed the title of Senior Stick for the male head of student body prior to 1909, and at the beginning of the 1912 academic year the "Ladies' Student Body" president received an official "stick" to denote her office, and was thereafter referred to as Lady Stick.<sup>47</sup> The November 1916 issue of *Vox Wesleyana* announced Edith's appointment:

The office of Lady Stick suggests the highest honour which the women students can give, and also involves duties which are at once arduous and painstaking. An unusual amount of tactfulness is required, combined with sympathy of the most helpful kind. Edith Robertson, our stick for the '17 year, is a combination of all that is good and true... we find Edith occupying a position for which few are justified.<sup>48</sup>

These heartfelt congratulations were echoed by her fiancé Fred, who wrote with pride from the war front:

I do congratulate you with all my heart, there is nothing, not even whole necklaces of medals, that I would more keenly wish for your last year at Wesley. And you will do honour to Wesley's finest and best.<sup>49</sup>

## Young Women on Manitoba's Home Front



University of Winnipeg Archives, SC-2-4\_19239

The 1917 ladies' hockey team at Wesley College included Edith Robertson, third from right.

Starting in autumn 1914, university student publications like *Vox Wesleyana*, *The Manitoban*, and *The Varsity Yearbook* were filled with war-related news. The enlistment of male faculty members and students into the Canadian military was reported with enthusiasm, and students encouraged their peers to get involved with the war effort.<sup>50</sup> As women were unable to enlist as soldiers, organized volunteerism was the primary way in which university women were expected to contribute to the war.

Edith's experience as a student engaged to a soldier serving overseas was not unique, but it did shape her experience of attending university in a country at war. We know from the letters in the Frederick D. Baragar collection that on top of her school work and social activities, Edith devoted a certain amount of time each week to writing letters to Fred.<sup>51</sup> Corresponding regularly with soldiers serving overseas was one of the ways that women supported the war effort; the ability of soldiers at

the front to communicate with friends and family at home was considered "essential to morale" by the British and Canadian Armies, and women in Manitoba worked to make sure that all soldiers had a "pen pal".<sup>52</sup>

As early as 1915, female university students in Manitoba organized through the Red Cross corresponded with students and alumni serving overseas.<sup>53</sup> In January 1917, a formal University Correspondence Club was established at the University of Manitoba.<sup>54</sup> The goal of the club in its inaugural year was to ensure "that every student from this University who has enlisted for active service receives from [the club], periodically, a 'news letter'".<sup>55</sup> The language used to describe the work undertaken by the club was similar to the language used to describe women's wartime volunteer work. Particularly, describing the work of the club as comforting soldiers through "the horrors and carnage of battle fury" echoes what Sarah Glassford calls

"the languages of patriotism and care" that permeated women's volunteer work for the Canadian Red Cross.<sup>56</sup>

Linda J. Quiney argues that across Canada, the Red Cross encouraged "monetary contributions" and participation in "fund-raising events" from female students.<sup>57</sup> Gendered tasks like "sewing and knitting hospital garments" made up the largest "portion of Red Cross work expected of university" students and women in Canada.<sup>58</sup> Edith Robertson and Wesley College's female students organized a Red Cross Society beginning in 1915.<sup>59</sup> By November that year the group was "already well advanced" on their volunteer work.<sup>60</sup> The Red Cross report in November 1915's *Vox Wesleyana* made use of distinctive patriotic rhetoric, encouraging female students who had not yet joined the society to "make it a point to" join while also pressuring male students to "contribute some small sum towards bearing the expense entailed in this work."<sup>61</sup> That male students supported the wartime volunteer work of their female counterparts demonstrates that this volunteer work was seen as a patriotic effort worth supporting and was recognized as having a tangible positive impact on the experiences and outcomes of the war.<sup>62</sup> Female students described this work as "varied and interesting."<sup>63</sup> In the Red Cross report for the July 1916 issue of *Vox Wesleyana*, Edith wrote that student volunteers became aware over the course of the year "just how great their responsibilities were becoming."<sup>64</sup> The "Red Cross work occupied a large place in the hearts of the girls at Wesley," Edith argued, "but, at heart, the chief interest lay in the mighty struggle and those who were representing" Wesley College overseas.<sup>65</sup> While students recognized this work as undeniably valuable, reports in *Vox Wesleyana*, *The Manitoban*, and *The Varsity Year Book* glossed over the *labour* involved in the work performed by female students to complete these tasks. "Producing and raising money for comforts required time and skill" and "the labour involved in Red Cross work", Glassford argues, much like other forms of women's unpaid labour during this time period, went unacknowledged.<sup>66</sup>

Donating time and labour to the war effort was a difficult balancing act for female students. Fred's letters to Edith while she was a student include many references to her busy schedule.<sup>67</sup> Fred demonstrated that every letter Edith wrote to him took time away from another commitment, but writing to her fiancé was something to which Edith gave high priority. Edith and many female university students like her found ways to balance their academic commitments, careers, and social lives with their volunteer efforts and community activism.

The volunteerism and activism that filled women's time went beyond activities related strictly to the war. Suffrage and prohibition movements, which had been rising to prominence before the outbreak of war, exemplified women's growing political agency throughout the war period. Manitoba's suffrage movement gained strength during the first years of the war, bolstered by women's war work. The political issues of prohibition and social reform had also been taken up by suffragists of all ages, and these

movements represented public declarations of women's political opinions and ability to effect political change. After an extensive public campaign, on 28 January 1916 Manitoba became the first Canadian province to grant women the right to vote in provincial elections. While University of Manitoba sources are fairly quiet on the suffrage question, it's clear from what *was* said that many students were suffrage supporters.<sup>68</sup> The letters in the Frederick D. Baragar collection demonstrate that both Fred and Edith were suffrage proponents, "Of course I believe in suffrage, I always did," Fred wrote on 25 December 1915, a month before women's voting rights were legislated in Manitoba. These letters also tell us that Edith supported the popular prohibition movement, a sentiment that was shared with her classmates.<sup>69</sup> In February 1916 the Wesley College student body decided collectively "to assist in the coming prohibition campaign in Manitoba."<sup>70</sup> On 13 March 1916 a majority of Manitobans voted in favour of prohibition;<sup>71</sup> the province was officially 'dry' throughout the rest of the war. The suffrage and prohibition movements, and Edith's support of both, exemplify the reformative nature of the war years in Manitoba and demonstrate the impact women had in the wartime political landscape.

The suffrage and prohibition movements, as with women's wartime participation in previously male-dominated jobs, inspired varying degrees of support and opposition from Manitobans. Even proponents and allies of the suffrage movement supported it on the basis of women continuing to behave in typically feminine ways. Months after Manitoba had legislated women's right to vote, in August 1916, Fred Baragar passed on a story to Edith from his brother Arthur that exemplified the feminine codes women suffragists were expected to follow. Arthur, a doctor serving in England with the Canadian military, attended a dinner party where a number of English suffragists were in attendance. He described the female suffragists as "the type who think they've got to be mannish and crude to show their right to suffrage."<sup>72</sup> Fred added to Edith, "Thank the Lord that as yet that type is very scarce in Canada," implying that Edith (and mutual female acquaintances) embodied an appropriately feminine brand of suffragist.<sup>73</sup>

The First World War disrupted not only the political and social status quo of Canadians, but also their personal relationships. Fred and Edith's wartime engagement provides a glimpse into wartime relationships. The pair shared similar religious, economic, and educational perspectives. Fred had a Methodist background and Dutch heritage on his father's side, Irish and Anglican heritage on his mother's.<sup>74</sup> Fred's family were farmers near Elm Creek, Manitoba. Though Scottish-Presbyterian Edith lived in Winnipeg, it appears both had similar experiences. They attained college degrees from the same institution within a few years of each other, Fred having studied English and Latin, and Edith having majored in English and History, both with the aim of becoming teachers. Due to these factors we do not get a particularly culturally diverse representation of the courtship experience from this couple.

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However, if we follow the assertion that “the courtship and marriage rites of English Canadians cut across most social boundaries,” in the pre-war, we can accept that Fred and Edith’s wartime courtship as typical of the young English-speaking Canadians of their time.<sup>75</sup>

Engagements prior to young men’s enlistment were common, but there was a divide between whether young people chose to marry prior to soldiers’ heading to war, or to wait hopefully for their return.<sup>76</sup> Whatever the case, young lovers were forced to put their first married years together on hold until the soldier returned. Some women travelled across the Atlantic to marry their fiancés during a brief leave from the front, including Winnipegger Doris Aldous.<sup>77</sup> We know that Fred and Edith at least contemplated this action, as Fred wrote the following in October 1917:

If ever I could get a leave I would come home, do you think it would be foolish for us to be married? And dear girl, I often wonder if anything should happen to me, would you rather it were as it is now, or with a greater hold on our comradeship and love that marriage would give ... I often wonder in my heart which you in your most sensible mood would wish for.<sup>78</sup>

Fred and Edith were no strangers to a long-distance relationship. They began their courtship while both in Winnipeg, but Fred headed to Toronto to complete a year in the University of Toronto’s Education program during the 1914–1915 school year. In March 1915, Fred wrote that he had joined the University of Toronto’s Canadian Officer

Training Corps, signing-off with the sentiment, “I ask if you can save a place for me against the time that I shall return, if God will that it shall be.”<sup>79</sup> Fred returned home to Manitoba very briefly on 20 May 1915 and had one day with Edith as she prepared to leave to teach in Flacks, Saskatchewan.<sup>80</sup> During their day together Fred proposed to Edith, she accepted.<sup>81</sup>

Like Fred and Edith, women and men wrote to each other frequently throughout the war, often outside of romantic relationships as well, as a means of supporting soldiers at the front.<sup>82</sup> All mail was valued by the soldiers, as evidenced by one of Fred’s letters when he writes about a several-week Canadian mail delivery delay at the front lines, “By jove, it makes a hole in our existence that nothing can fill up.”<sup>83</sup> Letters were not only the primary means of communication, but were also an outlet for consolation and sympathy through which women performed the “emotional labour that evolved around bereavement” during the war. Women in Manitoba played a role in comforting soldiers overseas who lost friends and family members fighting at the front. For Edith and Fred this is demonstrated in his letters about the death of a friend: “No incident of this whole war has touched me so deeply as the death of Bill Crummy,” Fred wrote in April 1916.<sup>84</sup> The two young men graduated from Wesley College a year apart, and Fred considered Bill to be one of his “best friends”.<sup>85</sup> Fred subsequently wrote to Edith about his grief over this loss, and about how important it was for the two of them to support each other through the “sorrows” of war.<sup>86</sup> Emotional supports provided by women at home didn’t go unnoticed. As Fred wrote, “Were it not for loved ones at

**Women of Canada!**  
**Your Country Is Calling You**

At any moment the call for every able-bodied man may come. Our Country and King will utilize his services

**Are You "Doing Your Bit"?**

Are you ready to share the burden that will fall upon your shoulders? Are you properly fitted to take his place?

*Winnipeg Tribune, 23 June 1917, page 3.*

“Are You ‘Doing Your Bit’?” An advertisement by the Dominion Business College in the *Winnipeg Tribune* in June 1917 appealed to the patriotism of women when it offered courses in shorthand, English, and bookkeeping.

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home, we would care little what happened" in battle.<sup>87</sup> The scale of loss experienced in the First World War is hard to imagine, but during the war years Canadians experienced such loss daily.

While many of Fred's letters were thoughtful and detailed, once he was fighting at the front, maintaining detailed correspondence with Edith was not always possible. Fred regularly thanked Edith for the abundance and quality of letters. At one point he wrote, "You are a dear and no one can deny that. Two letters from you last night, indeed you are wasting far too much time on a lonely soldier."<sup>88</sup> At times Fred was able to compose only short notes due to the activity at the front lines. When spare time for letter writing was non-existent, Fred sent "wizz-bangs": military form postcards upon which statements were circled and brief sentences were written before being sent off. He occasionally sent postcards, which were common at the time, and included varieties such as those covered with embroidered silk samplers from France and elsewhere.<sup>89</sup> Young women like Edith would receive these short notices, often carrying gratitude for their letters and care packages received at the front lines.

Looking at the paper and cards sent by soldiers, we can see that the very fabric of wartime correspondence was infused with reminders of patriotism. The stationery which Fred used occasionally featured the Union Jack, Canadian flags, or other Canadian insignia. Some paper even included a censorship reminder,<sup>90</sup> which hints at the limitations put on soldiers when writing home, and the ways in which their communications with loved ones were restricted by military regulations. Soldiers were instructed:

Do not mention your rank or battalion, brigade, or the names of places: Expected operations, movements or numbers of troops: Casualties, previous to publication of official lists, or make specific reference to the moral or physical condition of the troops. J. M. Mackendrick Secretary.<sup>91</sup>

During wartime, closeness with loved ones was maintained by sharing experiences outside the constant reality of war. Fred and Edith discussed the contents of the *Manitoba Free Press* and *Vox Wesleyana* issues, as well as church sermons they had read or heard. They wrote to each other of Wesley College and local news, and of updates on their circle of friends, and Edith sent Fred books and magazines to read, which they later discussed. In this way the archival record provides us with another clue to Edith's interests through Fred's responses to her opinions.

The day the Armistice was signed, 11 November 1918, Fred Baragar wrote two letters. One was to his brother Ernest, and the other a joyful celebration sent to Edith, telling his fiancée to expect him home by mid-summer at the latest, and that at long last she could begin planning for their wedding.<sup>92</sup> Their happy reunion took place in

April 1919, and February 1920's *Vox Wesleyana* includes the following announcement:

"On Dec. 31st, Miss Edith A. Robertson '17, became the bride of Fred D. Baragar '14, the ceremony being performed by Rev. R. F. Argue '11. The happy couple are living at 95 Lansdowne Ave., Winnipeg."<sup>93</sup>

Edith carefully preserved the letters received from Fred, and we know from his letters that Fred routinely sent her letters to him home for safekeeping under the care of his brother Ernest. A selection of letters from those sent home to various family members were also saved. The letters still exist today because Edith and Fred's family actively chose to keep the letters, and their children and grandchildren valued the collection enough to save it and donate it to an archival institution. It is a chain of choices resulting from the fact that Fred survived the war, came home, married his fiancée, and lived a long life following the end of "the Great Killing."<sup>94</sup> If Fred Baragar had not survived the war, his letters home—now preserved at the University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections—would likely not have been saved and would not be available to us today.

The documentary record in Edith's own voice remains minimal. Fred Baragar's letters provide a wealth of material on a young soldier's experience of the First World War and have been preserved largely for that purpose. Yet despite the archival silence we are able to read Edith's activities, her experiences, her interests, her successes, and her relationship with the man she loved through Fred's letters to her and to his family. We are also able to follow Edith's student years and teaching career through *Vox Wesleyana* and a history book featuring brief memoirs of her 1915 and 1916 teaching experiences. Edith participated in these documentary activities as a student, a teacher, a citizen, and a woman with a post-secondary education. She was privileged to have both the skills and time to participate in recording her own experiences and those of young women like her on the prairie home front during the dynamic years of the First World War.

Women's labour, both physical and emotional, made a significant contribution to the home front and battle front experiences of war. Correspondence, care packages of various kinds, fundraising efforts, moral support, and the many home front workforce positions which women moved into, were just some of the ways they contributed to the fabric of society during the First World War. Young women in particular, especially those with the privileges of middle- or upper-class leisure and without the responsibilities of taking care of a home or children, had the time and energy to put into these wartime home front labours. The story of Edith Robertson helps to provide a starting point for further explorations into how young women on the Manitoba home front experienced the years of the First World War. ❧

# Shifting Memories, Shifting Meanings: The Nutana Collegiate Memorial Art Gallery in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, 1919–1930

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“**Y**ou might have had the finest collection of Canadian pictures in Canada,” wrote A. Y. Jackson, leader of the famed Group of Seven, in a letter to A. W. Cameron, principal of Saskatoon’s Nutana Collegiate, in November 1926. Cameron had earlier sent Jackson a letter, presumably asking if the famous Canadian artist would be willing to sell one of his canvases to the collegiate’s memorial art gallery in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Jackson replied stiffly, “... I have not the slightest desire to be represented in your collection.”<sup>1</sup> Jackson was not yet finished. Believing strongly in the new modernist movement within the Canadian art scene, he saw works of the traditional school as unappealing, unsatisfying, and ultimately, underwhelming. Believing the paintings of the Nutana Collegiate Memorial Art Gallery to be a product of the latter school, he wrote, “It is uniformly dull and looks like a collection formed between 1900 and 1907 instead of the past seven stirring years in Canadian art.”<sup>2</sup>

Jackson and Cameron’s exchange reflects the contested nature of the Great War’s memory in Canada during the 1920s. This essay seeks to unpack and examine these competing strands of memory through an exploration of the meanings and memories in the Nutana Collegiate Memorial Art Gallery elicited in its various audiences. Opened in 1909, Nutana Collegiate was the first high school built in Saskatoon, and served as the city’s only secondary school until Bedford Road Collegiate was constructed in 1922. The idea of a memorial art gallery at Nutana Collegiate was conceived sometime after the conclusion of the Great War in November 1918, and the school’s announcement that it was acquiring paintings was made four months

later in March 1919. From its outset, Nutana planned to acquire twenty-nine paintings, with each serving as an individual memorial to each of the twenty-nine students of the collegiate who enlisted, fought and eventually died in the Great War. However, the meanings behind the Memorial Art Gallery would not remain unchanged. The memories the Gallery evoked were constantly evolving, shaped by the passage of time, a growing consciousness of a regional identity, and the varying audiences that interacted with them. This essay explores the history of the Gallery, including the motivations behind its establishment, the decisions its leaders made, and how the Gallery’s audiences perceived it. In exploring a memorial in a local community, this paper offers insight into the popular memory of the Great War in the 1920s, through a gallery that was initially a war memorial, but eventually evolved into a multi-faceted cultural object. It also reveals the competing strands of memory evident in this decade, and the tensions between what the organizers of the Gallery wanted it to represent, and what those who interacted with it saw of the paintings and the Gallery as a whole.

The cultural impact of the Great War remains contested. Some insist that the war marked a break with the past: the days of chivalry and heroism gave way to a more modern view, driven by memories of gruesome death and disillusionment. A new language recounting the horrors of the Great War resonated in the works of writers and poets such as Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owen and Robert Graves. This modernist interpretation of the war is often associated with the publication of Paul Fussell’s book in 1975, *The Great War and Modern Memory*.<sup>3</sup> It dominated historiographical discussions into the 1990s until such historians as Jay Winter in Britain and Jonathan Vance in Canada challenged Fussell’s conclusions. Both scholars insisted that western countries viewed the war in more traditional terms.<sup>4</sup> Arguing that those proponents of Fussell’s interpretation focussed too heavily on the prolific disillusionment writers, Winter and Vance instead looked at the “inept novelist, the bad versifier, and talentless essayist” in order to comprehend how the masses understood the conflict.<sup>5</sup> Because the war resulted in such upheaval, in such widespread death and destruction, Winter and Vance



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## Nutana Collegiate Memorial Art Gallery



Saskatoon Public Library, Local History Room, PH-96-31-2.

Saskatoon's Nutana Collegiate was known as the Saskatoon Collegiate Institute until 1923.

insisted, many people yearned for something familiar, and, as a result, embraced traditional forms of symbolism and images of religion, chivalry and honour.

Since the mid-1990s, the historiography has favoured the traditional school, seeing modern art and literature as having less of an impact on the general population.<sup>6</sup> Most recently, historian Steven Trout, addressing Winter's call to historians to understand the Great War not as a divide between tradition and modernity, but rather an ongoing dialogue, wrote a monograph on the American memory of the Great War. Trout finds the collective memory to be more complicated than a singular interpretation of the past.<sup>7</sup> In looking specifically at war memorials, he argues that the old found expression in the new, and the new borrowed much from the old. Trout sought out a fusion of both traditional and modern elements of memory.<sup>8</sup> In utilizing a unique set of both public and private sources, this essay calls for historians to understand the modernist and traditional interpretations of the war's memory not solely as opposing forces. Following Trout's lead, scholars should instead seek to understand that many sought meaning in both modernity and tradition.

### Origins

Canada, after four long years of battle, lost over 61,000 of its men, dead, while another 172,000 returned home with a war-related disability. An additional 15,000 were diagnosed with shell-shock.<sup>9</sup> For a Dominion with a population of only eight million people, such losses and injuries had a deep impact. With the decision that soldiers' bodies would not be repatriated home, families with lost loved ones had no place to mourn. As a result, communities across Canada began to erect memorials at a rapid rate, affording some consolation to families who were not given an opportunity to visit their loved ones' graves.<sup>10</sup>

The most common form of memorial was the municipal cenotaph. Many cities modelled their memorials after Sir Edwin Lutyen's cenotaph at White Hall in London, England, while others took a unique approach. According to Jonathan Vance, however, all communities had to

decide whether their local memorial would be aesthetic or utilitarian.<sup>11</sup> Those who supported the aesthetic model believed memorials should serve a singular purpose: memorializing the dead. On the other hand, proponents of the utilitarian vision simultaneously viewed memorials as a means of advancing their respective communities: the fallen soldiers would remain visible to the public eye in a forward-looking manner rather than solely as an aesthetic commemoration of the past.

At the beginning of March 1919, a debate ensued in the *Saskatoon Phoenix* newspaper about a suitable memorial to Saskatoon's soldiers, whose bodies lay overseas. On 4 March, editor Charles Smith wrote about the efforts across Canada to "commemorate the valor and achievements" of its soldiers. He urged that Saskatonians do the same: "Locally," the editorial read, "we should make sure that nothing nondescript, nothing commonplace shall be tagged 'memorial.'"<sup>12</sup> Smith preferred the utilitarian model, urging that Saskatoon erect a memorial hospital, which "would be instrumental in alleviating pain, healing the sick and restoring the maimed to their former place of independence and usefulness."<sup>13</sup> The following day, Dr. Ernest Myers, the "leading physician in the city," endorsed the idea, and by 11 March, the *Saskatoon Phoenix* had received praise from citizens around the city and outside. Such strong support from the Saskatoon citizenry was not surprising, as it reflected the "Saskatoon spirit" that had been observable in the city in the years leading up to the Great War.<sup>14</sup> This "spirit" represented the attitude of municipal boosters, who hoped to see the city progress into a western metropolis. A modern facility with X-rays, surgical wards and pathology units appealed to those who still thought Saskatoon was going to grow into one of the biggest cities in the country. Indeed, as Smith wrote in a 19 March editorial, "Saskatoon, an important and growing city in itself, the centre of a great country, must provide hospital room and equipment in keeping with its position."<sup>15</sup>

Not all believed a hospital was the right choice. On 22 March, the first substantive protest against erecting a memorial hospital was heard at the Great War Veterans Association (GWVA) meeting in Saskatoon. It would be disingenuous, declared the critics, for the city's war memorial to take the form of a hospital, for the city, in any case, desperately needed a new and improved medical facility.<sup>16</sup> Instead, the members of the GWVA suggested a civic centre or library as a more appropriate monument to the dead. On 27 March, James Alexander Aikin, an early Saskatoon business leader, voiced his disapproval of both the memorial hospital and the civic centre, believing "the social utility element might obtrude itself too prominently in both plans, a thing not to be desired."<sup>17</sup> Alternatively, he recommended a memorial library, with "Records as complete as possible ... on the war activities of Saskatoon men and women." The library board would also be responsible for "securing a strong representation of the best books on the Great War."<sup>18</sup>

## Nutana Collegiate Memorial Art Gallery

The debate that ensued in Saskatoon about a desirable war memorial reveals the tensions visible at the time between civic boosterism and memorialization. Saskatoon was growing steadily before the war, and there was a tendency amongst its business leaders to assume that 11 November 1918 would mark the return of prosperity. But the war and the sacrifices Canadians made in Europe lingered too large in the public's mind. Many, particularly veterans, felt strongly that a utilitarian, business-centric memorial structure was simply an inappropriate reminder of the men who would never return home. Whatever structure was built, it had to place the memory of the fallen soldiers first; any other benefits derived from such a memorial would have to be secondary.<sup>19</sup>

Amidst this debate, Saskatoon's Nutana Collegiate (called the Saskatoon Collegiate Institute until 1923) struck a compromise.<sup>20</sup> On 29 March 1919, Principal Alfred J. Pyke announced that the school had established a memorial art gallery, and was actively pursuing works of art by Canadian artists.<sup>21</sup> Of all the potential memorials, though, why a gallery of art? The answer is found in the success of the First World War Canadian War Memorials Fund's art collection. Conceived in 1916, the Fund commissioned over a hundred artists of different nationalities to paint nearly one thousand works of art by war's end. On 4 January 1919, an exhibition of the Fund's war art was showcased at Burlington House in London, which was widely publicized. In the same month, the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE) decided to sponsor a scheme that would bring eighteen prints of the Fund's war art to local schools around the country for display.<sup>22</sup> Many Saskatonians would have known of the Fund's work, as there was a local IODE chapter in Saskatoon, which would have participated in the art sponsorship. Saskatonians, as a result, certainly had been exposed to art as memorial at least a few months before Principal Pyke's announcement. Pyke was also involved in the local art scene, meaning he would have been more receptive to a memorial of paintings.<sup>23</sup>

Pyke and the gallery's organizers understood early that the Memorial Art Gallery would be simultaneously aesthetic and utilitarian. Pyke wrote in a letter to one of the earliest contributing artists, Frederic M. Bell-Smith,

When deciding on this form of memorial, the students were actuated by several motives among which might be mentioned, a desire to formulate interest in Art among the boys and girls, attending this school, to encourage, in a small way, our Canadian artists, by purchasing their pictures, and to provide a medium through which the spirit of the fallen boys might function in the building of our nation, by stimulating our boys and girls to a richer and deeper meaning of education and citizenship.<sup>24</sup>

Pyke's awareness that the First World War Canadian War Memorials Fund was a product of many nationalities,

not just Canadian, can explain his insistence on a strictly national gallery.<sup>25</sup> Nonetheless, from the outset, the Gallery held multiple meanings. It was not a cenotaph, nor a tower nor clock, representing a singular goal of memorialization. The lifeblood of this memorial, according to its organizers, was located not only in its remembrance, but in its promise of better education, stronger citizens, and therefore, a brighter future.

This language was common in the post-war period, particularly within the secondary school system. Modern high school was seen as an integral part of the post-war nation-building programme. The collegiate was a place to teach youth respectable values of the middle-class and prepare them for post-graduate life, so they could lead productive and meaningful lives when they arrived in the workforce.<sup>26</sup> The importance of instilling these values into the first generation to come of age after the Great War was even more essential given the heavy tolls Canada sustained from 1914 to 1918. After losing 61,000 men in the war, many Canadians felt the need to ensure these deaths were not without meaning.<sup>27</sup> According to a columnist in the 1920 student yearbook at Nutana Collegiate, "[The] students ... through these [secondary] institutions ... are capable of wrestling with the bigger tasks which they must meet. To such men and women the world will owe its future welfare."<sup>28</sup> So as not to relive the horrors of 1914 to 1918, each student, through the education system, had to be given the tools that he needed to "bring his influence to bear upon the course of world affairs."<sup>29</sup> Since, in 1919, it was the only secondary school in Saskatoon, Nutana Collegiate was the sole institution in the city in which to mold the minds of the young. It thus had an integral role to play in commemorating its war dead. The announcement of the Memorial Art Gallery was a signal that Nutana Collegiate was honouring its fallen men, while at the same time making sure that the post-war generation understood its forebears' sacrifices. In doing so, this generation would become a fundamental component of the nation-building years of post-1918.

### Fundraising and the Privilege of Place

Before the Collegiate began to acquire pieces of art, however, it needed money. Particularly in the early years of the gallery's acquisitions, the students shouldered the majority of the costs, while the School Board of Trustees subsidized the remainder. A joint stock company was created, with shares sold at fifty cents each. The student executive of the Literary Society directed the company, under the trusteeship of the Board of Trustees.<sup>30</sup> Students could buy shares, so that they and other contributors jointly owned the paintings themselves. According to Pyke, the hope was that such a company would be a "student enterprise," so as to create a sense of "student community."<sup>31</sup> In one sense, Pyke succeeded, for a community of four thousand students purchased stock in the company.<sup>32</sup> Although one must be careful not to conclude that these numbers represent student enthusiasm in the Gallery, there was a

culture of giving within the Nutana community during the immediate post-war period. Just as families were asked to sacrifice during the Great War, the same was asked of them in the interwar years when it came to honouring the dead. If a person declined, as local businessman and community leader John Cairns told the citizens of Saskatoon in a January 1919 speech, he or she might be accused of “sit[ting] tight with [his or her] hands folded ... wait[ing] for the good old times to come again.”<sup>33</sup> In a Collegiate newsletter circulated to Nutana students in May 1924, an editorial took a subtle jab at those who had not purchased a share in the company: It is “hardly possible to conceive of a pupil going through three to four years of collegiate life and not wishing to support this movement and be part owner of these pictures,” the author wrote.<sup>34</sup> This culture of giving was as much voluntary as it was coercive. Clearly, the language of patriotism so prevalent during the intra-war years had carried over into the interwar period.

All of the funds Nutana Collegiate raised were placed in the Memorial Art Gallery Fund. Two student groups became regular contributors to the Fund: the Pauline Club and the NNS Club. The former was a female operetta group, staging multiple shows annually in Saskatoon and contributing a percentage of their proceeds to the Fund. In 1919, it donated \$150, and another \$200 in 1924.<sup>35</sup> By the final year of art acquisitions, the Pauline Club was still contributing funds to the gallery.<sup>36</sup> The NNS Club—or *Non Nobis Solum*—was the second student-group donor. Formed in 1915, the NNS Club was a women’s group initially hoping to “serve the school and country” during wartime. Although it certainly raised less money than the Pauline Club, it too gave to the gallery: ten dollars’ worth of shares in the joint-stock company were purchased in 1919.<sup>37</sup> On Field Day in 1927, it donated the proceeds it made from serving tea and selling Nutana memorabilia to the public.<sup>38</sup> Aside from these two groups, both male and female students raised funds through babysitting, washing dishes and laundry, sawing wood and selling papers.<sup>39</sup>

As the paintings were acquired, piece by piece, year by year, they were hung in Nutana’s auditorium on the top floor of the school. Although there is no explicit indication as to why they were located where they were, the ‘place’ of the auditorium within modern Canadian high schools provides some answers. It was a gathering spot for the institution’s population, where its leaders would communicate to the student body, and instill in them school spirit and the respectable values of Euro-Canadian society.<sup>40</sup> When the paintings were situated in this daily gathering place for the student population to see, they became attached to the daily ritual of inculcating in the adolescent minds the values and norms of acceptable societal behaviour. Thus, the Gallery had an integral role to play in what Eric Hobsbawm terms the “invented tradition” of daily auditorium gatherings.<sup>41</sup> In locating the Gallery within the auditorium, the paintings became a small part of Canada’s nation-building exercise that was to prove the Great War was fought for something important.

Youth’s exposure to these paintings, however, was limited. Although historian Cynthia Comacchio concedes that the post-war years in Canada saw a rise in the number of working-class children attending secondary schools, those children of the managerial class remained a clear majority among high school attendees.<sup>42</sup> Further, given Nutana Collegiate’s status as the only high school in Saskatoon until 1922, it was considered, like many others across Canada, a place where the minds of the affluent were cultivated for a post-secondary education. In the case of Saskatoon, this education would eventually have taken place at the University of Saskatchewan.<sup>43</sup> The Nutana Collegiate Memorial Art Gallery, consequently, had a very strong class component attached to it. The community who mourned the deaths of the men commemorated by each of the Gallery’s paintings would have been of the middle- or upper-class. The indoor location of the memorial also meant that fewer members of the public would have seen, or been aware of, it. The Gallery held meaning to a selective and privileged community within Saskatoon—those of the affluent class with access to higher pay and education.

### Early Acquisitions and the 1923 Shift

Immediately after his announcement, Pyke contacted an old friend and amateur artist from London, Ontario, David Wilkie, who had taught life-drawing at the local technical school. He soon became Pyke’s art liaison and, in 1919, helped acquire the first six paintings of the Memorial Art Gallery’s collection.<sup>44</sup> Wilkie’s motivations in acquiring these pieces of art are unclear, although he wrote later to Pyke that the paintings were “of a style that any student [sic] would be safe in following.”<sup>45</sup> Being a teacher himself, Wilkie was speaking from an educator’s perspective. How these paintings were received at the Collegiate is more clear: in an art catalogue the Collegiate published, the paintings were described as “beautiful.” Five of the six paintings were of the landscape, showcasing the pristine and picturesque beauty of nature, which the committee of the catalogue made sure to emphasize.<sup>46</sup> William Greason’s *October* is a vibrant landscape of autumn in Ontario with the reds, yellows, oranges, greens and blues yet untouched by the brittle winds of winter. Even the sole winter landscape—Harry Britton’s *March Thaw in Ontario*—is unthreatening. The river is calm and the sunset can be seen on the tips of the tree branches. In these early acquisitions, nature is depicted as unthreatening, and therefore, conquerable. The paintings communicated a message of serenity and hope to its audiences, which is exactly what Nutana needed after losing twenty-nine men in the war.

A second quality in the early acquisitions of the Memorial Art Gallery’s paintings was an intentional avoidance of the grim realities of the war. While these paintings were to be hung in an art gallery dedicated to men who died in the war, they did not depict the loss of life. In avoiding the ghastly aspects of war, these paintings allowed viewers to reflect on the beauty of nature, rather than the horrors of modern warfare. As art historian Laura Brandon

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says, “War brought discomfort: the land, and its enduring stability, a kind of cultural comfort.”<sup>47</sup> The organizers of the Nutana Collegiate Memorial Art Gallery understood the ambivalence among Canadians towards attempts to depict the war in its true, brutal form, and instead sought works depicting the landscape.

Wilkie died suddenly in January 1920, leaving Principal Pyke to contact artists directly. It was the first step in the maturation process of acquiring art at Nutana. Between 1920 and 1922, Pyke wrote a formulaic letter to various painters, explaining the origins of the gallery, and asking that they “submit one of [their] best paintings” to the school.<sup>48</sup> The selection process was simple, as it was left to the artist: “... we prefer Canadian subjects for such a school collection, but this is not essential; our regulations merely require original paintings (oil or water) by Canadian artists,” wrote Pyke to a prospective contributing artist.<sup>49</sup> Once the painting—or paintings—had arrived at the Collegiate, a purchasing committee would decide if it—or which one—was appropriate for the Gallery.

Pyke was honest in admitting that the purchasing committee had little knowledge or appreciation of art. Corresponding with Ontario artist Thomas Mitchell in April 1920, the principal naïvely wrote that Nutana’s aim was to “hang good pictures.” He then asked Mitchell what the artist “consider[ed] appropriate paintings for such a collection.”<sup>50</sup> Mitchell responded, writing that the purchasing committee should seek to “acquir[e] significant works”: they should have “a real reason for having been done; and on the other hand avoid the merely superficially pretty.” In these early years of acquisitions, Pyke and the purchasing committee had little control over the shape of the gallery.

This would change in 1923. In one of his final acts as principal of Nutana Collegiate, before resigning and taking up a position in the Mathematics Department at the University of Saskatchewan, Pyke contacted E. Wyly Grier, an Ontarian artist, about an “excellent” and “unusually interesting picture.” He asked if the artist would be willing to paint a picture entitled *Spirit of Youth*—that of a young boy of the western prairies.<sup>51</sup> Grier was intrigued and wrote back: “I’m a bit of a boy myself; and, in my youth, played, to the detriment of my scholarship, every game I could get myself into. So you can imagine me as entering with zest into the working of ‘The Spirit of Youth’ as exhibited by a typical young Westerner.”<sup>52</sup> Pyke decided that Jack Cairns, son of previously-mentioned city leader John Cairns, would represent the “Spirit of Youth.” After Grier’s painting had arrived in Saskatoon in fall 1923, the idea arose to purchase a companion painting to *Spirit of Youth*. After a few months of deliberation, A. W. Cameron, the new Principal of Nutana Collegiate, contacted another Ontarian artist, Marion Long, in March 1924 and asked if she would accept a commission to paint a “companion picture of the same size as the *Spirit of Youth*, representing a typical Western Canadian Collegiate girl.”<sup>53</sup> She accepted the commission, and in fall 1924, Grier’s *Spirit of Youth* and



Saskatoon Public Library, Local History Room, CP-8182-18.

**“Spirit of Youth” by Sir Edmund Wyly Grier (1862–1957).**

Long’s *Pauline* were hanging side by side in the Collegiate auditorium.

These two acquisitions marked a substantive change in the Memorial Art Gallery, spurred onward by the expansion of arts and culture in Saskatoon in the early 1920s.<sup>54</sup> The Saskatchewan Music Festival was revived in the city in 1920, and a local theatre company formed two years later.<sup>55</sup> According to two local historians, however, the most important organization contributing to the local cultural scene at this time was the Saskatoon Arts and Crafts Society, established in 1921. It encouraged, created and showcased traditional crafts, which promoted the idea of an ‘ethnic mosaic’, which some believed to be the true image of Saskatchewan, and its place within Canada.<sup>56</sup> The rise of the local arts and culture scene in Saskatoon began to shift the gallery and the meanings attached to it. The Collegiate, first of all, began to take control of the direction of the Gallery. Beginning in 1923, artists were commissioned and specific paintings were pursued. No longer were artists asked what they thought were most suitable for the Gallery. The second significant change related to the Gallery’s purpose. In the first five years of acquisitions, it was essentially a memorial. In a 1924 catalogue of the gallery, photographs



Saskatoon Public Library, Local History Room, CP-8500-11.

### “Pauline” by Marion Long (1882–1970).

of the fallen soldiers of Nutana were published beside the paintings dedicated to each man. The photographs and accompanying biographies appeared first in the catalogue, followed by the paintings. Clearly, remembering the soldiers, as in the case of the catalogue, was the Gallery’s foremost purpose. Yet in commissioning Grier and Long to paint portraits of Saskatchewan adolescents, the organizers of the gallery recognized the art was slowly superseding the memorial aspect of the Gallery. In his letters to various artists, Cameron began to speak less of the fallen men, and more of expanding the Gallery.

The third and most significant change was a clear attempt to express both local and regional identities through art. In the case of the former, Cameron intended for Long’s and Grier’s paintings to capture the “three important phases” of Nutana’s school activities: academics, sports and what Cameron called “the aesthetic, the ethereal, the social and their love of beauty and purity,” evident in the young female students of the collegiate.<sup>57</sup> Grier’s painting captured the athletic side of Nutana’s student activities, with the young boy’s baseball bat and glove, and, as the 1924 catalogue said of Long’s painting, “the book suggests

study, while the face gives a sense of the mental alertness and the sweetness that belongs to young girls.”<sup>58</sup> These companion paintings also serve as examples of the “school spirit” that pervaded modern high school culture post-war.<sup>59</sup> Beneath the young boy’s tie in *Spirit* is the Nutana Collegiate Institute crest—another demand Cameron had of his artist. In May 1924, Cameron wrote to Grier, criticizing the “sombre” shade of the sky in the painting, and politely asked if he could return it for revisions. He also suggested that “a bit of [the crest] might be shown beneath his flowing tie.”<sup>60</sup> Grier conceded and eventually painted the crest onto the boy’s chest. The crest was symbolic because it identified the young boy as a student of Nutana Collegiate, effectively cementing him in a particular place in time. In regards to how the public responded to the two paintings, Cameron said, “It has captivated the hearts of the students here, not only because of its art but because of a strong personal appeal.”<sup>61</sup>

In expressing a regional identity, the two paintings depict representations of the Saskatchewan landscape. The “typical young Westerner” in Grier’s painting is playing baseball on a slightly rolling plain, with the clouded sky taking up nearly half of the portrait. With the long brownish-green grass brushing the young boy’s soles, this painting was not only intended as a representation of a typical western Canadian boy, but also of a typical western Canadian landscape. Marion Long’s *Pauline* too showed hints of a regional identity through landscape in her inclusion of poplar trees—a common sight along the riverbanks of the South Saskatchewan River. Situated behind the poplar trees is the river itself. As historian Mark Connelly said of collegiate war memorials, they became representations of the values the institutions hoped to communicate to, and embody in, its students. They also became places of pride.<sup>62</sup> Multiple expressions of identity embodied in the works of the Nutana Collegiate Memorial Art Gallery was how it, as an institution, communicated its values, and articulated its pride in sacrifice. Even more importantly, these expressions were marks of modernity, in that the Saskatoon citizenry began to self-identity through representations of the landscape.

These expressions of identity were also deeply embedded in racialized and gendered discourses at the time. The light-pigmented skin of a “typical” western Canadian boy and girl in both *Spirit of Youth* and *Pauline* show, as Jonathan Bordo does in his article on how representations of the wilderness in Laurentian school landscape paintings “erased” the human presence, that they were used to expunge any racial or ethnic diversity evident in Saskatchewan.<sup>63</sup> In painting the “typical,” both Grier and Long constructed an identity not only through representations of the landscape and Nutana’s school spirit, but also through racial exclusion. The presence of hats in both paintings—protecting the subjects’ ‘whiteness’ from the sun’s rays—further suggests the preservation of the light skin pigmentation, and thus the Anglo-Saxon race as ‘true’ representations of Saskatchewanian youths. Aside

from race, these two paintings attempted to reinforce conservative values concerning the place of male and female adolescents in Canadian society. The emphasis on the young boy's sportiness was an extension of modern high school's extracurricular activities, which were designed to instill Victorian values of manliness through work and play.<sup>64</sup> On the other hand, the depiction of the adolescent girl in *Pauline* as thin and delicate suggests a nurturing, maternal nature. The book she holds, as well as her expression, reveals also a reserved, yet studious young woman. Finally, Principal Cameron's asking to separate the activities of boys and girls in each painting shows that they were connected only by the school in which they attended. Their activities—as well as their uniforms—divided them by sex.

It must be acknowledged, though, that outsiders, rather than artists from Saskatchewan, were creating many of these local and regional images. Grier and Long were both Ontarians, as were the seventeen other artists who had sold paintings to the gallery since 1919. It would appear that Saskatonians had not yet determined, in artistic terms, how they saw their region, and how they wanted it seen by the rest of the country. For it would not be until the 1930s and even the 1940s before a homegrown art movement began to gain traction in the province, and communicate artistically an identity in Saskatchewan.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, by the 1920s, there were signs that Saskatoon's local art scene was beginning to grow. For the first time, in 1923, the Gallery's organizers made a concerted effort to purchase works from Saskatchewanian artists. In 1926, A. W. Cameron wrote about his desire to acquire one of Frederick Loveroff's paintings, "as he made his start in Art in Regina."<sup>66</sup> After Long's and Grier's paintings arrived at Nutana, six of the gallery's final ten paintings were acquired from artists who had lived in Saskatchewan. Of these six, Emile Walters' *Winter* and Augustus Kenderdine's *The Signal* captured the Saskatchewan landscape. The former was a winter scene near Wynyard, and the latter, a painting of a First Nations people releasing a signal fire along the banks of the North Saskatchewan River. These acquisitions suggest that the organizers of the Memorial Art Gallery were not only attempting to encourage Canadian artists, but also, and especially after 1923, to cultivate local artists' talents. After 1923, the Gallery became a space where Saskatchewanians expressed who they were (and who they were not), and how they saw themselves.

### Motivations, Meanings and the Tradition Versus Modernity Debate

In some ways, the contributing artists' motivations did not differ from those of the organizers of the Nutana Gallery. Many reduced the price of their paintings as a sign of respect for the fallen men of Nutana. Frederic Bell-Smith, William Greason, Andre Lapine, Charles W. Jefferys and Thomas Greene, all respected artists who appeared in the catalogue of the Ontario Society of Artists in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, accepted a reduced payment of fifty per cent for

their paintings.<sup>67</sup> Emile Walters also dropped his price in the name of memory. Walters was a young artist, just thirty-one when he made contact with Cameron and the Memorial Art Gallery. He asked that the two canvases he would eventually sell to the Collegiate be dedicated to the Lindal brothers—so that, in his words, "my work may be a contribution to the memorial for the boys."<sup>68</sup> The brothers were graduates of the Nutana Collegiate, and Walters had met them many years earlier when he had lived in Saskatoon. He "struck up a deep friendship with Jacob [Lindal] keeping in touch with him until he left for War." He asked that his *Saskatchewan Sunset* landscape painting be dedicated to Jacob because "it has some of the poetic feeling that was a part of [him]."<sup>69</sup> The purchasing committee rejected the painting, but they did approve a second one he submitted—*Apple Blossoms*—also dedicated to Jacob.

The students, too, understood the Gallery as a memorial to the fallen men of Nutana Collegiate. Lisa Panayotidis and Paul Stortz found in their study of university student yearbooks during the interwar period, that universities constrained students in what they chose to write about. Students commented, satirized and poked fun at each



Saskatoon Public Library, Local History Room, CP-8182-20.

"The Signal" by Augustus Frederick Lafosse Kenderdine (1870–1947).

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other, and even their professors, but they always did so within expected codes and structures of behaviour.<sup>70</sup> These codes were as restrictive in the case of the even younger students writing in Nutana's yearbooks under the watchful eye of their teachers. As a result, the language used in *The Collegiate Hermes* yearbooks to describe their perspectives on the Memorial Art Gallery were nearly identical to that of their parents and teachers.<sup>71</sup> There were a few cases, however, where students wrote of the Gallery in unique terms. One student wrote that "... nearly all of us, during a study period in the Auditorium, have turned from a tiresome problem in Geometry to admire the beauty of these pictures."<sup>72</sup> To this student, the Memorial Art Gallery served as a source of comfort. Yet, it is difficult to ascertain what the Gallery meant to the students of Nutana Collegiate. It is reasonable to suggest, nonetheless, that the students were, at least, aware of it, and understood its importance. For example, in the Christmas 1926 edition of the *Hermes*, Audrey Gallaway said about her "First Impressions of the N.C.I., ... that [t]he long corridors seemed unfriendly and the auditorium, in spite of its pictures, seemed a lonely place." At the end of her final year, she understood the paintings' importance: "The pictures in the auditorium are much more significant to us since we realize that they are our Memorial Art Gallery, reminding us of those who fell in the service of our country."<sup>73</sup>

The Nutana Collegiate Memorial Art Gallery completed its acquisitions in November 1927, when it received its final acquisition, Frederick Challener's *Off to Flanders' Fields*. It was a peculiar painting—the only one in the entire gallery to come remotely close to addressing issues related to the Great War itself. It depicted ships sailing Canadian troops overseas to England in preparation for training. Enough time had passed, and the wounds had healed just enough, to allow a faint echo of the war to resonate in the halls of the Collegiate. However, the painting did not depict soldiers fighting on the battlefields. The painful memory of how and where these boys had died was still too strong. The avoidance of the battlefields signified that the memory of the war the organizers attempted to convey in 1919 had remained largely unchanged. The Gallery was trying to communicate a positive, if not idyllic, memory of wartime to its audiences. It is clear that the now complete Gallery tried to evoke a memory of a time before the bitter conflict, so its audiences could forget what hurt them most—that their boys would not be coming home.

On 11 November 1927, Nutana Collegiate held a ceremony to mark the conclusion of acquiring art for the Gallery. University of Saskatchewan President Walter Murray was the keynote speaker. He declared:

Each age has left memorials of what they thought worthy of honour and reverence. The pyramids of Egypt, the temples of Greece, the Cathedrals of the Middle Ages, the music, literature and painting of the Moderns reveal and reflect the highest and best of the thoughts of their time. In the years to come

this age will be judged by the memorials which it has left of the services of its sons and daughters ... As this collection is added to and becomes not only a memorial of the past but a symbol of the nation's growth in appreciation of the Beautiful and the Good, its influence will ennoble and refine the lives of the young for generations.<sup>74</sup>

To those in attendance, the Nutana Collegiate Memorial Art Gallery was a monument to the school's war dead. Reta Willard, a journalist from Vancouver who heard of the gallery in late 1926, agreed. She wrote in a column about war memorials, "Some are very beautiful with their magnificent symbolic appeal, but always the coldness of stone or metal leaves only the grim feeling of a monument to death." The Gallery was different, as it evoked a memory of life.<sup>75</sup>

Although those who contributed to, and interacted with, the Gallery certainly viewed it as a war memorial, the contributing artists understood the paintings that hung in the Collegiate's auditorium were also works of art. Further, the 1920s saw tensions rise between the modernist and traditional interpretations of art in Canada. The differences between the two schools were articulated in a 1919 article A. Y. Jackson, the leader of the Group of Seven, wrote for the art magazine *The Lambs*. He found that the Great War had profoundly changed the art profession in Canada. "The four square and the cavalry mass," he wrote, "so effective in older battle paintings, was gone forever and the open concentration of a modern battle made another interpretation."<sup>76</sup> Artists were forced to find a new way to paint: many were now striving to "lift art above mere representation."<sup>77</sup> Yet, the pieces of art that would eventually fill the Memorial Art Gallery at Nutana were mostly examples of the traditional, representation-type paintings that Jackson viewed as outdated. At least a few of the contributing artists were aware of the Gallery's traditional makeup, and hoped it would offset any modernist tendencies in Canadian art, which they saw as alarming. Harry Britton wrote to Principal Pyke in July 1919, "It seems to me one of our chief duties to the Layman is that of bringing again to his notice the wonders in nature."<sup>78</sup> These wonders would not be expressed through modernist interpretations. Instead, they would be the peaceful, beautiful and very realistic renderings characteristic of the Edwardian artists.<sup>79</sup> After mailing his painting to Nutana, Britton provided a few other names that he thought "might be over looked in the rush of modernism."<sup>80</sup> In May 1920, Frederic Bell-Smith wrote of his painting *In Northern Waters*: "I ... hope that it may do some missionary work in helping the extreme modern tendency [of] some young painters."<sup>81</sup>

The composition of the Nutana Art Gallery actually became a reason for some artists to reject the offers of Cameron and the Collegiate to be represented. At some point in late 1924, Cameron attempted to procure *The Pointers* from the estate of the famous Canadian artist, Tom



Saskatoon Public Library, Local History Room, CP-8182-18.

“Off to Flanders” by Frederick Sproston Challener (1869–1959).

Thomson. He received a negative response from James MacCallum, an early patron of Thomson’s who would eventually administer the artist’s estate when he died under mysterious circumstances in 1917. MacCallum described the painting as being a “rather strong diet” for the Gallery. He maintained that Thomson’s colour and style would not fit the frame of Nutana’s current collection. He was certainly not wrong. The radical colour scheme was not like any painting that Nutana held at the time—save perhaps Thomas Mitchell’s *The End of the Portage*. *The Pointers* would have been an awkward addition to the gallery. Even more importantly though, MacCallum’s refusal to sell *The Pointers* demonstrates that the Gallery was more than just a memorial. It was a gallery of art, too, and some did not feel compelled by the spirit of patriotism to perpetuate the memory of fallen Canadian soldiers if the painting was not a proper fit.

Cameron received another negative response from the Group of Seven’s leader himself, A. Y. Jackson. In a rather harsh and scathing letter referred to at the beginning of this article, Jackson told Cameron in November 1926 that he was not interested in being represented in the Nutana Collegiate Memorial Art Gallery.<sup>82</sup> He then proceeded to criticize Cameron and the organizers for their selection of art, and wrote, “... as a memorial to men who fought and died you have a collection of pictures with no fight in them.”<sup>83</sup> Jackson’s opinions on the art scene had not changed since he wrote his article for *The Lamps* in 1919. Clearly, there was an artistic tug-of-war between the traditional and modernist artists during the 1920s playing out beneath the surface of the Nutana Collegiate Memorial Art Gallery.

The rising tensions between the two competing schools of art also reveal the contested terrain of how the memory of the war should be portrayed in Canada. Jackson and those of the modernist school were convinced that older art techniques could not adequately represent what post-1918 Canada felt in the wake of such profound loss. Modern art possessed the tools necessary to convey the horror and grief felt throughout Canada. However, as Vance has observed, Jackson’s interpretation was not popular. Many artists believed in the value of utilizing “nineteenth-century images to describe a twentieth-century war,” as did the general public.<sup>84</sup> Principal Cameron understood this reality, and thus replied to Jackson after receiving his letter: “Those we have chosen may not have any fight in them, but because they are not provocative they may well memorialize the dead.”<sup>85</sup> The organizers of the Nutana Memorial Art Gallery were beyond trying to capture the ‘spirit’ of the trenches, or of the mass grief that permeated Canadian society after the Armistice was declared. They instead chose something familiar—something subtle and uplifting for the masses.

Cameron was conflicted nonetheless. Because the Gallery’s emphasis on memorialization had shifted, after acquiring *Spirit of Youth* and *Pauline* in 1923 and 1924, respectively, to one more focussed on art, Cameron saw the traditional composition of the Gallery as unrepresentative of western Canada’s progress. To Jackson he wrote:

[The Gallery’s paintings] are not only expensive but they do not breathe the spirit of the prairie, which is not two-faced like Janus, but looks always

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in one direction, viz., toward the future ... The West is not only progressive but it is aggressive, not hide-bound because of traditions but adventurous and visionary, as witness its United farmer movements, its grain pools, its Union of Churches, its community enterprises.

Cameron hoped that after acquiring the twenty-nine paintings for the memorial aspect of the Gallery, the collection would be extended to include a modern art section.<sup>86</sup> The paintings in the Memorial Art Gallery sufficed as a monument to the dead, but, to Cameron at least, they did not represent the 'true' spirit of the western prairies. Cameron was looking to the city's future. A modern installment would demonstrate the forward-looking nature of the west. Saskatchewan was not a backwater, constantly playing catch-up to eastern Canada; it was a unique place with its own individual interests that looked to its own future. Cameron ended his letter to Jackson with a quote from Proverbs: "Where there is no vision, the people perish."<sup>87</sup> What lay at the heart of Cameron's vision was what Saskatchewan always wanted to be: an equal player on the national scene, and viewed as such by eastern Canadians.

Outsiders tended to agree with Cameron's assessment. *Saturday Night* magazine published a brief article in August 1926 about the Memorial Art Gallery. In it, the Gallery was praised for its "truly representational" portrayal of "many phases of the Canadian scene, both Western and Eastern." The columnist also made sure to mention the progression of the city up to that time from "open prairie" in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Gallery was a reflection of that progress.<sup>88</sup> Frank Yeigh, the editor of the Toronto *Globe* newspaper, in a similar tone, wrote of the Gallery as an example of the "new ideas and methods" filtering out of western Canada.<sup>89</sup> Just prior to Canada's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary in July 1927, Yeigh wrote of it as an example of the "steady growth of the Prairie Provinces." Yeigh had divided the same column into sections with headings, one of which was titled: "War Memorials." Interestingly, the Nutana Collegiate Memorial Art Gallery was not listed in this section, but rather in the "Educational Progress" one.<sup>90</sup>

By July 1930, one columnist in the *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix* demonstrated that at least someone aside from A. W. Cameron in Saskatoon viewed the Gallery as more than just a memorial. The Gallery's paintings were on display at the 1930 Saskatoon exhibition. They were described as a "fine assemblage of pictures in a variety of styles, mostly

modern in spirit."<sup>91</sup> These comments stand in sharp contrast to those of the leader of the Group of Seven, who saw the Gallery as outdated. According to those who did not have a background in Canadian art or its history, the Memorial Art Gallery was an example of Saskatoon's progression into modernity.

### Conclusion

The Nutana Collegiate Memorial Art Gallery held various meanings as it evolved. In the early years of art acquisitions between 1919 and 1923, the organizers of the Gallery viewed it as a memorial. The beauty and the peaceful nature of the paintings was evident, which would have appealed to many people who were still nursing fresh wounds from the memories of war. By 1924, however, Principal Cameron and the organizers began to shift the Gallery away from a message of remembrance—emphasizing, instead, the importance of the art itself. In regard to Grier's *Spirit of Youth* and Long's *Pauline*, these acquisitions represented both a local collegiate identity at Nutana and a regional consciousness through depictions of the western landscape that were inclusive only of the affluent and educated Euro-Canadian community in Saskatoon. When Cameron eventually contacted A. Y. Jackson in late 1926, the latter effectively dismissed the Gallery as traditional and outdated. By this point, the Gallery had become a contested space of traditional and modern interpretations of art in Canada, as well as a struggle between regional representation and Eastern Canadian elitism—the latter expressed chiefly through the works of the Group of Seven.

Student opinions of the Gallery are difficult to determine, as they often echoed the opinions of their teachers and parents. The students were nonetheless aware of the gallery's presence, and understood its importance. For the general public, the Nutana Memorial Art Gallery held many meanings. On 11 November 1927, it was a memorial to the crowds that attended the ceremony to mark the completion of its acquisitions. Alternative views of the Gallery came from Eastern Canada, and later, even among some Saskatonians, viewing it as representative of western Canada's progress into modernity since Confederation.

Memorials hold a multiplicity of meanings to their audiences. Scholars, in the future, should approach the memory of the Great War with race, ethnicity, class, gender and age in mind, as these identities impact how a person or a community remembers an event. They should also learn from American historian Steven Trout and do away with the traditional versus modernist dichotomy. To some, the Memorial Art Gallery represented an all-too-traditional means of remembering the war and its victims. To others, it was an indication of the west's progress, with Saskatoon leading the way. In looking at differing identities and discarding the binary of tradition/modernity, historians can provide more nuanced assessments of the past, and discover new understandings of the Great War's memory in Canada. ∞

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# Conscientious Objection in Manitoba during the First World War

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When Prime Minister Robert Borden announced Canada's entry into the First World War, he did so in the language of unity and responsibility. On 18 August, he told a cheering House of Commons: "As to our duty, we are all agreed, we stand shoulder to shoulder with Britain and the other British Dominions in this quarrel."<sup>1</sup> While there were fractures, most notably between French- and English-speaking Canadians, the language of the war continued to emphasize the duty of Canada to Britain and to the abstract ideals the empire was meant to represent. For men, fulfilling this duty generally meant becoming a soldier. Conscription was enacted in 1917 in an effort to bring those who would not volunteer into an appropriate expression of the duties of masculine citizenship. Compulsory military service was, then, both the acme of this desire for unity of behaviour and an articulation of understandings of the gendered responsibilities of citizenship.

It is useful to look at those who rejected conscription based upon a different conception of their individual responsibilities. Men who claimed exemption from combatant military service on conscientious grounds asserted the precedence of other obligations—religious or ethical—that prevented them from killing or, sometimes, joining the army at all. Public reactions to conscientious objectors, whose beliefs and behaviour put them outside the norms of wartime society, offer insight into how Manitobans during the First World War saw minority rights, religious freedom, and the responsibilities of citizenship and masculine behaviour.

Conscription was not a novelty in Canada, although the Great War was the first large-scale use of it, and the first time Canadians were drafted for overseas service. There had been various militia acts since the time of New France, but when the war broke Canadians had almost no experience with military conscription. The volunteer militia had not been called out since the Northwest Rebellion of 1885, and the contingents sent to the South African War had been made up of volunteers. Along with this lack of direct experience, there was also a sense that conscription was just somehow not really our way. Compelling people to fight was "un-British" and many Canadians were very confident about the efficacy of the voluntary system. Volunteerism was an important part of many people's sense of Canada's national identity.<sup>2</sup>

As well, the war was popular. Canadians volunteered in a rush when it began, many worried about missing out

on their generation's great opportunity for heroism and adventure. Prime Minister Robert Borden promised that there would be no conscription. But, as casualties mounted, enlistment dried up, and the murmurs of discontent about the perception that some people and groups were sacrificing much more than others grew louder, drafting men began to seem like a real possibility.

Duty was an important element of the discourse of Edwardian Canadian society, especially during the First World War. As well, the demands it asked of the homefront seemed easier to bear if they were fairly distributed. There were different interpretations of how to make the losses of the war more democratic—some Manitobans argued for what they called a conscription of wealth rather than, or at least before, the conscription of men's bodies, seeing the upper classes as not doing their fair share.<sup>3</sup> The focus was, however, on drafting men to fight. Military necessity was part of the argument, but the focus tended to be on a more equitable homefront. Drafting men also accorded well with contemporary ideas about eugenics. Chief Justice T. G. Mathers of Manitoba described voluntary service as "iniquitous" because it distributed the burden of sacrifice unequally and drained the country of "its best blood."<sup>4</sup> Conscription seemed to be the answer.

The Borden administration introduced it under the 1917 Military Service Act. This included various grounds for exemption from conscription; provision was made for ill health, holding a job that was essential to the prosecution of the war, or if enlisting would cause serious financial hardship to one's dependants. The last grounds for exemption was that a conscript conscientiously objects to the undertaking of combatant service and is prohibited from so doing by the tenets and articles of faith, in effect at the date of the passing of this act, of any organized religious denomination existing and well recognized in Canada, at such date, and to which he in good faith belongs.<sup>5</sup>



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This basis for exemption was included partly in a spirit of liberal individuality. All of the Allied countries that enacted conscription legislation included a clause providing for exemption on conscientious grounds. But Canada's clause was very specific. Exemption was provided only to members of specific religious denominations.

Part of the reason for this distinction was to avoid the perceived complications raised by Britain's more liberal exemption clause.<sup>6</sup> Also, the government had an obligation not only to the successful prosecution of the war, but also to respect the promises made to what are called the "historic peace churches" in Canada. These are the Mennonites, Church of the Brethren (also called Tunkers or Dunkards), Hutterites, Doukhobors, and the Society of Friends or Quakers. Many of these people had emigrated to the country based on promises that they would not be asked for military service.<sup>7</sup> In Manitoba, Mennonites were the most numerous of these groups, and their presence, and government intentions and public attitudes towards them, shaped the experience of conscientious objection in that province.

But members of these groups were not the only ones who felt that their attitudes towards war placed them in the category of conscientious objectors. Members of smaller denominations, like the International Bible Students (today called Jehovah's Witnesses), Plymouth Brethren, and Christadelphians also objected, as did some members of the mainstream Protestant and Catholic churches. Members of all of these groups had a more difficult time, generally, than did members of the historic peace churches.

Not that all conscientious objectors (COs) did not face impediments. Advocates of conscription promoted, among other things, its democratizing benefits. The broad association of conscription with equality and democracy placed conscientious objectors in a most unfavourable light. The draft promised a parity of sacrifice, and a recognition of group goals that many Canadians hoped would continue after the war. Objectors had chosen to differentiate themselves from that picture of unity, and retain allegiance to different, individual goals. It left them open to charges of selfishness, along with the more predictable allegations of cowardice.

The widespread presentation of the war as being fought to preserve peace and Christian values also increased the difficulty of maintaining an ethical objection to military service. Nellie McClung wrote: "Then I said that we were waging war on the very Prince of Darkness ... I knew that no man could die better than in defending civilization from this ghastly thing which threatened her."<sup>8</sup> Such arguments seemed to take the ground from beneath the conscientious objectors' feet. In these terms, military service was the ultimate expression of Christian sacrifice. It was incomprehensible to stand aside from a holy war for reasons of conscience. The real motivation must then be something else: cowardice, selfishness, too much civilization or not enough, pro-German beliefs, and a lack of manliness all seemed likely culprits. Several newspapers

across the province reprinted the caustic and unattributed "Conscientious Objector's Creed."

I believe in peace and in the determined obliteration of all feelings of wrath and indignation for crimes against humanity and civilization. I believe in a supine endurance of all insults, and in a cringing compliance with the forces of bestiality, destruction and lust. I believe in opening our gates to madmen and leaving our homes defenceless. I believe that if a war is to be fought, it should be fought by someone else. I believe in milk and water, in namby-pambyism and flapdoodle, in gush and bunkum, in veiled eyes and soft hands, in mealy mouths and fat stomachs, in the encouragement of cowardice, and in slavery everlasting, for the forgiveness of everything rotten, Kaiser's sake, Amen.<sup>9</sup>

In this atmosphere, when COs were disenfranchised under the Wartime Elections Act in 1917, it generated little protest. The Wartime Elections Act is well known for extending the vote to Canadian women who were mothers, wives, sisters, or daughters of servicemen. This is the first time women were permitted to vote in federal elections. But the Wartime Elections Act also, less famously, took away the vote from some people. Naturalized Canadians born in enemy countries who had settled in Canada after 1902 lost their right to vote, and conscientious objectors were also disenfranchised.

The reason for this seems to be partly connected to the idea that voting was a prerogative of citizenship, and that citizenship was connected to the ability to defend the state in time of war. Women who were closely related to soldiers were given the right to vote ostensibly based upon their apparent stake in the military defence of the country. They were also, critics charged, extended the franchise because they were deemed more likely to vote for the Conservatives' Union Government, supporting conscription as a means of supporting their menfolk overseas. There was wide support for the disenfranchisement of COs.

Men who will not fight for their country do not deserve to hold a stake in the country. It is to the credit of Premier Borden that he has pronounced himself in favour of conscription. Our best and bravest cannot be allowed to make the supreme sacrifice in order to preserve this land for the children of slackers and for those whose attachment to England and Canada is only in name.<sup>10</sup>

Voting was the prerogative of adult male citizenship. Removal of the franchise then was not just a punishment for the objectors' dissenting behaviour, but also a slur on their manhood. That the Wartime Elections Act enfranchised female relatives of soldiers made patent the sense that war service was the basis of citizenship, and conscientious objectors were beyond the pale.

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The equation of soldiering with masculinity and refusal with a fearfulness born of effeminacy, while perhaps not surprising, was also not a foregone conclusion. Expressions of manliness in the not-so-distant Victorian past had generally shared an emphasis on intellectual as well as physical independence and strength. As well, mainstream Protestant culture had a tradition of respect for pious resistance.<sup>11</sup> This emphasis altered toward the end of the Victorian era, with the growth of a “cult of manliness.” Jonathan Rutherford, in his study of race, masculinity, and empire in England, attributes it to prevalent ideas about the superiority of the British race. “The rising popularity of imperialism and the influence of social Darwinism cultivated manliness no longer dependent upon soul-searching, but upon subordination to the national ideal and an enthusiasm for being ‘normal.’”<sup>12</sup> The ramifications of this new understanding of masculinity were, quite arguably, among the root causes for the nature of the abuse that public opinion visited upon the conscientious objectors.

This new “cult of masculinity”, with its emphasis on “being normal”, was promoted from boyhood. The healthiness of public school life, with its values of submission, conformity, and loyalty, was, for example, expressed in such popular books as *Tom Brown’s School Days*. The lifestyle promoted anti-individualistic values that were carried into adult life. Rutherford quotes Henry Newbolt on the virtues of physical education: “Its great merit was that it made men, and not sneaks or bookworms, and its direct objects were character and efficiency.” The intellectualism and self-sufficiency valued in earlier Victorian ideals were markedly curtailed. The emphasis was now on action and being a team player.

Coupled with the conformity that wartime tends to produce, this meant that the pacifist objectors were sometimes seen as closer to the hated “militaristic” Germans than to their own compatriots.

It seems to me that the conscientious objectors are suffering from the same mental malady that afflicts the Germans. In one case the patients think so highly of their spiritual and mental attainments that they want to force their habit of thought and style of living on the whole world. In the other case the patients consider themselves to be so much finer in sensibility and truer to their ideals than their brothers that they can indulge themselves in those same feelings at the expense of these same brothers who are thinking more of the good of others than of themselves.<sup>13</sup>

The writer was appalled by the “stupendous egotism” of both the Germans and the conscientious objectors. Such irritation at the COs’ perceived sense of moral superiority was commonly voiced. Their seemingly wilful separation from the activities of the rest of the country implied a certain smugness that the public was determined to quell.

The terms with which they were disparaged also relate to fears about masculinity in an urbanizing society. Theodore Roosevelt, whose pro-war speeches were widely reprinted in Manitoba newspapers, derided conscientious objectors as effete. “The parlour pacifists, the white-handed or sissy type of pacifist, represents decadence, represents the rotting out of the virile virtue among people who typify the unlovely senile side of civilization.”<sup>14</sup> Part of the reason for the popularity of the First World War at its outbreak was a sense of such conflict as invigorating, a healthy respite from the enervation and feminization of an increasingly urban, industrial society. An appropriate manly response to the war, then, was enthusiastic enlistment, not just on patriotic grounds, but because of an instinctive eagerness for the benefits of what Roosevelt called “the strenuous life.” The apparent absence of such an instinct among pacifists was evidence of their decadence and lack of manliness.

If they were sometimes castigated as over-civilized, they were also, and conversely, derided for being backwards. This stereotype took aim at members of the peace churches and other small denominations that tended to separate themselves from mainstream society. In *The Conscientious Objector*, Walter Guest Kellogg published his assessments about men imprisoned for conscientious objection in the United States. The typical Mennonite objector was, to him, of singular appearance. “His hair and beard are unkempt... His trousers open only at the side and do not button, but hook together. He wears no jewelry of any kind. He shuffles awkwardly into the room – he seems only half awake. His features are heavy, dull, almost bovine.”<sup>15</sup> The Mennonites were portrayed as almost bestially boorish in appearance, manners, and intelligence.

Reaction to the claims of exemption of other small pacifist groups draws similarly on their physical difference from the rest of society. “As a matter of fact most of them are ignorant and unhealthy minded and no more represent the normal population than do the giants, dwarfs and fat women, who can be seen in a hundred country fairs. The production of ‘conscientious objectors’ seems to be a necessary evil arising from freedom of thought and action, but these people represent the chaff in the winnowing process.”<sup>16</sup> This image of the obtuse religious objector, whose refusal was apparently based on ignorance and isolation from everything healthy in mainstream society, became an important aspect of reactions to COs in Manitoba.

While the Military Service Act had been put in place in 1917, no efforts were made to enforce it until after the election of the Union government at the end of that year. By the time the new parliament met on 18 March 1918, machinery for the enforcement of the MSA had been set up, under the control of the Department of Justice. To judge the validity of an individual’s grounds for exemption from military service, 1395 local tribunals were set up throughout the country. A man unhappy with the decision of his local

tribunal had recourse to one of 195 one-man appeal courts throughout the country. The final step was the Central Appeal Court, where the merits of the case were decided by Justice Lyman P. Duff of the Supreme Court of Canada. If the military authorities were unhappy with a tribunal's decision, they could appeal it to the higher courts as well.

An impression of the elements of a typical tribunal, and of attitudes towards those who claimed conscientious objection, can be gleaned from an account in the *Brandon Daily Sun*. The article noted that the tribunal had fifty-two cases to deal with that day, a demanding schedule which would have left little room for thoughtful deliberation, or tolerance for less than concise claims. After brief mention of some medical exemptions, it discussed the case of Oliver Fish. Fish claimed exemption from military service not only based on his religious proscriptions against killing, but also by arguing, as did some other objectors, that his denomination believed it wrong to "seek comradeship in armies where the great bulk of the men are unsaved, 'Even if one had never to fire a shot, the association is contrary to the word of God.'" The tribunal deemed such scriptural authority "insufficient," and made a statement about the judge's own beliefs on the matter.

In commenting the Tribunal said these people are not actuated by conscience at all, but are slackers pure and simple. It isn't that they conscientiously refuse to take the life of another man but object to being shot at. These men should be made to serve in some position where the danger is to their own lives and not to the life of another. If this is conscience, then virtue is a vice. We have another name for it. What they call conscience, we call cowardice. Exemption disallowed.<sup>17</sup>

In such a rushed and antagonistic atmosphere, people often unaccustomed to articulating their private beliefs faced tremendous difficulty. In response to the need to prove something so intangible as conscience, the only sure means seemed to be to test it. The *Manitoba Free Press* worried that what the objectors thought was their conscience, was really fear. "How can they be sure they believe in non-resistance when there are so many brave men between them and danger?"<sup>18</sup> Theodore Roosevelt often spoke of his solution. After calling conscientious objectors "the paid or unpaid agents of the German government" in a speech, he said that "If a man does not wish to take life, but does wish to serve his country, let him serve on board a mine-sweeper or in some other position where the danger is to his own life and not to the life of anyone else."<sup>19</sup>

The Canadian authorities acted less dramatically, although according to a similar sense that pacifism was best met with punishment and coercion. Those who did not receive exemption from their tribunal were deemed to have enlisted, and, upon their refusal to obey military orders, were subjected to a somewhat haphazard series of military arrests, court martials, and detentions. After some

highly publicized mistreatment of COs in Winnipeg, many, though not all, were transferred to civilian prisons.

If generally typical in its attitudes towards these young men, Manitoba's experience with conscientious objection during the First World War also included some more extreme episodes that drew national attention. The most widely reported case of the mistreatment of conscientious objectors involved two clerks from Winnipeg, both International Bible Students: thirty-two-year old Robert Litler Clegg, and twenty-three-year old Ralph Naish, and a Pentecostal, Charles Matheson. The men suffered abuse at Minto Street Barracks in Winnipeg. For not obeying an order, they were held several times under an ice cold shower until they either accepted military discipline or collapsed. Matheson broke down and agreed to obey orders. Later, testifying before a court of inquiry, he described the experience.

[The water] was very cold, and as I stood under it, it got colder, till it became icy cold. My whole body began to heave... when I would stand with my back to it, he [Provost Sergeant Simpson] would make me turn around and face it, and make me turn my face up to it. I was shading my face with my hand ... he made me take my hand down... I was beginning to get dazed, and I was tumbling around... He asked me, 'Will you give in now?' I said no. He put me in again... This went on three or four times... He said 'we will either break you or break your heart' ... I was put into my undershirt and things, and I was dragged away.<sup>20</sup>

According to his affidavit published in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, Clegg's shower apparently lasted for about fifteen minutes, until he fell unconscious and had to be hospitalized. He charged that he was stripped of his clothes and "subjected to a violent treatment of ice-cold water." He was then subjected to another cold shower treatment.

I was in a semi-conscious state during the greater period of the second treatment, and when taken out, I was seated upon a cold stone slab, which caused me to lose control of myself and become absolutely incapable of any control of my limbs or muscles... while still wet and in a condition of complete nervous prostration, and helplessness, I was dressed... dragged on the concrete floor upstairs, through the drill hall, to the place of detention... Subsequently, while unconscious, I was removed to St. Boniface Hospital.

The soldiers of the barracks were quoted as being "highly incensed over such cruel treatment and have questioned if even Germany can beat it... We, as men, regret there are those so debased who would tolerate such treatment on human beings when it would be unlawful to mete out such treatment even to a dog." The commander of the depot battalion, Lt.-Col. Osler, countered that the matter had been

“very much exaggerated.” Another officer compared the incident to “schoolboy pranks” or “ragging.”<sup>21</sup>

F. J. Dixon, one of the few voices of anti-war protest in Canadian politics, brought the incident up in the Manitoba legislature. Fred Dixon was a key voice for labour in provincial politics who had been elected as an “Independent Progressive” MLA in 1914, and would go on to play an important role in the Winnipeg General Strike and the founding of the Independent Labour Party.<sup>22</sup> After the incident at Minto Street Barracks he argued that the Minister of Militia and Defence, Major-General S. C. Mewburn, ought to issue a general order about the treatment of conscientious objectors. Dixon wrote, “The day of torture should be past. If there is no other way of dealing with these men, it would be more humane to shoot them at once than to submit them to torture which endangers their reason.”<sup>23</sup> The *Manitoba Free Press* published an editorial entitled “Stop It!” cautioning Canada to avoid the “serious mistakes” in Britain’s “physical coercion” of its conscientious objectors. The editor refused to believe the response of the officers about schoolboy pranks: “It is idle to pretend that, in cases like this, the hazing is the result of spontaneous indignation by the companions of the recalcitrant; these things happen because someone in authority is desirous that they shall happen.”<sup>24</sup>

A district court martial was ordered to investigate Sergeant G. J. Simpson for his part in the hazing, and he was acquitted. Despite some efforts, civil charges were never laid. The court of inquiry took no action regarding the treatment of conscientious objectors beyond ordering that in the future objectors who refused military orders were to be sent to civil prisons. Major-General Mewburn supported his subordinates at Minto Barracks, and concluded that the affair had been blown out of proportion. Clegg, Naish, and another Bible Student, Frank Wainwright, who continued to refuse to obey orders, were convicted by district courts martial, sentenced to two years at Stony Mountain penitentiary, but then shipped to England.

Some conscientious objectors were sent overseas because disobeying an order at the front, which was deemed to include England, was grounds for being shot. Being sent overseas then was intended to scare them into giving up their objection.<sup>25</sup> Adherents of small religious denominations like the International Bible Students tended to be subjected to harsher treatment than did members of the historic peace churches or individuals from mainstream churches who disagreed with their churches’ teachings. This seems to be based on a more suspicious attitude about their stance, and a sense of their lesser respectability more generally.<sup>26</sup>

The case of David Wells also drew wide attention. Wells was a twenty-four-year-old Pentecostal who worked as a teamster. He had refused to report when called up for service, and been charged with desertion. His two-year sentence was intended as something of a deterrent for others considering the same course of action. When asked to plead, Wells responded “I plead guilty before man, but

not before God.”<sup>27</sup> While his rather cocky absolutism earned him a brief newspaper mention, he drew wide notice when he died in Selkirk Asylum a month later. The *Manitoba Free Press* summarized: “Wells became a raving lunatic four days after being taken to the penitentiary on January 24. On February 11 he was removed to the Selkirk asylum, and died on February 18.”<sup>28</sup>

There was a great deal of publicity, and a great deal of argument over who was to blame. Members of the Pentecostal mission to which Wells belonged claimed that they had been denied admission when trying to visit him at Stony Mountain prison, and that he had entered it a healthy man. The Justice Department reported that Wells was a manic-depressive who had been overcome by shame. Interestingly, members of his church seem to have blamed his death on intolerable social pressure more than any sort of ill-treatment in prison. The *Manitoba Free Press* spoke to his pastor:

Rev. Mr. Sweet stated that the death certificate, when he saw it, hinted that probably Wells was wrong mentally for some time. This, according to Mr. Sweet, is not borne out by facts. “What is the use of a government doing men to death in this fashion?” he said. “He was sentenced by a judge who knew absolutely nothing about his private life and who was influenced by what he was told by other people.”<sup>29</sup>

The reference to his private life apparently refers to the fact that Wells was evidently financially supporting his mother in England, and that he had two brothers in the British army and a father who had served a long career in the navy. It is instructive to compare this situation to that of the objectors in the Minto Barracks case: Charles Matheson’s mother made a statement to the *Manitoba Free Press* supporting his position:

I would much rather have my boy put up against that wall and shot than he have to go and fight. He is standing up for his Lord and he will keep on doing so. These boys have suffered for their Lord and will still suffer and then they will not fight.<sup>30</sup>

Matheson had support at home for his absolutist stance; Wells did not. It is impossible to know his mental state when entering prison; the speed of his decline is certainly shocking whatever his mental health. But his stance was a very lonely and unpopular one, and it seems that the confidence with which he faced his tribunal could not be sustained. Where Wells’ physical and psychological isolation from his family was apparently mitigated by the support of his church, guilt and worry over his mother’s support probably added to the strain. One conscientious objector in Britain described the pressure and isolation he and his fellow pacifists faced.

No normal person likes the prospect of being sentenced to death, but the prospect caused

infinitely less anxiety and mental anguish to the C.O.s than the fact that they found themselves up against the war-fever – not only of their countrymen at large, but of their neighbours and even some members of their own families.

The lack of an organization along the lines of the British “No Conscription Fellowship” meant that COs in Canada, unless they had some church support, were isolated from each other as well.

If their community support helped to shield Manitoban Mennonites from some of this at the time, the protection was only partial and, if many members of the government and public had their way, temporary. Many people called for an end to their separate communities where they spoke the language of the enemy and had their own schools. The great good of the war, as it was going on, was generally seen to be the unity it brought to Canadian society. This perception sharpened criticism of anyone who refused to be fully drawn in and increased calls to educate non-resistant groups in the values of Canadian citizenship.<sup>31</sup>

The antipathy became very loud towards the end of the war when a group of American Mennonites, buoyed by the clearer status of non-resistant groups in Canada, made plans to migrate north. The possibility met with a storm of negative public opinion. The *Manitoba Free Press* reported,

Groups of Mennonites or members of a sect closely resembling them, in any event slackers or people who profess a religion that prevents them from taking on their fair share of the responsibilities of Government, are reported to be trooping over the border into Canada and are settling in the Prairie Provinces.

The writer of this letter to the editor, albeit unenthusiastically, saw the need to live up to Canada’s “contract” with Mennonites who had arrived before the war, but not with these newcomers:

[P]eople of peculiar religions, living in colonies and clinging to an alien tongue and to racial habits are from every point of view – except that of production, perhaps – undesirable settlers... The country wants citizens in the full meaning of the word, and not a lot of slackers who are fully prepared to pile up wealth at some one else’s expense, but to whom the obligations of government mean nothing.<sup>32</sup>

Not bearing its share of the military burden, this “alien” group was easily assumed to be becoming wealthy in a time of stringency.

Unless something is done to stop these people from coming in... they are going to be a grave menace to the south country, and at the same time steps must be taken to bar them from their customary habit of forming self-centered communities, with little or no connection with the outside world, for while

they persist in so living they will not make good Canadian citizens... It is self-evident that “white folks,” be they Scotch, Irish, English, American, or just plain Canadian, do not want to reside in the neighborhood of a colony which speaks the enemy language, adopts the costumes and customs of enemy countries, and professes itself free from military or other duties of State that have to be recognized and obeyed by Canadian citizens.<sup>33</sup>

When it was customary to see the war as something that was bringing disparate elements of the country together, the persistence of a group living separately and clinging to a “peculiar” religion was an annoyance. Worse still was their German background and refusal to fight. Antagonism in contemporary newspapers to their conscientious-objector status is very often paired with irritation at the separatism of the historic peace churches. Non-resistance, in this view, is merely further evidence of not being sufficiently Canadianized.<sup>34</sup>

In formulating its policy towards conscientious objection, the Borden administration had to balance its promises to certain religious groups, the tradition of liberal individualism inherited from Britain, and its need to continue to provide troops for the war in Europe. Canadians as individuals also had to balance the competing claims of their various responsibilities. Even when the national obligation to participation in the war in Europe was apparently agreed upon, that the overwhelming majority of conscripted Canadians requested exemption for some reason or another, shows that COs were not alone in their sense of the precedence of other duties.<sup>35</sup>

A group of men unwilling to take human life, and largely shaped by ideas of deference to authority, constituted a singular faction for the government and wider Canadian society to deal with when they refused to participate in what was widely agreed upon as a national crusade. That they received abuse beyond the degree of threat their numbers or level of organization could be argued to warrant seems to be at least partly attributable to the distance their response put them from the norms of masculine behaviour of the time. By failing to go along with their fellows, the conscientious objectors were not just being cowardly or lazy, but were privileging an individual, contemplative response over one of group loyalty and action. This, and the encouragement of conformity that wartime promotes, amplified the Canadian public’s suspicion of those determined to assert an individual voice, the stubborn conscientious objector among them. ❧

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# Manitoba Mennonites and the State: Wartime Measures and the Influenza Pandemic in Hanover

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On 16 October 1918, the *Steinbach Post* published two public health notices concerning the prevention and management of influenza, almost simultaneously with the appearance of the first cases of the disease in the Rural Municipality of Hanover (hereafter Hanover) in what was known as the East Reserve in Manitoba.<sup>1</sup> These notices were a part of a very select number of advertisements and advice columns provided through the *Post* concerning ways to cope with influenza. Appearing just prior to the end of a four-year long conflict overseas which Mennonites opposed, the appearance of influenza in the community was dealt with in the midst of a wave of anti-German sentiment from the state. As a group whose ethos of faith revolved around pacifism and the maintenance of German language, Mennonites were a potential threat to the Canadian war effort. Continued anti-German sentiment alienated Mennonites and further reinforced the perceived need for a separate and cohesive community enclave as a way to stave off intrusion of ‘outside’ world.<sup>2</sup> Of concern were such regulations governing conscription and the censorship of German language publications. The lengthy German language publication ban exposes just one of the longer-term consequences of wartime measures on health. Government press censorship, conflict over education and schooling, the appointment of health officers and bans on meetings and church services all created tension, and arguably contributed to the distinctly higher mortality rate amongst the Mennonites of Hanover.

## Calculating Mortality

By the time of the influenza pandemic, other immigrant groups had settled in the municipality of Hanover. Thus, it is possible to compare Mennonite deaths resulting from influenza to those of non-Mennonites in Hanover. Figure 1 illustrates the absolute number of influenza deaths amongst

Mennonites and non-Mennonites.<sup>3</sup> In Hanover, there was a total of 42 cases of influenza or influenza-related deaths recorded from October 1918 to April 1919 amongst Mennonites.

The global tendency for influenza to disproportionately affect the young adult population, the very young, and the elderly was observed in Hanover.<sup>4</sup> When examining the number of deaths amongst Mennonites based on age and sex, young adults were most affected by the epidemic and young men were more vulnerable to the disease than young women and constituted a lesser number of deaths outside of the young adult (13–30) range.

In Hanover, non-Mennonite deaths related to influenza numbered only six while there were 42 flu-related deaths among Mennonites. The mortality rate from influenza was 13.5 per 1,000 for Mennonites in Hanover.<sup>5</sup> This rate was more than double the Canadian national average of 6.1 per 1,000.<sup>6</sup> In comparison, the mortality rate from influenza for the non-Mennonite population of Hanover was 8.6 per 1,000. Mennonites were more likely to succumb to influenza in 1918–1919.<sup>7</sup> Without accurate morbidity statistics, it is impossible to determine whether Mennonites contracted the flu more than the rest of the population, or whether they were more prone to dying from the disease, while non-Mennonites recovered more easily.

Further, these mortality statistics do not include deaths that were an indirect cause of influenza. Howard Phillips has recently argued that influenza mortality should not include only those who died of influenza but also of its longer-term effects.<sup>8</sup>

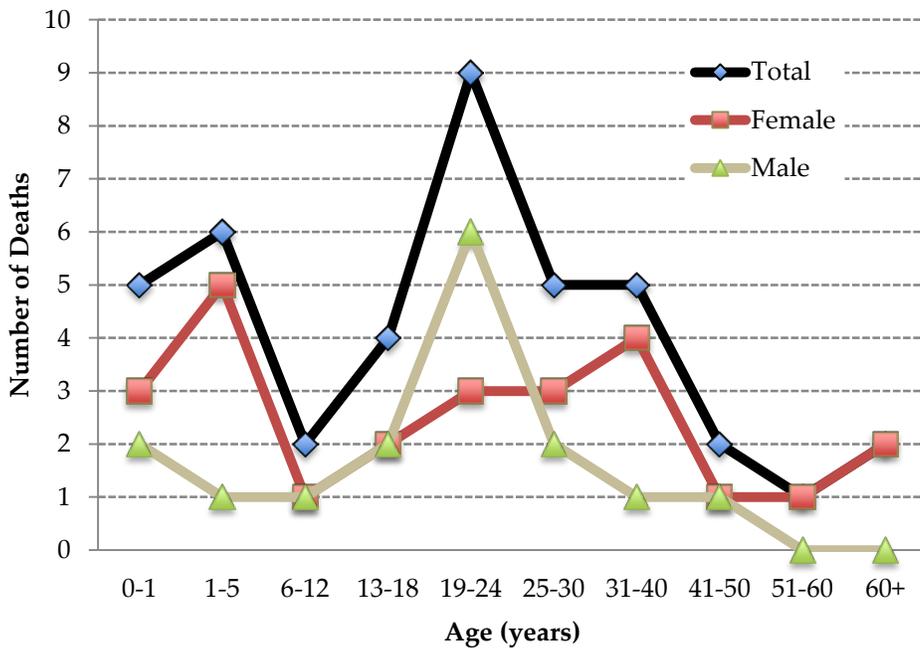
The deaths of infants and potential mothers do not make it onto the death certificates. A number of stillborn babies and infants dying of general debility were recorded for the years of the pandemic.<sup>9</sup> Were these deaths related to the flu pandemic and mothers not being able to carry their children to term due to having the disease?

Accepting the above conceptual complexities, I argue that high death rates from influenza amongst Mennonites stemmed from a mixed acceptance of public health regulations, and inadequate deployment of health care services and health information. Government policies, both federal and provincial, including conscription, the issue of German language in private and public schools and, issues of wartime censorship undermined the relationship between Mennonites and the state. This affected how they



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## Manitoba Mennonites and the State



**Figure 1. Influenza Deaths in Hanover, Manitoba.** Number of influenza deaths amongst Mennonites and non-Mennonites in Hanover, Manitoba, from August 1918 until the end of April 1919.

responded to the epidemic and their attitudes towards state intervention in matters of health.

### Wartime Regulations and Health

First, federal military conscription undermined relationships between Mennonites and the state, which in turn affected the way that Mennonites responded to state-imposed measures concerning the epidemic. By the fall of 1918, the war was coming to an end; however, over the previous months, there had been an increase in war production and in military recruiting. On the home front, Canadian families had suffered the loss of brothers, fathers, and husbands overseas and young women working as nurses. When Britain declared itself at war, Canada—as a part of the British Empire—was also at war. This was the newly formed Canadian Expeditionary Force’s first major foray into war. As propaganda supporting voluntary service increased, the war effort affected all sectors of society. Factories needed labour to continue war production and farms demanded attention for agricultural production.<sup>10</sup> On the home front, wartime mobilization and the loss of male members of the labour force to overseas combat opened up debates about women’s right to vote, and women’s work outside the home. Volunteer nursing organizations recruited many young nurses to care for the wounded.<sup>11</sup> However, by 1916, it was clear that voluntary enlistment was not working as the number of recruits decreased. Prime Minister Borden saw no alternative other than conscription.<sup>12</sup> Upon his return from a trip to Britain, where he met with the British prime minister, Borden decided that conscription was necessary as more men were needed for the military. His administration drew up the *Military Service*

*Bill*, which called for conscription, and debate ensued over the clauses of exemptions to military service. The Bill passed on 11 June 1917 and on 29 August 1917, the *Military Service Act* was signed into law. The act meant that all British subjects between the ages of twenty and forty-five could be called upon to serve in the military. The *Military Service Act* was not enforced until Borden formed a coalition government and won the election in the fall of 1917.<sup>13</sup> Concern over conscription was felt throughout the country. While some Canadians were strong proponents of conscription, especially those with ties to the British Empire, other groups, including pacifists, farmers, French-Canadians, and a number of religious denominations (including Mennonites) opposed conscription.

Conscription followed upon the Manitoba school issue of 1916, which had made Mennonites unsure of their

place within the Canadian population.<sup>14</sup> The provincial policy affected multiple groups as it made English the only language of instruction in schools rather than having bilingual public schools. As a response to this, and also to changes in the curriculum of district schools, compulsory school attendance for the pupils, and the lack of Mennonite religious authority within the schools, some Mennonites reverted back to private schools.<sup>15</sup> Mennonites felt provincial policies on language and education threatened their rights under the *Privilegium* and, most important, undermined their religious practices as the German language had become so central to their faith.<sup>16</sup>

Thus, through the war years, Mennonites increasingly worried that the government would void certain aspects of the 1873 *Privilegium*, which clearly stated “an entire exemption from military service, as is provided by law and order-in-council, will be granted to the denomination of Christians called Mennonites.”<sup>17</sup> Thus, the *Privilegium* gave Mennonites the assurance that they would be exempted from military service. In the early years of the war, some Mennonite groups, notably the *Kleine Gemeinde*, began raising funds for the Red Cross through their private schools. The funds were to be used by the government specifically for relief work and not to support the war.<sup>18</sup> Fundraising was a way of thanking the government for its continued adherence to the military clause of the *Privilegium*.<sup>19</sup> Problems between the Mennonite communities and the government arose, however, when the *War Measures Act* (1914) was used in 1916 to dedicate a week in January to register and account for the potential manpower of the country.<sup>20</sup> The fact that registration cards were to be filled out by all males from ages 16 to 65

under the *War Measures Act* worried Mennonites. Some Mennonites refused to fill out the cards although direct disobedience to the state made many uncomfortable.<sup>21</sup> Doctrines of obedience to the state date far back into Mennonite history whereby, according to Amy Shaw, “the state was instituted by God in response to human sin in order to punish the evil and protect the good.”<sup>22</sup> Mennonites usually respected government authority even when there could be disagreement over policies.<sup>23</sup>

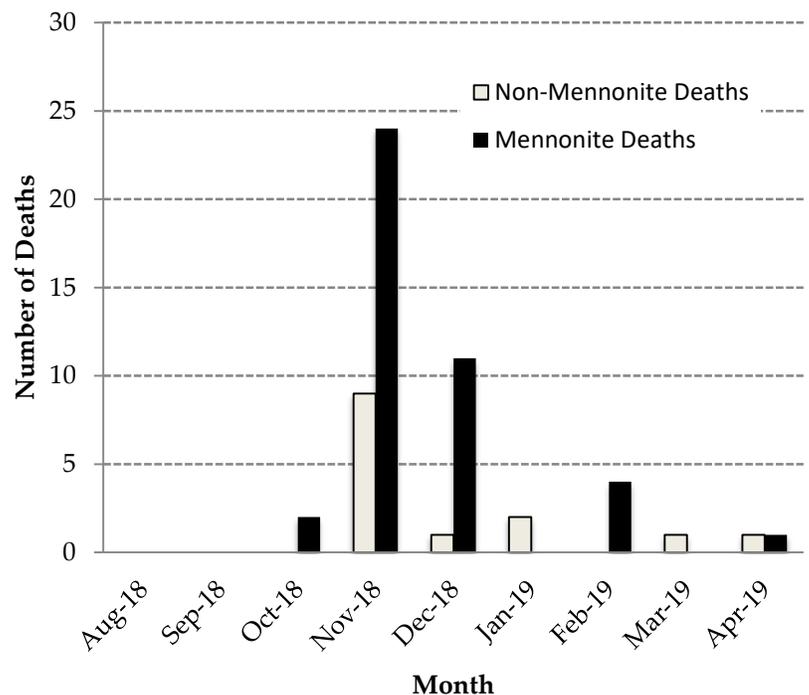
In order to deal with the registration issue, Mennonites were informed that their previous agreement would be honoured and they would be exempt from military service, although they would have to fill out the registration cards, write “Mennonite” on them and have them approved by a respected member of the Church, notably the pastor.<sup>24</sup> While this was a compromise, federal actions created tensions between the Mennonites and the government and created uncertainty regarding their continued rights. At the same time, military exemption from conscription fostered resentment amongst the general population: why were these German-speakers exempted from military service while those in Quebec and other parts of Canada were required to abide by the laws of conscription? Although some Mennonites felt compelled to enlist voluntarily, those few Mennonites also risked losing their Church membership by doing so.<sup>25</sup> Letters were sent to the federal government in order to assure the government of the cooperation of the Mennonites and their loyalty to Canada.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, by the end of the First World War, the conscription crisis had undermined Mennonite trust in the Canadian state.

Second, the ongoing war against a German enemy created hostility towards Mennonites throughout the country. Fears of the presence of German sympathizers, especially in cases of those communicating in enemy languages, played a major role in the tensions between government and Mennonites. In order to better control and be able to prevent correspondence that actively discouraged military support or was viewed as pro-German, the Chief Press Censor, Lieutenant-Colonel Ernest J. Chambers, solidified the censorship powers of the government by consolidating various orders-in-council from the beginning of the war in 1917.<sup>27</sup> Chambers was appointed Chief Press Censor in 1915 when the Chief Censor’s Office was created through an Order-in-Council because the government needed a better way of preventing the press from leaking sensitive information during the war.<sup>28</sup> With the approval of the Secretary of State, Chambers went beyond the *War Measures Act* in dealing with publications and implemented numerous Orders-in-Council that restricted the press. Chambers had the authority to prohibit the publication of any sources that criticized military

efforts or policies and thus stir disaffection, or hinder the eventual success of the war.<sup>29</sup>

Wartime censorship severely impacted Mennonites, further undermining relations with the state, as well as hampering the ability of public health officials to communicate with a German-speaking immigrant group. Publications in German outside Canada, including those from Mennonite locales in the United States such as the paper of the General Conference Mennonite Church of North America, *Der Christliche Bundesbote*, faced restrictions and import bans. The paper was published in Indiana and could no longer be imported into Canada through the postal service. Anyone owning a copy of the paper could be severely fined.<sup>30</sup> The main opposition to this paper was that it was published in German and so, in order to pass censorship, the Canadian issues were published in English under the title of *The Mennonite*.<sup>31</sup>

Censorship was a problem for Canadian Mennonite papers as well. The participation of Mennonite congregations in the Victory Bond drive was a central concern to the censors.<sup>32</sup> As the Victory Bond campaign funds were to be used specifically to support the war, Mennonites felt uneasy as this potentially countermanded their affirmation of pacifism. Some of the Bergthaler Mennonites in Manitoba were especially uncertain: they felt that it was necessary for them to support the government financially but asked that their contributions, left at the individual’s discretion, be used solely for foodstuffs.<sup>33</sup> Other congregations refused to participate in the campaign and, as an alternative, gave donations to the Red Cross to be used specifically for relief purposes. When Jacob Friesen, editor of the *Steinbach Post*,



**Figure 2. Influenza Deaths by Age Amongst Mennonites in Hanover, MB.** Mennonite influenza deaths by sex and age in the Rural Municipality of Hanover from August 1918 until the end of April 1919.

refused to place a paid advertisement for Victory Bonds in the paper, he was confronted by the Chief Press Censor to explain his position.<sup>34</sup> Eventually this matter was allowed to pass; however, by September 1918, the *Post* was facing the Press Censor again, given that it continued to forgo any mention of the war and continued publication in German.<sup>35</sup> Canadian ethnic papers, a few weeks prior to the end of hostilities, faced severe censorship regulations. Under pressure from the Great War Veterans' Association, the federal government allowed the Press Censor to prevent the publication of papers in enemy languages including German, Bulgarian, Ukrainian, Hungarian, Turkish, Finnish, Ruthenian, Estonian, Croatian, and Livonian as well as banning these languages at public meetings. By April 1919, only those newspapers in the principal enemy languages, including German, continued to face bans on publications unless for solely religious, literary, or legal material.<sup>36</sup>

The *Post* was left with two options in October 1918 – either face suspension of the paper outright or attempt to pass through the censors by switching its language of publication to English. Although, according to Ens, the *Post* was considered one of the least offensive and dangerous enemy language papers, it faced serious criticism, partly due to previous issues brought to the attention of the press censor including the lack of Victory Bond advertisements in the paper.<sup>37</sup> Although the censorship law came into effect on 1 October 1918, barring publication of the paper in German, the *Post* published its next two issues in German before switching to English on 16 October 1918. It included in the next issues announcements and advertisements for the purchase of the Victory Loan campaign.<sup>38</sup> The paid advertisements for the loan campaign in the *Post* specifically targeted the Mennonite population, playing on the number of privileges obtained by these German speakers in Canada. One advertisement read: “Canada expects every Citizen of German birth or descent to help maintain the freedom he has found in Canada, by buying Victory Bonds,” asking Mennonites, other German speakers and their descendants to buy these bonds to support the war.<sup>39</sup> The publication of these advertisements and further articles referring to the war reveal that the editor of the *Post*, rather than suspend publication, accepted the regulations placed upon him in order to be able to keep informing at least some of the members of the community of local news.

Changing the language of a community paper to English, which could only be read or written by about one-third of the population, limited journalistic content and letters to the Editor. Friesen never gave a direct reason for the change to English though he appealed to his readers to rally together to maintain a community:

Our readers will likely be surprised to see that their paper comes in the English language now without any explanations of the Editor. We trust our readers will stay with us although some will have a hard time reading the paper for two reasons

first because they are not used to reading English and second on account of the poor English the Editor is able to produce, for this last cause the Editor asks his readers to excuse him, as he also has had practically no education in this language, but always tried very hard to master it. We ask our readers to study hard and make as good as they can, and keep on reading our paper, and so help us and themselves at the same time.<sup>40</sup>

Although this statement by Friesen shows both some resentment and resignation towards the censorship and government, they also indicate that Friesen, at least, believed that some level of English was needed to be understood by the members of the community. By standing and rallying together, the *Post* continued its publication; however, its readership was somewhat diminished. Correspondence in the *Post* also decreased as the editor had to translate some of the letters coming to the paper into English as best he could.<sup>41</sup> Some readers tried to continue to provide content for the *Post* and encouraged others to do the same. Abraham Friesen emphasized the difficulty and the value that the *Post* has when the community wrote about the issues. In a long letter to the Editor and readers, he wrote:

It must be a hard task for the dear Editor to fill his or rather our paper without any support from us readers. It also loses of its value without any news from the different readers, therefore dear reader, we better pick up and push to keep it rolling over the tide, which I believe must be at the highest point pretty soon, oh, I wish the Post would appear in its own language again.<sup>42</sup>

Others also supported the *Post* and encouraged continued correspondence as much as possible. One contributor from Roland, Manitoba, explained that “I though it better to have a few lines appear in the *Post* from this district, to help out the publisher and our local paper, for I still find it of great value.”<sup>43</sup> Since the *Post* now had to be in English, it affected the diffusion of public health information when the flu epidemic began. Some readers and authors tried to continue writing despite this difficulty with the English language. One “Tante” Schmidt explained that “as I do not intend to for the sake of the editor, and cannot write English myself, so will try a borrowed hand.”<sup>44</sup> Only a third of the readers were able to understand the public health announcements. Although Mennonites felt compelled to follow government regulations as they had for the registration cards, some hesitancy to accept ‘English’ methods was felt, including in the area of health care.<sup>45</sup>

### Influenza

The existing provisions of *The Public Health Act* ensured that Mennonites had to follow state imposed management systems for the epidemic. On 11 October 1918, at a meeting of the Provincial Board of Health, a decision was made

that influenza be considered as epidemic within Winnipeg and surrounding areas. The Board gave health officers the authority to close schools and public meeting areas, including some stores. The Board directed local health officers to take measures as soon as influenza was found within the community, and to limit public gatherings not deemed essential.<sup>46</sup> These were similar to flu control measures in various regions across the country, which included bans on public gatherings, such as church services, funeral services in some cases, school closures, and the closing of theatres and cinemas. Quarantine was tried in some locales though it was not very effective. Wearing of masks was strongly encouraged and regulated in some cities. Incoming trains, passengers, and their luggage were fumigated.<sup>47</sup>

Closure of schools, churches, and meeting places remained at the discretion of the municipality's health officers. The closure in Hanover of some stores at an earlier than accustomed hour, was influenced by the decision in Winnipeg to do the same.<sup>48</sup> As far as can be discerned, in Hanover public health measures were followed when the order was issued directly by a government official. However, the role of Health Officer changed hands multiple times over the course of the epidemic in Hanover. The position was not always held by a licensed physician, which contributed to the difficulty of enforcing any long-term ban on meetings and the closure of schools.<sup>49</sup>

The epidemic began in earnest in early November with a number of community members being placed on the sick list. The sick list was kept by the Health Officer who was responsible for reporting all cases and suspected cases of influenza in order to try and control the spread of the disease.<sup>50</sup> In the worst weeks of the epidemic for Hanover, namely the month of November, numerous cases of the flu were reported and yet there were no central resources for helping the ill. No dedicated hospital existed within the community. Dr. Hans Herschman from Steinbach, who had medical training, had been Health Officer until his resignation in June 1918.<sup>51</sup> Hanover therefore had no official Health Officer until the epidemic began, at which point it appointed one, as was required by the Provincial Board of Health.<sup>52</sup> The Municipality of Hanover appointed Dr. Belanger, a physician from the neighbouring village of Ste. Anne, to become the Health Officer for the municipality in November through to the end of December.<sup>53</sup> It is unclear from the records whether or not Dr. Belanger remained the Health Officer until the end of December but at a meeting of the Municipality's Council in December, John D. Goossen was appointed Health Officer for the remainder of the year and into the month of January.<sup>54</sup>

While Dr. Belanger was appointed Health Officer for a part of the epidemic, there was no licensed doctor practising exclusively within the Hanover district at the time of the epidemic. The Health Officer appointed in the fall of 1918, John D. Goossen, was not a licensed medical practitioner but instead was a member of the Hanover Municipal council. As the Secretary Treasurer for Hanover,

he was already responsible for filing and completing all vital statistics forms including certificates of death.<sup>55</sup> Goossen was also a real estate manager. He appears to have fallen into the role of Health Officer when one was needed. No provincial regulation existed that stated that a Health Officer needed to be a medical practitioner. While Goossen filled out many of the death certificates, he was not named Health Officer until a Council Meeting in early December although he was paid retroactively from July until December 1918.<sup>56</sup>

The appointment of Health Officers during the epidemic by municipalities was a means by which the Provincial Board of Health maintained some control and monitored the situation. In Hanover, however, the situation was very unstable. Untangling lines of authority is yet further complicated by the fact that Dr. Belanger may not have been acting as Health Officer for the entirety of his appointment, as a Dr. S. Kraminsky was appointed as Health Officer for a period of ten days from 14 November to 30 November. Kraminsky occupied the role of Health Officer for a very brief period of time and there is scant evidence has been found to understand his brief tenure. He also received a salary of ten dollars a day—a high salary given that the salary for most other Health Officers in 1918 and 1919 varied between five and ten dollars a month, except for Dr. Belanger who was paid on a case by case basis.<sup>57</sup> Dr. Kraminsky was responsible for the health of the region of Hanover during the height of the epidemic. Unlike other Health Officers, Kraminsky charged patients additional fees when completing his duties as Health Officer. This prompted the municipality to later reimburse all the patients by deducting the fees charged to patients by Kraminsky from the salary he received from the Municipality, as it was the municipality's duty to pay for a Health Officer.<sup>58</sup> Perhaps this 'double dipping' or double-billing had something to do with the municipality's decision to replace him.

The epidemic placed stress on a very limited health system, which had only begun to organize itself with health officers in the years prior to the epidemic. High turnover in the position of health officer prevented a consistent public health response. An examination of the notice of deaths that were to be filed with the Province of Manitoba, points to the lack of physicians. Out of all influenza deaths of Mennonite members, of which there were 42 from September 1918 to May 1919, only ten of those who died listed a family physician. Another six who died of other causes had a family physician listed. The physicians listed were from the neighbouring villages of Ste. Anne and Lorette. One physician, who resided in Hanover, was only listed as the family physician on the certificates during his brief time as health officer.<sup>59</sup> Even with a family physician listed, the physician would not often have been at the house at the time of death, as the certificates do not list that the physician attended the death.

The epidemic left health officers overworked and days would go by between the date of death stated by the family

or person reporting the death and the investigation of the cause of death by the health officer or Secretary-Treasurer of the municipality. In many cases, two or three days passed between the date of death and when the death certificate was completed.<sup>60</sup> This discrepancy in dates could be accounted for by the possible closure of public offices on certain days, but does not explain all delays in investigating a death. In some cases, the health officer and his medical training, would be the determining factor in the prompt completion and filing of a notice of death. For example, John D. Goossen was responsible for investigating the deaths, the investigation would often take place the next day, especially when the death occurred in the afternoon. However, when a physician investigated the death, it would often be done that same day or the next day. When only one Health officer was available, the certificates would be often be signed the next day as reporting and investigating the death meant that the health officer had to travel to the homes of the deceased.<sup>61</sup>

A lack of English language skills could be a problem for those diagnosing causes of deaths including influenza on death certificates, but the nature of the disease itself further complicated matters. Of those who died of influenza, the majority died from pneumonia or another respiratory complication arising from it. In some cases, victims of tuberculosis were further weakened by the influenza virus and died. The first recorded death from influenza occurred 4 November 1918 and yet the virus had reached Winnipeg, some sixty kilometers away, at the end of September. It is plausible that no flu deaths occurred until November as very little local news reports of ill community members appeared in the paper until the end of October. However, some earlier deaths, which had been attributed to "Inflammation of the Lungs" and lasted only three days before death, may have been caused by flu, as a list of those who died of the flu published in the *Post* suggests.<sup>62</sup>

On 8 November 1918, a young male died of what was diagnosed as "inflammation of the lungs (flu)." That same day, a woman in her thirties also died.<sup>63</sup> Her death was the first to be recorded as "Spanish Influenza" with no contributory cause listed.<sup>64</sup> It is unclear whether or not this woman suffered from any other disease prior to having contracted influenza. Other causes of death were listed without the presence of influenza and related to respiratory complications. These causes included lobar pneumonia, consumption of lungs, bronchopneumonia, bronchitis, and tuberculosis.<sup>65</sup> Tuberculosis was present in the Hanover prior to the flu pandemic and though all of the above mentioned causes of death are infections of the respiratory system, it is unclear to what extent patients who were diagnosed with consumption and/or tuberculosis were affected by influenza. Influenza presented itself with various symptoms and when unsure of the cause of death, influenza and bronchopneumonia usually appeared together on the death certificate.

According to public health notices printed in the *Post*, most important for both prevention and management of

the disease was to remain isolated and to keep away from crowds.<sup>66</sup> The various means of prevention advertised included avoiding people who suffered from cold symptoms such as fevers and coughs; maintain a steady room temperature between 65 and 72 degrees Fahrenheit, eating a simple nourishing diet and avoiding alcohol. While the last was not all that difficult for most Mennonites who did not drink, one point involved avoiding any visits to those afflicted or ill.<sup>67</sup> Public health officials and physicians prescribed measures to help the ailing and relieve symptoms of the flu. Given the limits of medical knowledge and treatment options, it is perhaps not surprising that these measures were similar to Mennonite home remedies for flu. During the early onset of the disease, bed rest and keeping a steady and dry room temperature were some of the most important measures advocated by public health officials.<sup>68</sup> Among Mennonites, methods for relieving symptoms ranged from prayer, using quinine, and even the newly available pain reliever aspirin.<sup>69</sup>

Within two weeks of the first reports of influenza in Winnipeg, the Board of Health issued a notice that restricted public meetings as well as the operating hours of stores at the discretion of local health officers. A few days later, the earlier closing time was extended to surrounding areas, including Hanover.<sup>70</sup> Storeowners closed their stores by seven each evening in order to prevent the gathering of too many people. The decision to close the stores was not welcomed by all owners.<sup>71</sup> The Reimer and Loewen stores published rather resentful notices in the *Post* informing readers of the change in operating hours and commenting "we are compelled, for certain reasons to close our Store at 7 o'clock at night after October 15<sup>th</sup>, 1918."<sup>72</sup> By the end of the war on 11 November 1918, the stores were still maintaining reduced hours, with some stores closing at six each evening.<sup>73</sup> The stores maintained reduced hours until December. Local advertisements insisted by early December that soon businesses would be open for their regular hours. In the 11 December 1918 *Steinbach Post*, J. R. Friesen's advertisement specifically referenced the flu, stating "now that the 'FLU' epidemic is over, we are again in position to repair your cars and do the welding for you" while K. Reimer Sons Ltd. insisted that all was "business as usual."<sup>74</sup>

The ban on public meetings in Winnipeg lasted seven weeks and was lifted on 27 November 1918.<sup>75</sup> It was expected that the ban would be lifted in surrounding areas as well in the coming days and weeks. Church services also suffered disruptions during the epidemic. For a brief period of time starting on 17 November 1918 and continuing for two weeks, church services were cancelled in the municipality. Meetings of the Brotherhood of the Bergthaler Church appeared to be suspended during the outbreak of influenza. The final meeting of the Brotherhood prior to the outbreak of influenza occurred in October 1918 and no meeting took place again until June 1919.<sup>76</sup> However, Brotherhood meetings of other churches, namely the *Kleine Gemeinde*, occurred periodically throughout the epidemic.<sup>77</sup>

School closures were also implemented in Hanover. In 1890, thirty-six schools were in operation in Hanover and a similar number were in operation in 1918. The school in Steinbach, the Kornelsen School, was closed due to the epidemic but only because the space was needed to treat victims of influenza whose families were too ill to care for them. Other schools were also closed during the epidemic. It was not only the Mennonite schools that were closed; half-yearly attendance records for fall 1918 demonstrate that most schools in the area were closed throughout all of November and were open for just a few days to a week in December. All schools within Hanover that can be found in the registers, including the schools in Hochstadt, Blumenhoff, and Steinbach, were reopened by January as the epidemic presented fewer new cases.<sup>78</sup> In this regard, Mennonites followed the law.

Since there was no hospital in Hanover in 1918, in November, at the height of the epidemic, Aganetha “Agnes” Fast, a local woman from Steinbach who had been studying nursing in Minnesota, was placed in charge of the makeshift hospital in Steinbach. Agnes Fast, known locally as the “Florence Nightingale of Steinbach” rose to prominence in the community for her role in caring for patients.<sup>79</sup> She, along with other young women from the Hanover region helped with all general nursing tasks at the makeshift hospital. While the district school was not the ideal location for a hospital, as it was not built with medical treatment in mind, it did allow for a more centralized system of care. The schoolhouse, a two-room building, enabled a better orientation for the organization of beds as in a hospital ward. The first floor encompassed all the beds for the sick, the basement was used as a kitchen and the steam heating system allowed for better ventilation than would have been possible in most homes. Managers for the hospital, chosen amongst the Hanover population in mid-November included Mr. C.P. Toews, Mr. P.H. Funk, and Mr. H. W. Reimer Jr.<sup>80</sup> They ensured that the makeshift hospital ran smoothly and that patients continued to have the necessary equipment and care.

Entire families were hospitalized to obtain better care when all were afflicted. Although no record to indicating when the hospital opened precisely, it was open in early November and served this purpose for a very limited time. Talks of moving the few remaining patients began in early December in order to reopen the school since only three patients remained there. The school was reopened by the second week of December.<sup>81</sup> By January, the epidemic had begun to present fewer new cases and the number of deaths was rapidly dropping. Schools throughout the North American Mennonite diaspora had been closed due to the outbreak of flu. Schools in Gretna, in the West Reserve were closed in November, as were some in Alberta, Kansas, and Montana. In Swalwell, Alberta, the church house had been converted into a hospital in November, posing a logistical problem concerning church services.<sup>82</sup>

There were not enough doctors to effectively serve the entire municipality. For physicians, whether Mennonite

or not, working in rural areas was not a financially viable option for the most part. The great distance to be travelled between homes and the lack of means to pay for medical services hindered the establishment of medical practices.<sup>83</sup> Hanover, during the epidemic, had multiple street villages, very few physicians available, and one health officer who had to travel quite some distance to attend to deaths. The lack of physicians during the epidemic was strongly felt and this was recorded in the newspaper.<sup>84</sup> Physicians and volunteers were needed, even with the presence of Aganetha Fast and one makeshift hospital.

Given that the presence of physicians in the community, non-Mennonite physicians more specifically, had created tensions between lay and professional medical practitioners for years, this plea is unexpected. Mennonites relied primarily on lay practitioners for their medical services.<sup>85</sup> Mennonite midwives occupied an important role within the largely patriarchal world of Hanover and were some of the most highly regarded members of the community.<sup>86</sup> Occupying the role of midwife, they also consulted in all matters of mundane health issues and were often also the undertakers for the community.<sup>87</sup>

Hanover Mennonites were not passive in the face of the influenza epidemic. However, their response was shaped and to some extent limited by several factors. Untrained medical practitioners, lack of proper accommodation for victims of the disease, and difficulty in communicating public health information through the newspapers aggravated the situation in Hanover over the course of the epidemic. Their German ethnic identity, wartime anti-German sentiment from the general public, fear of excessive modernization, and the tensions between the state and the Mennonites concerning the *War Measures Act* all contributed to the difficulty and anxiety of Mennonites when dealing with public health authorities. Mennonites continued to rely on their established rural patterns of health care during the epidemic. They followed some of the requirements of the *Public Health Act* while refusing to systematically follow quarantines and isolation. Mennonites, while still relying on physicians from outside the Mennonite community, maintained a tight community connection, caring for relatives and family members. Although bans on public meetings were placed, they were not closely observed in the Mennonite community, as Mennonites were reluctant to give up their church services and community meetings, especially as health care was based in community networks which contributed to a higher death rate amongst Mennonites. ❧

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# Armageddon: Western Canadian Newspapers at the Outbreak of the Great War

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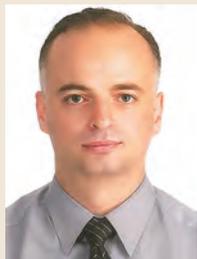
On 29 July, six days before Great Britain declared war on Germany for its invasion of Belgium, the *Manitoba Free Press* published alarming front-page headlines of the deteriorating diplomatic situation on the Continent: “EUROPE ON VERGE OF GIGANTIC WAR” read the large headline.<sup>1</sup> In Brandon, the *Daily Sun*’s major headlines for 30 July read “All Nations Prepared for World Conflict.”<sup>2</sup> Farther west, on the same day, the *Edmonton Daily Bulletin* warned its readers of the “possibility of a vast catastrophe,” while *The Calgary Daily Herald* carried chilling words from London: “Should international war come, it would mean a new story in the history of civilization—a kind of death grapple in the darkness: a cosmic catastrophe.”<sup>3</sup> As the formidable military machines of the Triple Entente (Russia, Great Britain, and France) and the Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy) mobilized for war in late July and early August 1914, Western Canadian newspapers eagerly followed their movements, aware that they were witnessing the most momentous events in history. On 31 July, in “WHAT WAR WOULD MEAN,” the editors of Regina’s *The Morning Leader* estimated that 13.4 million men were preparing for general European war, “the end of which no man can foresee and the horrors of which baffle human imagination.” In such a massive modern conflict, “half the peoples of the civilized world will be involved in crushing, overwhelming disaster.”<sup>4</sup>

As the Austro-Hungarian Empire declared war on Serbia in late July and Germany invaded France and Belgium in early August, Western Canadian newspapers struggled to make sense of the horrifying events unfolding in Europe. In a predominantly Christian nation, Canadian editors, journalists, and ordinary citizens utilized their religious imagination to make sense of this gigantic,

unprecedented conflict. On 5 August, the day after Great Britain declared war on Germany, bringing the British Empire and the Dominion of Canada into the war, the editors of rural Alberta’s *The Strathmore and Bow Valley Standard* captured the enormity of the emerging world conflict in a bold one-word headline: “ARMAGEDDON!”<sup>5</sup> *The Sedgewick Sentinel*, a fellow Alberta rural weekly, relayed news from London that “the empire is on the brink of the greatest war in the history of the world.”<sup>6</sup> The Empire and Western Canada were on the verge of Armageddon.

## The Golden Age of Telegraphy and Newspapers

From 28 June, when the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated by Bosnian-Serb radicals, to 4 August, when the British Empire declared war against Germany for its violation of Belgian neutrality, Western Canadians keenly followed events in Europe through the ubiquitous newspaper, the central medium of the age. Urban or rural, Liberal or Conservative, Canadian newspapers belonged to a transatlantic telegraphic news network, the world’s original “information superhighway.” The Canadian press had a daily newspaper circulation of 1.23 million by 1900, Toronto’s six dailies had a combined circulation of 433,023 by 1914, and *The Grain Growers’ Guide*, the voice of the Prairie farmer, was regularly topping 35,000 readers when war broke out.<sup>7</sup> Financially muscular newspapers had their own correspondents to supply them with international news; yet a handful of major telegraphic news agencies—Reuters, Wolff, Havas, and the Associated Press—controlled the flow of world news from major world capitals to colonial outposts.<sup>8</sup> London, the world’s financial centre, also controlled many of the world’s major cable companies, and Canada, child of the British Empire, shared a common telegraphic communication network, language, culture, and political sensibility with Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand. Although Canadians drew much of their international news from the American-owned Associated Press (AP),<sup>9</sup> the dominance of London as a world news centre ensured that “papers in each of the Dominions would continue to share the same basic perspective on international events, even if editorial opinions varied.”<sup>10</sup> Most importantly, Canadians received instantaneous domestic and international news via a global system of overland and undersea telegraphic cables from the 1860s forward. As historian Simon Potter contends, from



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## Western Canadian Newspapers

the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, “Information could now travel around the Empire in hours or even minutes.”<sup>11</sup> For example, in late July and early August 1914, *The Lethbridge Daily Herald* carried international news via telegram from London, Berlin, Vienna, Paris, and St. Petersburg, as well as domestic news from Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto, and Winnipeg. Much smaller newspapers, such as *The Claresholm Advertiser*, an Alberta rural weekly, would not be denied coverage as the threat of war grew. The *Advertiser* secured a “Special Bulletin Service” with a bigger newspaper, in its case “courtesy of *The Calgary News Telegram*,” immediately posting news bulletins on its office windows.<sup>12</sup> Western Canada was part of a global, telegraphically-driven newspaper network, and every paper wanted to be as up-to-date as possible as citizens devoured war coverage in 1914. As historian Ian Miller has argued, “Waking up with a morning paper, or relaxing after work with the news, was part of the daily routine.”<sup>13</sup>

Most Western Canadian newspapers reported the assassination of the heir to the Austrian throne, Franz Ferdinand, at the hands of Gavrilo Princip on 28 June in Sarajevo. The news dominated the front page of the *Brandon Daily Sun*, with the headline “HEIR APPARENT TO AUSTRIAN THRONE AND SPOUSE VICTIMS OF COWARDLY ASSASSINATION.”<sup>14</sup> However, Canadian newspapers viewed the assassination as part of an ancient quarrel between Serbia and German-dominated Austria-Hungary, or “Slavs versus Teutons.” It was not until Austria-Hungary sent a powerful and diplomatically irreconcilable ultimatum to Serbia on 23 July, seeking redress for its dead prince, which Western Canadian newspapers began to take the brewing storm in Europe seriously. From that day forward, news coverage adopted an ominous tone, with the *Edmonton Daily Bulletin* warning readers on its front page that a “GREAT WAR THREATENS EUROPE.” To the *Bulletin*, there was the possibility that “Europe will be plunged into the great international struggle which for fifty years has been her nightmare.”<sup>15</sup>

The timeline above is of crucial significance to an understanding of Canadian history. To date, most historians have portrayed Canadians as ill-informed and uninterested in foreign affairs in the summer of 1914, in effect the country bumpkins of the British Empire.<sup>16</sup> Eminent historians have argued that turmoil in Europe held little interest for Prime Minister Sir Robert Borden

in late July 1914 as he vacationed in Muskoka, and that, quoting Stephen Leacock, war came to Canada as a shock, “out of a clear sky—the clear sky of vacation time, of the glory of the Canadian summer.”<sup>17</sup> Historians have also argued that drought on the Prairies and recession across Canada meant that “Canadians had enough concerns of their own,” so that a “country so preoccupied had little thought of the outside world.”<sup>18</sup> John Herd Thompson’s brilliant study of the Prairies between 1914 and 1918 has a chapter titled “1914: Innocent Enthusiasm,” arguing that war took Western Canadians by surprise, with newspapers offering nothing but “cheap sensationalism” at the outbreak of war.<sup>19</sup> In the traditional or orthodox historiographical paradigm, Canada is not perceived as an intricate part of a worldwide telegraphic news network.

### The Myth of War Enthusiasm

Many studies of the First World War also contend that citizens of belligerent countries (and their potential allies) were infused with “war enthusiasm” as war clouds gathered in late July and early August, a “martial enthusiasm” and desire to fight in a grand, heroic adventure. Popular historian Pierre Berton, forever attuned to historical consensus in his best-selling works, writes of “wildly enthusiastic crowds” displaying “war fervour” in cities like Toronto and Montreal in August 1914.<sup>20</sup> Canada’s foremost official military historian, C. P. Stacey, contended that “enthusiasm for the cause—the enthusiasm of a nation which had scarcely the faintest idea of the nature of the ordeal ahead—was unbounded.”<sup>21</sup> Tim Cook, one of Canada’s most gifted First World War historians, deals



“The Angel of Death is Abroad in Europe,” *The Grain Growers’ Guide*, 12 August 1914, page 4.

with August 1914 in a chapter called “The Country Went Mad,” arguing that “martial enthusiasm” ruled English and French Canada alike.<sup>22</sup> However, a careful examination of Western Canadian newspapers shifts the pendulum away from “war enthusiasm” towards a darker, more complex understanding of events as they unfolded in late July and early August 1914.<sup>23</sup> Western Canadians, like their eastern counterparts, were part of a *nation informed* in 1914, reacting to the outbreak of war with profound maturity, courage, patriotism, and determination.

### The Horrors of War

As Russia and Germany moved closer to entering the war in late July, Western Canadian newspapers focussed

their attention on both the events themselves and the *public responses* to those events. From the beginning of the July Crisis, contemporaries believed that they were in the midst of something grand, unique, tragic, and potentially catastrophic.<sup>24</sup> On 27 July, *The Lethbridge Daily Herald* carried news from London of British Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey's attempts to localize the Austro-Serbian crisis, cognizant that "the failure of these efforts to bring about settlement would bring about the greatest catastrophe which could befall the concert of Europe, and its consequences would be incalculable."<sup>25</sup> On 29 July, the *Edmonton Daily Bulletin*, also carrying news from London, made it clear that there was "absolutely no enthusiasm in England for war," that the British faced the prospect of a conflict with the "deepest gloom."<sup>26</sup> The next day, a *Bulletin* editorial demonstrated the depth of the Great War generation's comprehension of the catastrophe that could befall Europe: "The armies of Alexander, Caesar or Napoleon would not constitute an advance guard for the armies which any one of the five of the great nations will have in the field within a fortnight."<sup>27</sup> On 31 July, a *Calgary Daily Herald* editorial shared the anxiety of their Edmonton counterparts: "Out in the open and at close range war is horrid—a plague far-reaching in its effects and debasing to those who participate in it."<sup>28</sup> A 20<sup>th</sup>-century industrial war among the great powers was unlike any struggle in history. As Europe spiralled out of control, *The Morning Leader* in Regina vividly captured the anxiety of the times in an illustration, "INTO THE DEPTHS."<sup>29</sup> Europe was plunging into the abyss of the "Horrors of War," forever altering the destiny of Europe and the world.

This is not to argue that there were no reports of "enthusiasm" in Europe or Canada at the outbreak of the First World War. For example, on 30 July, after Austria had declared war on Serbia, the *Edmonton Daily Bulletin* reported from Vienna that "the war spirit in the Austrian capital is hourly increasing," while in Russia a "great patriotic demonstration" was unfolding in St. Petersburg.<sup>30</sup> On 3 August, the *Bulletin* wrote of "a scene of great enthusiasm outside Buckingham Palace," while closer to home, in Edmonton, "Never were there such wildly exciting scenes in all sections of the city."<sup>31</sup> When Great Britain's declaration of war was announced in Winnipeg on 4 August, the *Manitoba Free Press* reported that "scenes of the wildest enthusiasm were enacted on the main thoroughfares" as immense crowds "surged around the *Free Press* singing British patriotic airs."<sup>32</sup> In Calgary, as thousands gathered in front of the *Herald* offices to catch

the latest news, people "went wild with excitement" as war was announced "shortly after 7 o'clock" on the evening of 4 August.<sup>33</sup> In cities across Canada, newspapers commented on patriotic displays of enthusiasm at the outbreak of war.<sup>34</sup>

However, reports of "enthusiasm" were often contextualized and downplayed by stories of more sophisticated, mature, and serious public responses. For example, on 3 August, in the same article in which the *Edmonton Daily Bulletin* spoke of "excited crowds on Jasper," the story continued with a deeper, more nuanced analysis: "Citizens realised the gravity of the situation, and the awful catastrophe that a general European war would mean." Such a conflict would "eclipse in horror anything that the world has ever known."<sup>35</sup> In Calgary, as pictures of King George V, British Foreign Secretary Grey, and French President Raymond Poincaré were flashed on bulletin boards by projectors, "anxiety" and "relief" overtook the brief excitement of the declaration of war: "The tenor of



"Into the Valley of Death," *Manitoba Free Press*, 8 August 1914 (Special Saturday Section), page 1.

the crowds was one of grim exultation not unmingled with a sense of what serious results the war into which the world is being plunged will entail."<sup>36</sup> On 22 August, as thousands of Calgarians said goodbye to loved ones departing for war, *The Calgary Daily Herald* wrote of a "silent grief" behind the veneer of patriotic enthusiasm: "Beneath the general buoyant spirits and enthusiasm was nevertheless a good deal of deeper and more sentimental feeling,

which in many instances was difficult to conceal."<sup>37</sup> An examination of a single newspaper on 5 August, Regina's *The Morning Leader*, reveals a multitude of intellectual and emotional responses to the outbreak of war: *Shock, silence, cheering, enthusiasm, danger, patriotism, self-sacrifice, relief, and grim determination.* Canadian journalist and editor J. Castell Hopkins, writing in 1919, understood the complex emotions at work in August 1914: "It is difficult to describe one man's state of mind at a time of war-crisis; it is a thousand-fold more difficult to analyze the soul of a nation."<sup>38</sup> There was no uniform reaction to the outbreak of war in Western Canada in 1914.<sup>39</sup> Anxious, fearful, enthusiastic, and patriotic, Western Canadians prepared for the greatest war in history. Yet what kind of war did newspapers imagine in the summer of 1914?

### A World War Threatens

On 27 July, nine days before Britain declared war, the *Toronto Daily Star* published "Forces for European War." It contained a military chart estimating the manpower strength at the disposal of the two power blocs to be 10.4 million for the Triple Entente (including Serbia) and 8.4 million for the Triple Alliance.<sup>40</sup> This chart was

also published in *The Lethbridge Daily Herald* on 30 July, with the proviso that the inclusion of allies on either side could result in a “world war” of more than 20,000,000 men, not including “the greatest fleets ever engaged in an international struggle.”<sup>41</sup> The chart was utilized again, with modified figures for the British and Russians, by the *Edmonton Daily Bulletin* on 3 August, with headlines shouting “20,000,000 MEN MAY FIGHT 14,000,000 IN THE WORLD’S WAR.” The *Bulletin* estimated 9.8 million Triple Entente forces (not including Serbia) could face 8.4 million Triple Alliance forces, with the numbers growing to 20 and 14 million, respectively, if “unorganized men of military age” (neither professional soldiers nor reservists) were drawn into the conflict.<sup>42</sup> In the age of telegraphy and newspapers, Western Canadians were reading of the most fearsome armies ever assembled.

The war charts of 1914 were remarkably accurate. British historian Hew Strachan has calculated that approximately 2,000,000 Frenchmen (1108 battalions) faced 1,700,000 Germans (1077 battalions) on the Western Front in August 1914, with approximately 2,000,000 men per side available as reinforcements should the need arise—not far from the four million French and 4.3 million Germans imagined by the *Edmonton Daily Bulletin*.<sup>43</sup> The important point to remember here is that contemporaries believed they were engaged in the greatest struggle in human history. *The Grain Growers’ Guide* understood this well, observing: “Never before in the history of the world has it been possible to organize armies of such enormous size.”<sup>44</sup>

In addition to the ubiquitous war charts of 1914, which delineated the massive armies congregating on the Continent, Western Canadian newspapers also offered readers prognostications regarding potential casualties in a great power war, based upon analyses and comparisons to previous large-scale conflicts. As the likelihood of general European war increased in the final days of July, newspapers looked to the casualties of past wars to more fully understand the prospective world war of 1914. An excellent representation of this type of reportage can be found in the 31 July edition of the *Manitoba Free Press*. In “Great Wars Cost in Lives and Money,” the *Free Press* compared nine wars from 1793 to 1913, the most destructive being the French Revolutionary wars of 1793-1815, which resulted in the loss of nearly two million men. The very recent Balkan Wars of 1912-1913, which lasted only 302 days, resulted in 145,500 casualties,

an indication of the tremendous firepower available to modern industrial armies.<sup>45</sup> With war charts and a feature story entitled “FOR WAR ON LAND, SEA AND IN AIR, FORTY MILLION MEN ARE AVAILABLE,” the *Free Press* implied that a general European war in 1914 would result in more devastating casualties than any conflict in history.<sup>46</sup>

In August 1914, many newspapers published the *Free Press* chart of 31 July in order to more fully comprehend the magnitude of the war engulfing the Continent. For purposes of comparison, Canadian journalists and editors concentrated most often on recent wars, particularly the South African War (Boer War) of 1899-1902, the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, and the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913. Given Canada’s experience in the South African War a mere fifteen years earlier, when the nation had sent 7368 men overseas to fight on the British side against the Boers, suffering 270 deaths, it was not surprising

that the war of 1899-1902 was often employed as a measuring rod for the potentially much greater conflict of 1914.<sup>47</sup> On 3 August, for instance, *The Morning Leader* published the 31 July *Free Press* war chart under the title “What Great Wars Cost In Lives and Money.” According to the *Leader*, the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars cost \$6.25 billion and lasted 8168 days, with 1.9 million dead. The smaller Boer War lasted 962 days, leaving more than 90,000 dead, at a cost of \$1 billion. The *Leader’s* main editorial for that day, “EUROPE ABLAZE,” illustrated the understanding that a 1914 war would be bigger, deadlier, and costlier than all previous conflicts: “A war which promises to be the most momentous in the world’s history is now actually under way with preliminary

engagements already recorded and mobilization of Europe’s armed millions proceeding day and night.”<sup>48</sup> Wars of the past, such as the Boer War involving Canada, paled in comparison to a modern conflict involving the world’s great powers.

### The Coming of Armageddon

In the summer of 1914, as the greatest empires in the world prepared for the universally recognized most destructive war in human history, many Canadians utilized their Christian imagination to conjure one word to describe the carnage occurring in Europe: *Armageddon*. Given the unprecedented armies mobilizing for war on the Continent, it was commonplace in press and pulpit to evoke the spectre of Armageddon—the final conflict between good



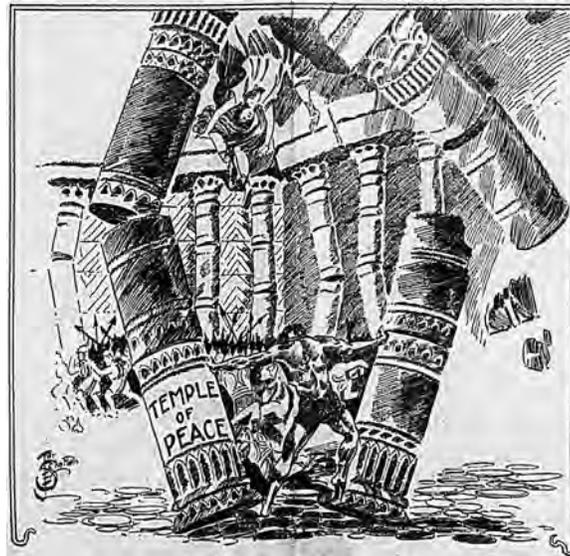
“The Grim Reaper is at Work in Europe,” *Brandon Daily Sun*, 8 August 1914, page 1. A caption below the image read “Already many lives have been lost in the European war; how many more will be lost before peace is restored?”

and evil, God and Satan, leading to the Apocalypse and the Second Coming of Christ.<sup>49</sup> In a predominantly Christian society like Canada, Armageddon stood at the pinnacle of Christian eschatology, harbinger of Christ's return and the establishment of his Kingdom on Earth.<sup>50</sup>

As British cultural historian Jay Winter has demonstrated, in literature, plays, and artistic representations the Great War generation fell back upon traditional modes of understanding in order to make sense of the chaos and uncertainty of war. In war literature, for instance, Winter's investigation of the work produced by both soldiers and non-combatants illustrates how "Fiction, memoirs, short stories, and plays reveal a wealth of evidence as to the war's mobilization of motifs and images derived from the classical, romantic, and religious traditions of European literature." The Bible and the Apocalypse figured prominently in the Great War generation's attempt to comprehend a modern industrial world war: "One of the most salient instances of the backward-looking character of this body of writing is its use of apocalyptic images." In essence, the "varied and rich appeal to a traditional eschatology, to a sense of the world coming to an end," establishes how 1914 unleashed "an avalanche of the 'unmodern.'" Writers and artists hearkened backwards, to the past, in order to understand the chaos of 1914: "The Great War was, in cultural terms, the last nineteenth-century war, in that it provoked an outpouring of literature touching on an ancient set of beliefs about revelation, divine justice, and the nature of catastrophe."<sup>51</sup> In major front-page headlines and articles, through editorials and illustrations, Western Canadian editors, journalists, and artists used the foundations of western civilization—the Bible and Greek mythology, as well as European history, culture, and art—to make sense of the unparalleled events of July and August 1914.

On 5 August, *The Calgary Daily Herald's* front page carried telegraphic news from London of cheering crowds at the outbreak of war: "Crowds gathered at the government office through the day and cheered the ministers whenever they appeared, and pressed about their motor cars." Given the enormity of the war in which the Empire was now involved, however, enthusiasm was muted: "The railway depots were filled with army reservists and territorials in khaki, but there were no flags flying on the buildings, and the great masses of people went about their ordinary occupations with serious faces. The first effects of the war are found in the increased prices of the necessities of life, but

the people expect this and are reconciled to it."<sup>52</sup> On page six, the main editorial revealed the attitude of the *Daily Herald* to the outbreak of war in August 1914: "ARMAGEDDON HAS ARRIVED." The editors of the *Daily Herald* understood the consequences of war to Canada, the Empire, and the world: "Great Britain has spoken and Armageddon is upon us... And thus has come about a conflict that, before it closes, will have transformed the face of Europe and left an indelible mark upon the whole world."<sup>53</sup> On 15 August, a *Daily Telegraph* war correspondent in Brussels described the carnage of war using the traditional poetic imagery of Dante. In a story published by the *Daily Herald* and other Western Canadian newspapers entitled "Vision of Hell Which Only Dante Could Describe," came horrific news of the plight of Belgium:



**"The Modern Samson,"** *The Edmonton Capital*, 7 August 1914, page 1. A caption read "Count Okuma, the Japanese premier, is reported to have declared that the present European war, if continued, would mean the destruction of western civilization."

A two hours' motor ride from Belgium's capital takes one to a world of grim realities and sinister contrasts... Approaching the village of Dormael, unmistakable tokens of desolation meet the view: Shattered window-panes and domestic utensils flung among the cabbages in the gardens... [a] mother leading two or three orphaned little ones from the still smoking ruins of their homes. Everywhere is the loathsome squalor of war... Many corpses have their hands raised and their elbows on a level with their shoulders. Horrible wounds were inflicted with weapons fired at a distance of a couple of inches from the mouth or breast. One could see masses of soldiers—a vision of hell which only Dante could describe...

So far the maimed warriors, homeless families, destitute women and orphaned children who are receiving attention remind one of the harvest of misery yet to be garnered.<sup>54</sup>

Armageddon was also invoked to describe the British Expeditionary Force's first major engagement of the Great War, the Battle of Mons.<sup>55</sup> To *The Morning Leader*, the BEF's initial encounter on the Continent was but the first salvo in a greater struggle, the "OPENING CRASHES IN ARMAGEDDON."<sup>56</sup> In the days to follow, the severe British casualties incurred at Mons were widely reported in the Western Canadian press.<sup>57</sup> In the opening weeks of the Great War, the Empire was perceived to be in the midst of the biblical Armageddon.

Clearly, the horrors of Armageddon touched the imagination of citizens in Calgary, Edmonton, and Regina. However, fears of civilization's collapse were felt no less powerfully in rural Canada. On 7 August, in "CIVILIZATION?" the editor of the B.C. Liberal weekly

*Alberni Advocate* expressed a sense of dread for humanity as war raged in Europe: "The very foundations of civilization are shaking under the rude hands of barbaric War Lords willing to drench the earth with the blood of countless thousands in order to win a little niche in the temple of Fame." Great Britain strove valiantly for peace as the warlords of Europe threatened to destroy all they had built for generations: "It appears now in the hum of armed camps, the marching of millions, the smoke of conflict, and in the blotting out in a few days of what it has taken hundreds of years to build." Although the editor hoped "against all conviction that something will yet happen that will show the way out without further bloodshed," civilization's fate hung in the balance: "The clouds are dark. They have never been darker in the memory of men now alive."<sup>58</sup>

### The Apocalyptic Darkness of War

The dark clouds of war are literally and figuratively evident in three Western Canadian newspaper illustrations in early August 1914. The illustrations convey themes such as the horror of war and the link between war and death. In addition, they illuminate the imaginative use of the traditional language and imagery of the Bible and European culture. Jay Winter has shown how Great War artists spoke a common language "across the yawning gap of doctrinal orthodoxy." After 1914, "most sought in the Biblical tradition a range of symbols through which to imagine the war and the loss of life entailed in it." The sacred returned in the Great War "as a vocabulary of mourning, and as a code through which artists expressed in enduring ways the enormity of the war and the suffering left in its wake."<sup>59</sup> This traditional vocabulary of the sacred was also employed by Canadians in the summer of 1914, in visual images capturing the anxiety and fear of the times, *before* they sent their sons and daughters to Europe.<sup>60</sup>

It is in the imagery of 1914 that we find the physical tools to topple the great pillars of Canadian historiography such as "war enthusiasm," concepts that have held ascendancy in the high schools, universities, and historical imagination of Canada for a century. On 7 August, for example, the *Edmonton Capital* published "The Modern Samson," an illustration which envisaged the destruction of the century-long European and world peace. In this biblically inspired image, Samson (the word "KAISER" is written on his back) brings down the pillars sustaining the Temple of Peace, wrecking western civilization. The caption below reads "Count Okuma, the Japanese premier, is reported to have declared that the present European war, if continued, would mean the destruction of western civilization."<sup>61</sup> On 8 August, a few days after the declaration of war, the *Brandon Daily Sun* published an image of the Grim Reaper at work in Europe. As Canadian soldiers volunteered for war at armouries across the country, as

families said good-bye to loved ones at home and on city and town streets, they did so with these harrowing images in mind.<sup>62</sup> The third image, a more literal representation of Armageddon, appeared in *The Grain Growers' Guide* on 12 August. The Angel of Death, replete with Roman armour, plumed helmet, and blood-dripping sword (the traditional imagery of Mars, the Roman god of war), leaves one field of death in search of another.<sup>63</sup> In the summer of 1914, in countless newspaper illustrations, editorials, and articles, the Angel of Death was abroad in Europe. Such was the Western Canadian apocalyptic imagination at the outbreak of the Great War.

### Conclusion: Into the Valley of Death

In July and August 1914, as the world fell precipitously into war, Western Canadian newspapers, intricately connected to the transcontinental telegraphic news network, deluged readers with headlines, articles, war charts, and illustrations describing the outbreak of the greatest war in history. A wide range of emotions, from patriotic enthusiasm to anxiety and grim determination in the face of Prussian militarism, can be found on the pages of Western Canadian newspapers at the outbreak of the Great War. More importantly, with tens of millions of men marching to the killing fields of Europe in 1914, with casualty reports from the Eastern and Western fronts reaching Canadian newspapers in multiple daily editions, it was natural for citizens infused with a Christian sensibility to imagine and invoke the spectre of Armageddon, the final battle between good and evil leading to the Apocalypse, to make sense of the unprecedented carnage taking place in Europe.

To many Western Canadians in 1914, the chaos of war brought in its train nothing but uncertainty and confusion. The ancient civilizations of Europe and North America were being led into the unknown darkness of war, the very existence of western civilization hanging in the balance. The uncertainty of war, expressed through the religious and cultural sensibilities of Canada's western heritage, was captured in a *Manitoba Free Press* illustration of 8 August 1914. Mars, the god of war, was leading Christian, civilized Europe, and the youth of the British Empire such as Canada, into the valley of the shadow of death.<sup>64</sup> In August 1914, Canada plunged into the abyss of war, forever altering its national destiny. ☞

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# “Holding Their End Up in Splendid Style”: Indigenous People and Canada’s First World War

by Karine Duhamel and Matthew McRae  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

In a 1919 essay entitled “The Canadian Indians and the Great World War”, Duncan Campbell Scott, Superintendent of the Department of Indian Affairs, detailed how Indigenous people in Canada had participated favourably in the war effort. Indeed, as he pointed out, “From the very outset of the Great War the Indians throughout the Dominion displayed a keen interest in the progress of struggle and demonstrated their loyalty in the most convincing manner both by voluntary enlistment in the overseas forces, generous contributions to the patriotic and other war funds and energetic participation in war work of various kinds at home.”<sup>1</sup> A key agent in the colonization of Indigenous lands and lives, Duncan Campbell Scott sought to paint the contributions of Indigenous people in a way that would bolster and valorize the Department’s ultimate mission which was the total assimilation of Indigenous peoples. In his mind, Indigenous people were a hindrance to the progress of Canada—their participation, in relatively high proportion, indicated to Scott that the mission was working.

Yet, his analysis was deeply flawed. It is clear, from the records of Indigenous people themselves as well as photos, letters, reports and artifacts, that Indigenous people had different motivations for their participation in the



Aboriginal People in the Canadian Military, Chapter 5,  
<http://www.cmp-cpm.forces.gc.ca/dhh-dhp/pub/boo-bro/abo-aut/chapter-chapitre-05-eng.asp>

**Lance-Corporal John Shiwak (Sikoak)**, a Labrador Inuit from Rigolet, served with the Royal Newfoundland Regiment and was killed at Cambrai on 20 November 1917.

Great War: treaty commitments, the relationship with the Crown, as well as family obligations and socio-economic pressures all contributed to the invaluable contribution of Indigenous service-people from across Canada. They had not acquiesced to the project of colonization; for many, their



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## Indigenous People and the First World War



Janice Summerby, *Native Soldiers, Foreign Battlefields*, Ottawa, 2005.

**Lieutenant O. M. Martin**, labeled “1” in this photo, was identified as ‘Mohawk.’

service was in fact a re-assertion of the original relationship established with the Crown over the past three centuries.

Understanding the true nature and significance of Indigenous service in the First World War requires looking beyond numbers, statistics and official reports. Researchers interested in this period should note the more complex history provided by looking beyond the traditional archive to the stories of those individuals and communities involved, as provided by photos, first-hand accounts, petitions, newspapers, monuments and by the aftermath of the First World War in Indigenous communities.

By the Department’s own accounting, over 3,500 status Indians served in the Great War, amounting to no less than one-third of all status Indian males of military age at the time.

The official statistics, however, tell only part of the story. For instance, these figures do not account for non-status Indian people, Inuit and Metis who served, nor do they tally Newfoundland’s contribution to the war—then still a separate British Dominion—which included at least 15 people with some Inuit ancestry.

While there were no officially all-Aboriginal units, some units had a high proportion of Aboriginal members. These included the 107<sup>th</sup> Timberwolf Battalion. It was raised by Glenlyon Archibald Campbell who, in 1885, had

served with Boulton’s Scouts in the Northwest Resistance. He began recruiting in November 1915, and within three months, had a battalion of 1000, about half of whom were Indigenous. Their roots varied, including members of the Blackfoot Confederacy, Cree, Ojibwa, Iroquois, Sioux, Delaware and Mi’kmaq people. Training was often conducted in Cree and Ojibwa at Camp Hughes, near Pilot Mound, Manitoba. Following training, the unit shipped overseas on 19 September 1916.

Residential schools contributed to recruitment in their own way, as cadet programs actively supported enlistment. Activities tended to focus on drill and routine with the intention of supplanting Indigenous traditions, such as the Sun Dance or other ceremonies, and administrators generally felt as though the Cadet Corp would promote the discipline and loyalty they argued was lacking. For boys who joined, the Cadet Corp could also offer opportunities to travel off the reserve and was frequently used as a means to reward students who were seen to be following the rules.

In 1914, Albert Mountain Horse, himself a product of the St. Paul’s Industrial School Cadet Corp, became one of the first Status Indian people to enlist. Samuel Middleton, the principal of the school at that time, was ostracized by



AEF, John Moses Collection. [www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1414152378639/1414152548341](http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1414152378639/1414152548341)

**Charlotte Edith Anderson Monture** (no date).



United Church of Canada Archives Digital Collections, <http://uccdigitalcollections.ca/items/show/1422?tags=Residential%20Schools>

### **Cadet Corps of the St. Paul's Indian Industrial School near Winnipeg, circa 1900.**

the community for encouraging enlistment after Mountain Horse died in November 1915.

In many communities, the decision of whether or not to join the military could be divisive. While the federal government initially had no official policy on the recruitment of Indigenous people, the practice was to discourage them. Many who attempted to join early on were turned away. Yet by 1917, the high number of front-line casualties created a need, and Indian Agents began to hold recruiting events on reserves.

While status Indian women were not well represented during the First World War, at least one Indigenous woman served overseas in an American military hospital. Edith Anderson was born in 1890 on the Six Nations Grand River Reserve. Determined to become a nurse, she found few opportunities to train in Canada. She therefore studied at the New Rochelle School of Nursing in New York State and became a registered nurse in 1914.

In 1917, Anderson and 19 other nurses, 14 of whom were also Canadian, joined the US Medical Corps finding themselves in Vittel, France, at Buffalo Base Hospital 23.

Indigenous women were also involved on the home front. The Six Nations Women's Patriotic League in Ontario made socks, quilts, and other items for the war effort. Food such as chocolate, fruitcake and Christmas puddings were also gathered by the League for soldiers serving overseas. The women did face discrimination, as when a ban was placed on their socks in 1915 for fear they could transmit smallpox to soldiers.

In addition to direct service and booster organizations, status Indian people were strongly encouraged to donate money to the war effort. Advertisements such as the one depicted on page 44, which appeared in a period broadside between 1914 and 1918 on behalf of the Canadian Patriotic Fund, encouraged donations—and assimilation—by using a caricatured Status Indian contributing to the cause. The Canadian Patriotic Fund was a private fundraising organization originally established to offer aid and financial assistance to soldiers' families.

The line "my skin is dark but my heart is white" suggests that darker skin implies less virtuous characteristics and expounds the principle of 'whiteness' being a virtue.

## Indigenous People and the First World War



Glenbow Archives, NA-3454-41.

**Recruits from File Hills, Saskatchewan, October 1915.** Left to right: David Bird, Joe McKay, Leonard McKay, Leonard Creely, Jack Walker, ---?, and Harry Stonefield.

Ironically, many Indigenous veterans were denied benefits under the Canadian Patriotic Fund after the war based on the insistence by the fund that the Department of Indian Affairs be responsible for Aboriginal soldier resettlement.

In 1917, the large number of front-line casualties prompted a new Military Service Act which instituted conscription for all British subjects of age. Many First Nations objected to conscription on the grounds of their special relationship with the Queen, promises made during treaty negotiations, and the fact that as First Nations, they did not enjoy the same rights as other Canadians.

Public perception of Status Indians serving in the Great War was a testament to the prevailing attitudes about race and Indigenous people at the time. In many newspaper articles, authors pointed out the great sacrifice that Indigenous people were making for the Canadian or British cause, as if to highlight the success of the Department of Indian Affairs' mandate in assimilating entire communities. As this particular article states, "... but there is one race of people of whom little has been told who are fighting with their heart and soul to bring an ultimate victory to Britain's arms. He is the Canadian Indian." Enlisted soldiers are described as "silent, taciturn men" and men for whom "ways of the white man were strange to many of them."

At the same time, the article also lauds the way in which more traditional skills provide an advantage: "No better men could be found for the Inland Water transport, for they are experts with an axe and with a boat, and in the forestry department they were indispensable. For scouting purposes there were none better, with eyes like an eagle and ears like a fox, they were the ideal men for this purpose." The author reifies racial stereotypes while supporting the idea that these skills can be useful in the projects of non-Indigenous Canada. The author argues that service in the war is an opportunity for Indigenous people to experience

a new level of civilization and that they have laid aside the old ways to come serve.

In reality, and although many Indigenous people served with great distinction, they did not necessarily trade in their traditional Indigenous ways for a new life. For Indigenous people, military service was complementary, not in opposition to, their identity as Indigenous men and women.

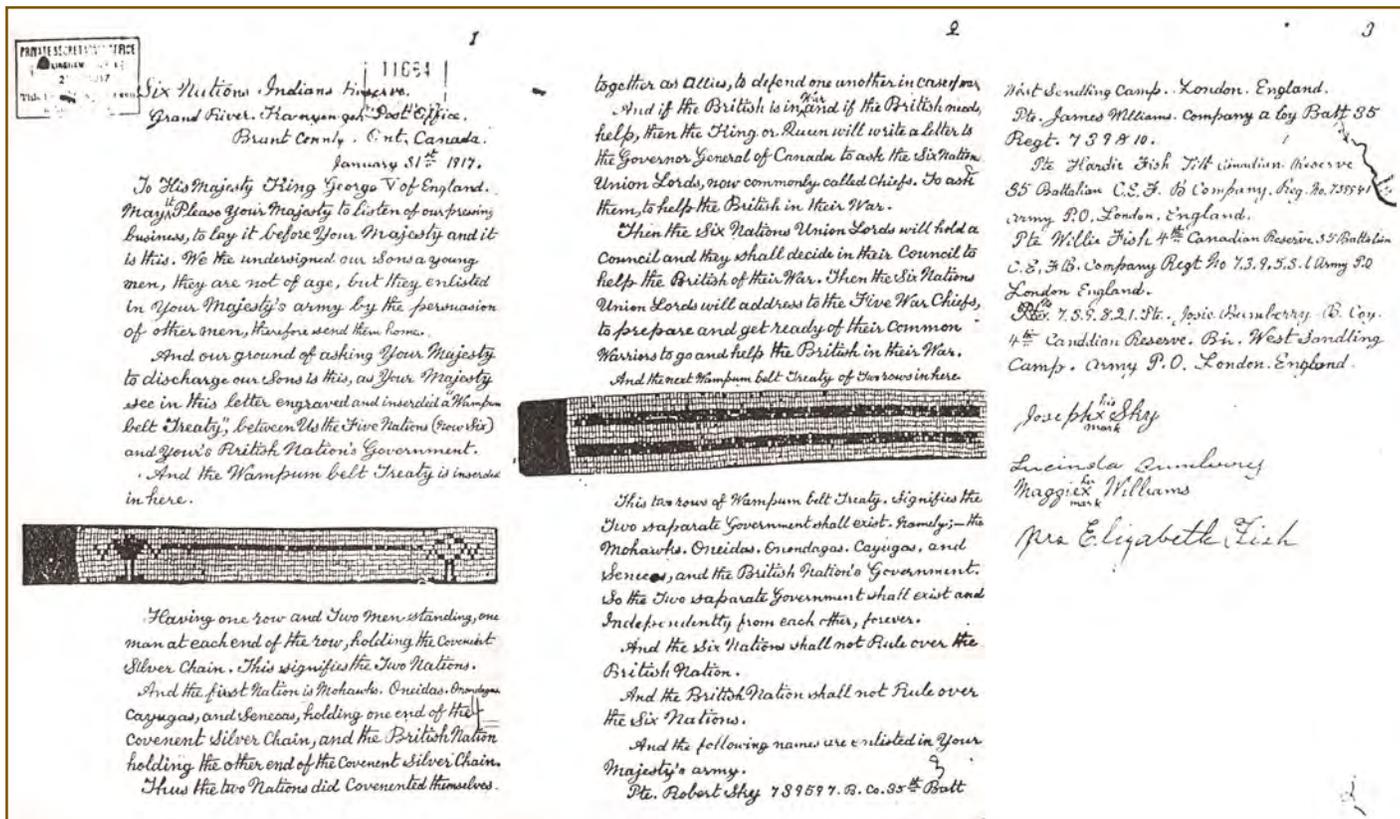
At war's end, and even though status Indians were officially eligible for programs such as the Soldier Settlement Act of 1919, which was designed to help veterans transition into an agricultural lifestyle, the Act designated the Department of Indian Affairs as the administrator of all benefits, allowances and pensions for status Indian people. The measure's stated intention was to avoid the confusion of joint administration, but the result was that less than 1 in 10 Aboriginal applicants received land or loans on reserve. When it did endorse grants on the reserve, there was no



[www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/detail.jsp?Entt=RDMDc-MOOCHWEINES&R=DC-MOOCHWEINES](http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/detail.jsp?Entt=RDMDc-MOOCHWEINES&R=DC-MOOCHWEINES)

**"My skin is dark but my heart is white."** A poster soliciting donations to the Canadian Patriotic Fund during the First World War.

# Indigenous People and the First World War



Library and Archives Canada, RG 10 Indian Affairs, Volume 6767, File 452-15, Part 1.

**Two-Row and Covenant Chain wampum belts.** This document was produced by a group of women from the Six Nations of the Grand River who, in 1917, petitioned King George V, citing the wampum belts as records of their agreement with the Crown that they would never again be compelled to fight in foreign wars. The agreements highlighted the concept of sovereignty association between the Crown and the Six Nations Confederacy. Objections such as these all contributed to the 1918 passing of Order-in-Council 111, which officially exempted status Indians from combat duties, although they could still be conscripted for non-combat roles.

guarantee that the land grant would be respected, as by the Department's own policy on Indigenous land-holding, reserve land could not be privately owned.

The Soldier Settlement Act was also used by the federal government to justify the appropriation of reserve land for non-Aboriginal veterans. In 1919, Order in Council PC 929 granted the Department of Indians Affairs the authority to expropriate reserve land "not under cultivation or otherwise properly used" without the consent of the band. Through this Act, the Soldier Settlement Board acquired over 85,000 acres of reserve land in Western Canada for non-Aboriginal soldier settlement in the years immediately following the First World War.

Other injustices came later. By the late 1920s, for instance, Aboriginal veterans were denied access to the Last Post Fund, a program meant to ensure that all veterans received a proper burial. In 1932 and with the onset of the Depression, status Indian veterans were also ineligible for the Veteran's Relief Allowance. Although these decisions were reversed in 1936, their impact was significant.

Metis men had also enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force and had taken part in battles at the First Ypres (April 1915), the Somme (August 1916), Vimy Ridge (April 1917), Passchendaele (October-November

1917, and the famed "One Hundred Days" (August–November 1918). Many served with great distinction, including Henry Norwest (c1880s–1918). Henry was the best sniper in the Canadian Expeditionary Force with 115 confirmed kills and succumbed to sniper fire at the Battle of Amiens.

For the Metis, demobilization presented its own challenges. When veterans returned, they often found themselves shuffled between federal and provincial governments in efforts to access veterans' services.

In his 1919 essay, Duncan Campbell Scott argued that the close of the Great War would hasten great change. As he argued,

The return of the Indian soldiers from the front will doubtless bring about great changes on the reserves. These men who have been broadened by contact with the outside world and its affairs, who have witnessed the many wonders and advantages of civilization, will not be content to return to their old Indian mode of life. ... Thus the war will have hastened that day ... when all the quaint old customs, the weird and picturesque ceremonies, the sun dance and the potlatch and

## Indigenous People and the First World War

even the musical and poetic native languages shall be as obsolete as the buffalo and the tomahawk, and the last tepee of the Northern wilds give place to a model farmhouse.

Yet this was not to happen. Indeed, those who had served returned from the front with a new awareness and an energy for change and transformation. They had identified as members of the Canadian military, and had been recognized as such. The demobilization, which highlighted starkly for many the lack of rights for Indigenous people in Canada, would be the genesis of a number of organizations that, through the work of veterans and others, would continue to fight for recognition.

The League of Indians, founded by veteran Fred Ogilvie Loft in 1919, was one such group. Its statement of principles contained passages condemning the



Randi Gage

**Veterans unveil monument.** Left to right: Arnold Sinclair, Drank Orvis, Randi Gage, Thomas Whitburn, and Gerald Bennett in Riverton, Manitoba at the unveiling of the new memorial stone, 14 May 2016.

mistreatment of veterans, denouncing the residential school system and protesting against the lack of Indigenous political representation within the federal system. Indian Affairs responded by attacking the League, going as far as threatening to involuntarily enfranchise its leader, Fred Loft, in an attempt to discredit him as a genuine representative of Aboriginal interests.

The National Aboriginal War Veterans monument was unveiled in 2001. Located in Confederation Park across from the Lord Elgin Hotel between Laurier Avenue West and Slater Street in Ottawa, the monument stands as an important correction to our history. Its text, which singles out the important contributions of Indigenous men and women, reads “We who would follow in their path are humbled by the magnitude of their sacrifice and inspired by the depths of their resolve. We owe them a debt of gratitude we cannot soon hope to repay.” Indeed.

As Elder Randi Gage, founding vice-president of the National Aboriginal Veterans Association, maintains, Indigenous veterans and particularly those who served in the First World War, gave up a great deal to serve, including, for many, treaty rights. In short, Indigenous people did not have to serve; they chose to. This choice commands our ongoing respect, admiration—and action. This 8 November, on National Aboriginal Veterans Day, remember their sacrifice. 🙏



Six Nations Public Library Digital Collection, <http://vitacollections.ca/sixnationsarchive/>

**League of Indians founder Fred Loft** at the former Ohsweken Orange Lodge at the Six Nations Fair grounds.

Notes for this article  
are available on the MHS website:  
[www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb\\_history/82](http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb_history/82)

or scan the QR code at right  
to go directly to the notes.



# The First World War and the Women of Waskatenau: The 1917 Red Cross Fundraising Signature Quilt

by Sean Moir and Anthony Worman  
Royal Alberta Museum, Edmonton

In the collection of the Royal Alberta Museum is a Red Cross signature quilt made by the women of Waskatenau, Alberta (also known as Pine Creek and Clodford). The quilt was made for the purpose of raising money for the local Red Cross auxiliary ca. 1917. The funds were used to purchase basic supplies and items for the assemblage of comfort packages for Canadian soldiers at the front.

Community members paid 25 cents to have their names, and those of friends and family members, embroidered on the quilt.<sup>1</sup> In total 300 names appear on the quilt. All of the names were entered into a raffle. The winner of the draw for the quilt was 23-year-old William Cherrington who at the time was with the Royal Naval Canadian Volunteer Reserve (1914-1923). His is one of thirty two names of military personnel that appear on the quilt, and he was one of at least sixty-four soldiers and sailors from the Waskatenau district who served with the military during the First World War.

But what of the women who made this quilt? Of the eighteen women credited with its construction, six were members of the local auxiliary. A further four paid Associate or Active membership fees with the Red Cross.<sup>2</sup>



Royal Alberta Museum

**1917 Red Cross Signature Quilt** from Waskatenau, Alberta bearing 300 names. Continuing research and investigation by Royal Alberta Museum staff has yet to uncover any other quilts of this kind in the collections of public entities. This item offers a window into how one small community contributed to, and was impacted by, the First World War.

Curiously, only thirteen have their names embroidered on the quilt, yet those of Carrie Lunn and Mary Ann New appear twice. Of the thirteen names, there is great variation in how they are recorded. These variations include whole names (i.e., Elsie New), initials (i.e., L. Ongena), marital and familial status (i.e., Mrs. Woodward, or more formally for



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*Anthony Worman is Curator of Military & Political History. He received a BA in History from the University of Calgary (2002) and a Master of Library and Information Studies from the University of Alberta (2011). His interests are in the history of Canada's military in the First World War, firearms and how material culture, curatorial research and storytelling intersect.*

## Signature Quilt



Royal Alberta Museum

Women quilters at the Red Cross Auxiliary picnic on the Bishop Farm at Waskatenau, Alberta, in the summer of 1917.

the time, Mrs. R. Brown, and Gran Ma Lunn) all of which suggests that the donor was, to some degree, pending their circumstance, able to dictate how their name would appear.

In addition to their own, most are accompanied by other family members' names—often a husband and children. The names of three of the quilters, Josephine West,

Lottie McCartney and Mrs. Erikson are not recorded. In fact, nothing is known of Mrs. Erikson, including her first name, except that she was an Associate Member of the Red Cross. In the case of Mary Barron, only her name is embroidered, not those of her husband or her son Albert, who was killed in action in September 1918. Like Mary Barron, the makers of the quilt were mothers (in-law), daughters, sisters (in-law), aunts, cousins and friends. Being from such a small community it is inevitable that all of these women suffered the harrowing impact of the news of the death or serious injury of a loved one—at minimum, they knew someone who endured such an experience.

Of the information that can be gleaned from local histories, many of these women were prominent and active members of the Anglo ruling elite within the Waskatenau (Pine Creek) region. In addition to making the quilt, these Red Cross members are known to have organized summer picnics in 1917 and 1918 as well as knitted or sewed 1400 garments for shipment overseas (e.g., mitts, trench caps, mufflers, socks and sweaters).<sup>3</sup>

The region boasted a substantive immigrant population, notably people from Ukraine. Integration of communities had not occurred in any meaningful manner by the beginning of the war. There are several reasons for this: for example, officially, people from Ukraine were deemed enemy aliens; wartime propaganda contributed to the nativist-driven bigotry of the day; and the obvious language barrier. These and tangible socio-economic factors contributed to the justification for not inviting women from newly arrived immigrant population groups to be a



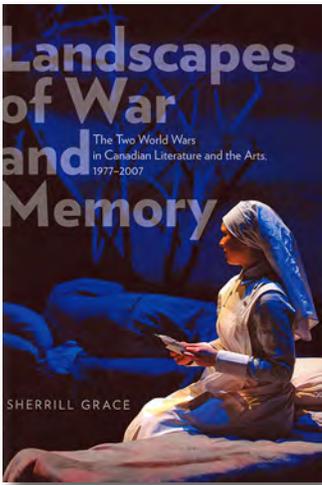
Royal Alberta Museum

One of thirty quilt blocks, bearing the names of several members of the Cherrington family, including William. Note that the names were embroidered using several different styles, affirming the work was completed by a number of different individuals, and likely rather hastily to ensure it was ready as the draw prize.



# Reviews

Sherrill Grace, *Landscapes of War and Memory: The Two World Wars in Canadian Literature and the Arts 1977–2007*. Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 2014, 610 pp. ISBN 978-1-77212-000-4, \$49.95 (paperback)



I am of that boomer generation that has no direct experience of war, and yet, in common with many Canadians, war has had a profound effect on the geography of my imagination—that amalgam of history, family memory, inherited attitudes, and place. My grandfather was a soldier in the First World War, both my parents participated in the Second World War, as did those of my wife. I grew up playing

war, dressing up in war surplus helmets and webbing. I was nurtured on war movies, both British and American, as well as on action novels like *The Cruel Sea*, *The Naked and the Dead*, and countless others set against the background of war. The mature self encountered writing much more critical of war, such as *All Quiet on the Western Front* or the memoirs of Robert Graves and Siegfried Sassoon. In company with many Canadians, I am aware of the many war memorials across this country, as well as those in France. This experience links these geographically and historically distant events with contemporary Canadian culture.

I begin in such a personal way in order to underscore the importance of Sherrill Grace's topic, "The Two World Wars in Canadian Literature and the Arts 1977–2007." The importance rests on two truths: the significance of the two wars in Canadian collective memory, and the mediating function of art and literature both in responding to the past and looking to the future, enriching the geography of our imagination in the process what Grace describes as a "shared landscape of memory" (p. 67).

While focussing on literature and the arts in Canada in a 30-year span, the book examines an enormous range of novels, plays, histories, memoirs, painting, and film, although most of the examples are taken from fiction. This selection is enlarged by references to many works of art and literature outside both the core period and Canada. As well, the author applies literary critical theory to further bring meaning to her subject. Behind this, there is a post-modern bias towards letting the texts speak for themselves without imposing too much order or critical interjection from above. Thus, at the end of her very long introduction, she writes, "I strive to practise, as a literary scholar and humanist, that complex ethical act of listening called for by Lamberti and Fortunati and evoked by the artists I discuss" (p. 93, author's emphasis).

Apart from the long introduction and a short intermezzo discussing interwar writing, the book falls into two main halves: the first treating responses to the First World War, and the second covering responses to the Second. Principal works discussed in the first section are the novels *The Wars*, *Broken Ground*, *Three Day Road*; the plays *Billy Bishop Goes to War*, *The Lost Boys*, *Mary's Wedding*, and *Vimy*; the films *Going Home*, *The Great War*, and *Passchendaele*; and the non-fiction works *Tapestry of War* by Sandra Gwyn, and *Danger Tree* by David Macfarlane. The second half of the book examines the novels *Obasan*, *The Ash Garden*, *Burning Vision*, and *The Wreckage*; the plays *Fugitive Pieces*, *Hana's Suitcase*, *None is Too Many*, and *Waiting For the Parade*; a memoir *Artist At War* by Charles Comfort; a history *Ortona* by Mark Zuehlke; the film *The War* by McKenna; and a television miniseries *The Valour and the Horror*. This list does not include the dozens of other literary and artistic works referred to by the author throughout the book, so that its bibliography covers 37 pages. Despite this range, the readings are by no means a comprehensive list, nor are they always representative of the period.

The author's strength, befitting a distinguished professor of Canadian literature at the University of British Columbia, is her ability to explain techniques of voice, flashbacks, and other means to fuse disparate periods of time and places into a single imaginary piece. This is especially true of the texts in the second half, where she notes, "each of the texts I examine takes its readers to a Europe of the past but returns us firmly to Canadian home ground in the present" (p. 365).

The author's approach to the topic is that of a literary postmodernist rather than that of an historian. The texts are taken from an arbitrarily determined time period, interspersed with other examples from other periods and places. The choices seem subjective rather than representative of objective themes. The whole is thrown together and examined on a single plane. There is little interest in examining the origins of memory or the development of national myths, no interest in distinguishing between fiction and reality, and a reluctance to engage in analytical or empirical historical thought. A revealing insight into her mode of thought is in her discussion of a passage in Findlay's *The Wars*, where she makes the following remarks: "That said, and while I agree entirely with those who characterize *The Wars* as a postmodern text that challenges, even undermines the dominant view of history as truth—the story of what really happened—the art of a sequence like this lies in its realism" (p. 132).

Grace seems to belong to that school of thought that believes there are no truths, only interpretations. This postmodern approach may be responsible for a rambling

and discursive writing style, where text after text is cited with little structure or argument. There are so many digressions and so much piling on of detail that any point the argument becomes lost to the reader. The overly-long introduction does not serve the subject well, serving to delay and obfuscate rather than open up the texts. It is not until page 61 that the reader is introduced to Findlay's *The Wars*, which, we are told, is a key text of the book. But the same paragraph that introduces the novel wanders off to discuss truth in history, ending with the sentence, "To call official history to account one must know what the history claims and, thus, if and where it fails" (p. 62). Chapter Three opens with a promise to discuss *The Wars*, and the reader is again reminded of its importance, along with two other novels — *Broken Ground* and *Three Day Road*. But following this tease there is a long digression in which several other works, including Jane Urquhart's *The Stone Carvers* and Margaret Atwood's *The Blind Assassin*, are discussed at length. It is sixteen pages later, on page 121, that we finally arrive at an actual discussion of Findlay's masterpiece. At this point we get a competent reading of the novel. Given the importance placed on the realism of the background, it would have been useful to know where Findlay found his inspiration: was it Charles Yale Harrison? Will Bird? Robert Graves? No clues are offered.

The second half of the book proceeds in a similar conversational way, with a selection of readings leaning to the exposition of the horror of war rather than any heroic or noble qualities. The concluding chapter was an opportunity to offer some clarifying notions. But instead of looking for themes and ideas in the preceding pages, the author introduces a completely new cast of authors and titles, beating the reader into unthinking submission. Some conclusions that are offered, such as the following sentence, bear no relation to the evidence presented in the previous chapters: "The Great War has often been remembered and imagined by Canadians, including those writing since 1977, as a unifying myth of the nation and one about which we can and should feel proud" (p. 455).

A literary postmodern approach aims to give the reader a direct experience of a place or time, without filters of analysis or externally-applied structures. This book illustrates the limitations of this approach. It is unable to provide meaningful insights into either the works themselves or the culture that produced them, while the writing is plagued by a stuttering style that makes too many digressions to arcane references. The poverty of postmodern thinking contributes to a multitude of sins, paramount, perhaps, being its absolution of the author from having to answer, or even ask, fundamental questions of both literary and cultural history. One question is what the documentary sources are for the historical fiction. Another question confronting any writer about Canadian culture is whether it is valid to confine one's area of study exclusively to Canadian writing, when Canadian culture is informed by an international body of writing, art, and cinema.

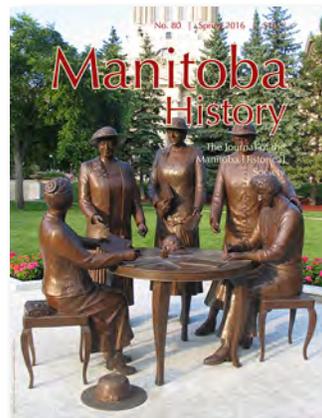
*Landscapes of War and Memory* is based on a personal selection of writing, art, and cinema from an arbitrarily derived span of time. One question that is asked — about the validity of official history — is dealt with in a superficial and naive way that would offend anyone educated in history. There is no attempt to be comprehensive or balanced. Any reader interested in the topic would be disappointed to see the omission of some Canadian classics: Billy Bishop's *Winged Warfare*, Farley Mowat's *And No Birds Sang*, and Manitoban Murray Peden's *A Thousand Shall Fall*. Throughout *Landscapes of War and Memory* the reader is given the impression of war as a terrible and gloomy experience, which, indeed for many it was. And, yet, as any Canadian youth brought up on war stories and films can attest, it could also be terribly exciting. So, too, there are other points of view concerning women's experience of war. My mother-in-law, for example, described the experience of many Canadian airwomen in her memoir, where she explained, "Enlistment meant taking part in the war effort, the chance to travel across Canada, make new friends, and not be dependent on one's own family."

Jonathan F. Vance's elegant history, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War*, published in 1997 provides an excellent introduction to how the memory of that war was formed and shaped in the interwar years. It is available in many public libraries across the country and no doubt will remain a classic on the topic for years to come. The same cannot be said for *Landscapes of War and Memory*.

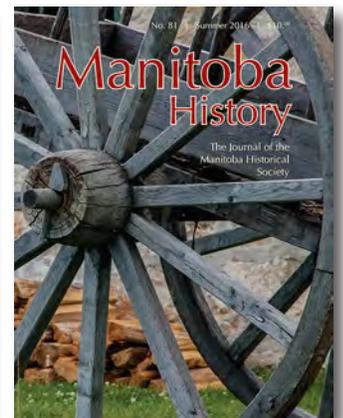
C.J. Taylor  
Ottawa

1. Joan L. Wright, *By the By: Memoirs of Joan Wright*, Ottawa: privately printed, 2009, p. 59.

## More Manitoba History



No. 80



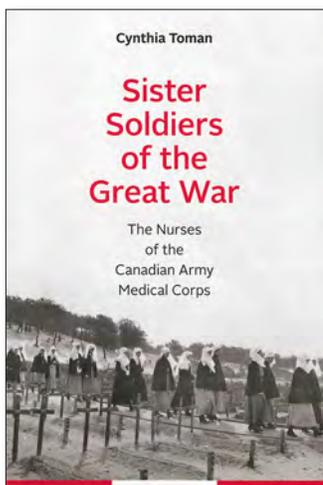
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**Cynthia Toman, *Sister Soldiers of the Great War: The Nurses of the Canadian Army Medical Corps*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2016, 312 pp. ISBN 9780774832144, \$34.95 (paperback)**

**Andrea McKenzie (ed.), *War-Torn Exchanges: The Lives and Letters of Nursing Sisters Laura Holland and Mildred Forbes*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2016, 268 pp. ISBN 9780774832540, \$32.95 (paperback)**



These two books from the University of British Columbia Press add immeasurably to the growing historiography on Canadian military nursing in the First World War, helping us to better understand not only nursing history and women's history, but the military medical system in which nurses played an integral role.

Toman's comprehensive analysis uses qualitative and quantitative sources to move the field beyond

the sometimes hagiographic approach of popular histories. Considering the few nurses whose stories have survived, Toman presents an impressive number of short biographical sketches. These, along with a demographic profile of the first women to serve in the Canadian military, reveal a great diversity of backgrounds. *Sister Soldiers*, through a painstaking analysis of attestation papers and military personnel files on all the nurses, also revises the long repeated estimate that there were 3,141 Canadian Nursing Sisters serving in the Canadian Armed Medical Corps. Eliminating duplications and errors, Toman corrects that number to 2,845, of which, interestingly, only 2,816 were actually trained nurses: apparently Matron-in-Chief Margaret Macdonald was not able to completely resist political pressures to take on non-nurses. Thus, included among the Nursing Sisters (a women-only title), were housekeepers, female physicians, and even a few wives of officers.

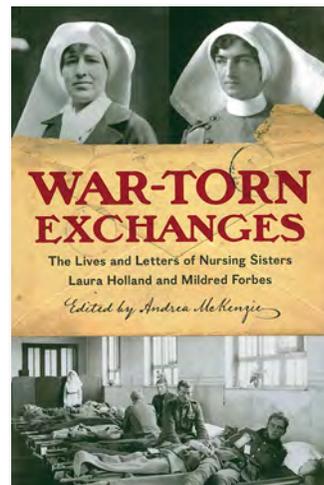
Building on some of her earlier work, which demonstrated that nurses identified as 'soldiers' and rejected the 'ministering angel' stereotype, Toman presents nurses as military personnel first and foremost. Even when working under harsh conditions—as in the Mediterranean where food and water were scarce, heat was oppressive, and dysentery, malaria, and other tropical diseases took a heavy toll—nurses were determined to stay as long as they were needed. In a chapter on sociability, Toman does not shy away from examining nurses' relationships with others, providing a portrait of nurses' social lives and friendships, including the travels they undertook during slow times, on leaves, or while waiting for re-assignment. Medical

officers, who often acted as 'superiors' (as they did in civilian hospitals), were members of a previously all-male military system, and were not always sure how their new female colleagues would fit in. Still, they functioned as friends, colleagues and fellow officers. Toman also sheds light on the role of orderlies, a hitherto shadowy force in the medical system. Orderlies were often older soldiers who were unable to do active service. They

outnumbered nurses two or three to one, and did much of the grunt-work in the hospital wards. Often coming under the nurses' authority, and/or receiving training from them, their resentment sometimes emerged. While the antagonism of British nurses—who persisted in treating Canadian Nursing Sisters as 'colonials'—is well documented in the literature, this nurse-orderly dynamic is part of the story hitherto ignored in the historiography.

At the practical level, readers will learn details of nurses' work in support of the Canadian Armed Medical Corps during the war, an element that is often missing because nurse memoirs were more likely to comment on the non-routine than the routine. *Sister Soldiers* provides a helpful 'roadmap' of the military medical system, showing readers where nurses could and couldn't serve, and what kinds of work they did, both medical and surgical. Toman does this expertly, as only a former nurse can, and in this sense *Sister Soldiers* is an excellent complement to her earlier book on the nurses of the Second World War, *An Officer and a Lady* (UBC Press, 2007).

Toman's *Sister Soldiers* quietly adds to the debate on the impact of the war on women, at least as it pertains to nurses. She approaches the subject of postwar experiences for nurses, many of whom tried to maintain their military connections by serving for as long as they could in Canadian hospitals for convalescent soldiers, though, sadly, most of these jobs were short-lived. Toman demonstrates that many nurses, despite their dedication to empire and the war effort, came to question the costs of war after it was over.



Some historians have linked postwar work and professional gains and even women's victory in the long suffrage battle to women's wartime 'contributions.' Others contend that the war left gender roles unchanged. Because nurses were perceived as being at the pinnacle of women's war work, their experiences shed light on this question. Nurses were certainly proud of their place in the military, believing that they were paving the way for professional women in the military, and enhancing the standing of nursing as a profession. Much has been made of Canada's Nursing Sisters being the first nurses, and hence the first women—not just in Canada but among western allies—to hold rank as officers in the military. Putting this in context, Toman explains that the military's motivation in granting rank was to keep these women firmly under military control, and that their relative rank gave Nursing Sisters only limited authority within the hospital. And, like other women after the war, most nurses were dismissed after demobilization. Despite these caveats, Toman shows that nurses held a certain agency within their caregiving role within the military. And in the larger sphere, they also took political roles. For example, Nursing Sister Rachel McAdams, a trained dietician, ran for and won political office in the Alberta legislature during the war.

Complementing Toman's book in a comprehensive but very different and more personal way, *War-Torn Exchanges* is the wonderful, rich cache of letters written by two nursing sisters and close friends, Laura Holland and Mildred Forbes, and edited by Andrea McKenzie. Holland wrote primarily to her mother, while Forbes wrote to her childhood friend, Cairine Wilson, who would later become the first female Senator in Canada. These letters take us from 1915 to the end of the war. These remarkable, candid letters illustrate the effect of wartime conditions on two women in their early thirties, revealing much about their relationships with each other, and with their colleagues. Holland and Forbes served first in Lemnos, Greece, an island near the coast of present day Turkey, where the conditions were so dismal that they threatened nurses' cohesion as a group, although not their resolve to continue serving. The hardships of these postings have long been known, but here we get a first-hand view of the daily effects of dire shortages and poor administration. With so little food available, a Nursing Matron's leadership was judged, fairly or not, on how good she was at procuring food from local sources. Water shortages are brought to life in descriptions of nurses working for months without being able to wash their hair or take a bath, and in the demoralizing impact on them trying to take care of fevered dysentery patients. Holland in particular expresses her frustrations with the military hierarchy, which she blamed for much of these hardships. Such conditions took their toll on all military personnel, and we see the personal impact of the first nurses' deaths from the vantage point of these two women. Both Forbes and Holland had varying degrees of dysentery in their first assignment, caring for each other as they best they could. Officers and orderlies, like nurses, also took sick.

After surviving Lemnos, the two nurses travelled to Cairo where they went sightseeing while waiting to be re-assigned. From there, they travelled to Salonika, on the Greek mainland, where heat and malaria were their greatest enemies: Forbes was struck with malaria, and Holland described days in which the temperature rose to as high as 107 degrees Fahrenheit. Cooler nights brought respite, but when medical staff worked on night duty it was nearly impossible to sleep during the day, as tents, set up on a plain with little shade, became blistering hot. At both these postings, the two nurses were disappointed to be treating only the moderately ill, rather than more critical injury cases, as would have been the case in France.

These letters are also testament to the support these nurses got from home, as family and friends sent many gifts, often by raising money in their home communities. They sent treats, usually for the soldiers, but also included necessities (and treats such as Christmas cake) for the nurses. The letters reinforce other sources in suggesting that nurses usually put the soldiers ahead of themselves. The letters also reveal the impact of military censorship, and the ingenious ways in which personnel circumnavigated it, whenever they could. Maintaining the communications link with home was absolutely essential for morale. But serving overseas certainly did not free nurses from sharing worries about loved ones left at home. Rather, it added a greater measure of responsibility. For instance, when Holland's nephew went missing, it caused great anxiety, and she and Forbes used their inside connections to gain information. When they eventually learned that the missing airman had been taken prisoner of war, the family was relieved for the news.

Next, the women travelled to Britain where Forbes was recalled to serve as Matron-in-Chief Margaret Macdonald's assistant through a particularly difficult time. A political controversy over the use of Canadian medical personnel in support of British (rather than Canadian) troops had caused a major upheaval in CAMC's administration. Holland nursed at No. 1 Hyde Park Place, a Canadian hospital for officers where she enjoyed a much more comfortable life than at Lemnos and Salonika. Forbes was a personal friend of Matron-in-Chief, and that friendship brought perks. Holland and Forbes were often entertained by Macdonald and her high-ranking friends. More importantly, it also helped ensure that she and Holland could avoid separation during the war, a possibility that caused them some considerable anxiety. Holland even turned down promotions to stay with her friend and the two often combined their individual living spaces into one, to make it as a 'home' for themselves. Macdonald accepted the importance of female-based support networks and understood their need to be together, assigning them to the same place throughout the war. While she was in England, Holland learned that she, along with most of the nurses who had suffered through the horrors of Lemnos, would be accorded a Royal Red Cross, 2<sup>nd</sup> class. Although she was very proud to attend the ceremony at Buckingham Palace and to meet Queen Alexandra, Holland could not quite

forgive Macdonald for not letting her share this special moment with her friend, Forbes. It appears that Macdonald was trying to avoid charges of favouritism toward her new assistant, and recommended Forbes for a medal later on during the war.

And finally, the nurses were moved to Casualty Clearing Station 2, near Ypres in France. Here, they would finally be plunged into the front line of nursing work. Casualty Clearing Stations were the closest nurses got to the front, and as CCS2 was such a busy one, it was a much coveted placement. Forbes and Holland arrived in mid-July 1917, just as the Third Battle of Ypres, Passchendaele got underway. Unlike Lemnos and Salonika where all the patients were medical, nurses here dealt with thousands of severely wounded and gassed soldiers. In what can only be described as assembly-line medicine, the nurses cared for patients who had to be treated quickly, and then either returned to the front or moved further down the line to a general or stationary hospital, usually within 24 to 48 hours. To get an indication of the intensity of the work, this clearing station admitted 3,396 patients during the month of July 1917, and in a scant five days, from July 31 to August 4, they admitted 3,566. Although by war's end Casualty Clearing Stations were becoming larger, the medical workforce averaged approximately thirteen to twenty-four medical officers, twenty nurses and various

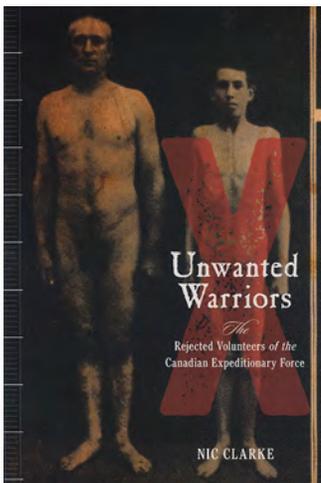
orderlies. Forbes and Holland, along with their colleagues, would have worked flat out, with little sleep, as casualties arrived by motor and by trains. Sometimes patients lay on stretchers which overflowed the station, and some patients were left outside, even in the rain, until someone could see them. Holland and Forbes were not demobilized until the spring of 1919, and, before coming home, they cared for many victims of the Spanish influenza pandemic.

After surviving all that they saw and experienced, nurses, like soldiers, were changed persons. Echoing Toman's observations of the group of nurses as a whole, the suffering these two nurses witnessed led to a certain disillusionment with the 'costs' of war. Illness also took its toll, especially on Forbes, but Holland went on to have a successful postwar career in which she combined nursing with social work, a decision that is foreshadowed in Holland's wartime observations of gender and class inequalities in the military system.

Both of these books are eminently readable and provide an excellent window into nurses' experience during the First World War—from clinical, military, and social perspectives. These books help us to understand who these people were, what they did within the military medical system of the First World War, and what it cost them.

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**Nic Clarke, *Unwanted Warriors: The Rejected Volunteers of the Canadian Expeditionary Force*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2015, 256 pp. ISBN 9780774828888, \$29.95 (paperback)**



What does an ideal soldier look like in the public imagination? What are the actual minimum physical requirements necessary for an effective soldier? These two questions have concerned many societies and many militaries, and they provide the competing concepts of appearance and function which clash in the heroic *über-mensch* of the recruiting poster and the decidedly less glamorous reality of military medical examinations. What a

society expects its warriors to embody, and what physical attributes a military requires its recruits to possess are interconnected and yet distinct structures.

Canadian War Museum historian Nic Clarke's most recent work, *Unwanted Warriors*, explores this tension of expectation and function in the context of Canadian recruitment during the Great War. Clarke estimates that

between 1914 and 1918, between 100,000 and 200,000 Canadian men were rejected as unfit for service in the CEF. Considering that Canada's pre-war population was only seven million, this means a significant minority were forced to deal with the trauma of being labelled 'unfit' in a society that viewed disability as emasculating and even threatening. By analyzing the personnel files of 3,400 Canadian recruits deemed unfit for service either at Canada's primary training camp at Valcartier, Quebec in 1914 or after having arrived in England, Clarke is able to build both an intimate understanding of the criteria of the medical examination itself, as well as the consequences of medical rejection upon the public and private lives of these men.

Clarke dedicates the first four of the book's seven chapters to the evolving process of determining and implementing the physical standards which functioned as the basis of the Canadian military's wartime medical examination. Although it is the rejected volunteers who are the explicit subject of the book, it is the mechanism and evolution of the medical examination itself which Clarke explores in the greatest detail. This is partly a practical concession—since it is only by successfully navigating several medical examinations that a recruit could become a

true member of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF)—and partly a result of the ideological (rather than explicitly functional) foundations for many of the mandatory physical requirements evaluated by the exam. As the Canadian army's understanding of and requirements for the Great War evolved, so too did the requirements for the Canadian recruit.

For example, Clarke stresses the transition from a dichotomous model in 1914 that classified recruits as simply 'fit' or 'unfit' to the hierarchical model of 1918 which recognized multiple levels of ability for different kinds of military service. Just as the militaries of the Great War had struggled to adapt to the new realities of industrial warfare, with its complex logistical and support requirements, so too Canadian medical examinations evolved to recognize that not all recruits needed to be capable of front-line combat. This "A-D" ranking system, first implemented in rudimentary form in 1916, gave medical examiners the flexibility to identify recruits' potential ability rather than immediately disqualifying them based upon inability. As Clarke notes, "The victories at Vimy Ridge and Passchendaele and during the Hundred Days were achieved with many men who would have been rejected as unfit to serve in 1914" (p. 9).

Clarke also documents an overall decrease in physical requirements for Canadian recruits; a result, he argues, both of changing perceptions of fitness and the increasing manpower needed to meet promised expansions in the size of the CEF. Before the onset of hostilities in 1914, Canadian infantry had to be at least 5 feet 4 inches tall, demonstrate an expanded chest circumference of 34 inches, and have no reliance upon either dentures or glasses. By 1917, infantry height requirements had been reduced to five feet (although other branches had stricter requirements), and regulations allowed the use of glasses and dentures to augment vision and consumption, respectively. The latter two changes in particular had a pronounced effect upon the size of Canada's recruiting pool, since 34 percent of Clarke's 3,400-strong sample group from 1914 were rejected for either substandard eyesight (24 percent), or poor teeth (10 percent). Both the vision requirements and dental requirements were pilloried by civilian critics and rejected volunteers alike as being irrelevant to the business of war. In the words of an angry Scottish Canadian recruit appearing in a 1914 *Punch* cartoon, "I dinna want tae bite the Germans; I'm offerin' tae shoot them" (p. 81).

The next most abundant reasons for rejection—varicose veins (7 percent), and varicocele (6 percent)—were also grounds for contention according to Clarke, illustrating how the ambiguity of medical requirements could leave the medical examiner considerable leeway to use his own discretion to evaluate recruits. Canadian recruiting regulations into 1917 stated that individuals with 'marked' varicocele were to be rejected, yet gave no description of how 'marked' the condition had to be before it became grounds for rejection. The examiner was also required to subjectively evaluate a recruit's age and intelligence

during the examination. *Unwanted Warriors* consequently shows that the evolution of Canadian medical examinations during the Great War was also a struggle to standardize and demystify the amorphous concept of the acceptable Canadian soldier.

In the last three chapters, Clarke explores the socio-psychological costs incurred by those men rejected for medical reasons, and their collective attempts to navigate those costs. As with any imaginary community, the handsome, masculine 'soldier' archetype of the Great War was partially defined by its opposite: the degenerate, perhaps 'scrofular', shirker. The glorification of the former led, by direct consequence, to the condemnation of the latter; a condemnation that was tangibly expressed in the confrontation of suspected shirkers by the recruiting officer and by the overeager patriot in the streets of Canadian cities. Clarke explains that since society evaluated potential recruits primarily on their visual characteristics, and since the most common reasons for medical rejection (poor vision, bad teeth, or circulatory conditions) were not visible, rejected volunteers were often lumped into the category of shirker despite their attempts to serve their country. Clarke documents several extreme cases where men killed themselves rather than live with the shame of having been rejected, and makes some preliminary connections between the popularity of eugenics ideas in early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Canada and the perception of the medically unfit as a burden to their nation. In this rather stark Darwinian sense, Clarke argues that to be declared unfit "was a direct assault on one's self-worth, honour, and masculinity" (p. 119).

To combat these accusations, many rejected volunteers sought to differentiate themselves from shirkers by stressing that they had attempted to serve their country. In 1916, the Dominion government created a three-tier system of war service badges to help returning veterans or those rejected for service identify themselves to recruiters and the general public. Clarke argues that these decorations could be seen as either a badge of honour or a mark of shame, and were not entirely embraced by those rejected for medical reasons. Still, the formation in 1918 of the Honourably Rejected Volunteers of Canada Association proves that a significant number of rejected volunteers saw their status as potentially important, both for redeeming their place in a post-war society, and in gaining access to at least some of the government-mandated benefits enjoyed by returning veterans.

Clarke devotes his last chapter to those who actively pursued a qualification of medically unfit as a way to avoid donning the khaki while still maintaining an 'honourable' veneer. He highlights the numerous ways in which men sought to manipulate the system by feigning various ailments (often short-sightedness), or how civilians (generally women) could use accounts of their own illness or distress to have family members released from service. In this way the 'casualties' of the system could also find ways to empower themselves and manipulate their circumstances for personal advantage.

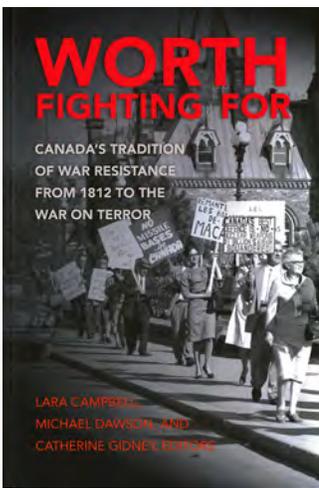
*Unwanted Warriors* is in many ways an exploration into a new theatre, and Clarke is conscientious in limiting the scope of his work to the concrete bones of both the examination itself and the testimony of the rejected recruits. Clarke weaves in the occasional popular source in the form of *Punch* cartoons, period literature, and even newspaper advertisements, serving as splashes of colour against the central analysis of Clarke's 3,400 medical records augmented by subsidiary documents and personal letters. It is obvious that Clarke intends his work to be a foundation for more comprehensive research, since he nods to the influence of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century concepts of masculinity, disability, and nationhood upon these 'unwanted warriors,' without attempting to systematically elaborate upon said connections. In this Clarke is very much a military historian,

and it will be left to the anthropologist and sociologist (among others) to fully explore this further.

Still, *Unwanted Warriors* is a well-researched and novel contribution to the history of Canada's participation in the Great War. It provides a solid foundation for new research possibilities, and highlights a Canadian community which has long been confined to the historical sideline. Ultimately, Clarke's work describes both the actions of these rejected volunteers and the evolution of the medical examination itself as attempts to redefine the concept of disability, and, in so doing, better reflect the needs of the Canadian military as well as the social value of those declared 'unfit'.

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**Lara Campbell, Michael Dawson, and Catherine Gidney, eds., *Worth Fighting For: Canada's Tradition of War Resistance from 1812 to the War on Terror*. Toronto: Between the Lines Books, 2015, 313 pages. ISBN 978-1-77113-179-7, \$34.95 (paperback)**



This is a valuable book. In light of the recent Canadian government's emphasis on Canada's military accomplishments since the War of 1812, this edited book offers another perspective. Spanning 200 years, from the War of 1812 to the current War on Terror, the book contains 17 chapters that tell of war resistance in Canada. According to the editors, a wide-ranging, multi-faceted, and complex anti-war tradition has

"shaped the legal foundations of modern recognition of conscientious objection" in Canada (p. 15).

Chapters 3 to 6 analyze Canada's overseas wars in South Africa's Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) and in the First World War, and their legacies. Amy Shaw argues that in the Anglo-Boer War, the peace movement was almost paralyzed. War resisters included French-Canadians, western farmers, Maritime Catholics, and church ministers. But with differing views of nationalism, imperialism, and English-French relations, "almost no group, religious or political, maintained a united front" (p. 47). According to Geoff Keelan, Canada's "most vocal, influential, and consistent" war dissenter during the First World War was the French-Canadian journalist, politician, and nationalist, Henri Bourassa (p. 52). His dissent was both political and religious. Politically, Bourassa criticized British imperialism and the war's economic and social costs. At a deeper level, his Ultramontane Catholic loyalty infused his writing with moral certainty and undergirded his defence of Catholic Quebec. David Tough challenges the traditional notion that the legacy of the war was democracy in Canada. Rather, it was the *war resistance* whose legacy was democracy. The mobilization of women, farmers, workers, and French Canadians against conscription led to women's right to vote; to the birth of third political parties, strikes and other forms of agitation; and to the introduction of income taxes. Cynthia Commachio analyzes "the controversy over [compulsory] school-based cadet training for English-Canadian boys" in Ontario after the First World War (p. 79). Cadet campaigns rose in the 1920s, declined in the 1930s, rose again during the Second World War, and then ended in 1947. While the debate raised issues of gender and what it meant to be a male in the modern world, peace organizations denounced "the education of children for

persisted in Canada from the late 1700s to today. Besides pacifist church groups and anti-conscription protests in the First and Second World Wars, this tradition includes women, workers, farmers, teachers, students, politicians, and others who have challenged wars both on North American soil and overseas. The editors' purpose is to "recalibrate our understanding of Canadian history by documenting Canada's long tradition of war resistance," for how we understand our history has "real consequences" for what we teach and how we behave (p. 2).

The first two chapters discuss pacifists in Upper Canada before Confederation. Jonathan Seiling, and Ross Fair after him, argue that from 1793 to 1867, religious groups (mainly Quakers, Mennonites, and Tunkers [Brethren in Christ]) successfully argued their objection to war despite a hostile colonial militia environment, stalemated governments, decades of exemption penalties, and great social and financial cost. Their advocacy gained lasting rights and

war' as the basis of militarism, the root cause of all conflict" (p. 81).

Chapters 7 and 8 discuss religious conscientious objection during the Second World War. Conrad Stoesz notes that while all conscientious objectors (COs) faced a degree of hostility from government officials, mobilization boards, and mainstream society, those from the historic peace churches found it easier to register as COs than those from other groups. Most accepted alternative service for the government such as agriculture and reforestation. This benefitted Canada's essential industries and, in the end, broadened the COs' world views. Linda Ambrose recounts the case of J. E. Purdie, a non-pacifist Pentecostal minister who worked tirelessly to win military exemption for his Bible College students. His insistence that church ministry was more important, that military chaplaincy could replace combat, and that Pentecostals deserved treatment equal to other denominations, illustrates that the motivations of religious war resisters were often complex.

Chapters 9 to 15 discuss Canadian Cold War resistance to nuclear weapons and the Vietnam War. Ian McKay follows the life of Margaret Ells Russell, a Canadian who led the "Women Strike for Peace" (WSP) movement in Washington, D.C. from 1961 to 1965. In communication with international women's organizations, WSP embodied the activism of women against war, nuclear weapons, and the communist scare. The 1963 World Congress of Women in Moscow brought Russell beyond liberal internationalism to "critical, compassionate identification with the women of Vietnam," and convinced her that the United States needed to get out of Vietnam (p. 129). Marie Hammond-Callaghan discusses Canada's Voice of Women (VOW). The VOW was born among women concerned about nuclear weapons, and by 1961 its membership reached 5000. Global alliances and the more radical Quebec wing (La Voix des femmes) led VOW in 1962 to embrace progressive, feminist, and New Left positions. VOW challenged the government on nuclear weapons and the Cold War binary paradigm, and in the process challenged gender roles in Canada. Braden Hutchinson examines another anti-war front that involved VOW and others: war toy activism during the 1960s and 1970s. Although figures are unavailable on how much the campaign affected the sale of war toys, the anti-war toy campaign sparked debate not only on nuclear weapons, the Vietnam War, and peace; but also on definitions of masculinity, and perspectives in child development and psychology.

Bruce Douville analyzes two Canadian peace protests at La Macaza, Quebec in June and September 1964 "to protest Canada's decision to allow American nuclear weapons on Canadian soil" (p. 161). Although the nuclear weapons remained until 1972, the protests were significant for several reasons: for the first time Canadian peace activists used large-scale civil disobedience; the protests brought together a broad cross-section of activists; activist strategy became more assertive; awareness moved beyond single issues to interconnected social concerns; and youth "critique of state

power" became more radical (p. 170). Jessica Squires shows how, from 1966 to 1973, the scattered anti-draft movement developed into a robust, efficient movement with expertise in immigration issues, the media, public opinion, job and housing information, and "legal consequences of resisting the draft or deserting the military" (p. 184). It influenced government immigration policy and "Canada's self-image as a peacekeeping nation" (p. 184). Tarah Brookfield tells of Claire Culhane, a grandmother who, while serving in a Vietnamese clinic, learned that Canada, as "the butcher's helper," was selling military hardware to the United States while CIDA struck a "humanitarian posture." For years she pressed government ministers "to reclaim Canada's neutrality and help end the war." Speeches, letters to government, protests in Parliament, and hunger fasts on Parliament Hill made Culhane "the most recognizable anti-war figure of the era" (p. 188). Rose Fine-Meyer analyzes the anti-war influence of Toronto teachers. The 1960s "peace movements, protests against the Vietnam War, ... women's movement, labour union activism," and the influence of social history all shaped the teaching content of many teachers into the 1980s (p. 201). Those influenced by the Vietnam War challenged traditional war narratives, as teachers must still do, for "a good teacher is a revolutionary" (p.201).

The last two chapters concern the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Unlike what happened to Vietnam War resisters, not one Iraq War resister received refugee status. Luke Stewart seeks to correct the "inaccurate arguments" articulated by government ministers (p. 217). The refugee applicants' major argument was that according to the UN Charter, the Iraq War was illegal. Further, the punishment of war deserters, when the global community considers the war illegal, amounts to persecution, and soldiers who enlisted in a war may later object as their knowledge about the war's legality evolves. Therefore, Stewart says, "the war resisters are legitimate refugees and conscientious objectors" (p. 226). Michael Dawson and Catherine Gidney analyze the 2009 controversy over Canada's national anthem. One New Brunswick school principal, known for his peace activism, played the anthem once a month rather than daily. A wave of patriotic indignation led to his resignation, revision of the New Brunswick *Education Act*, heated rhetoric in Parliament, and a flurry of media debate. For many, "singing of the anthem" was linked to "support and respect for the troops" in Afghanistan (p. 239). The authors conclude that those who challenge popular "notions of Canadian patriotism" face very real consequences, such as public shaming and physical intimidation (p. 229).

A major strength of this book is its coverage of 200 years of anti-war sentiments, which makes clear that war resistance in Canada has a long history and deep roots. The many angles from which the authors write — with analysis from religious, gender, political, economic, social, and personal perspectives — demonstrate that war-resistance was also multi-faceted.

All the chapters are brief and readable, useful for both scholars and lay readers. Many chapters helpfully locate their story or analysis in historical and political context. Some chapters, such as that on the national anthem controversy, need more historical context. All the chapters end with a helpful, structured conclusion that explains why their subject matter is significant. Sometimes the historical contexts that appear in these conclusions could have appeared earlier in the chapter. There is some unevenness in that some chapters argue a strong thesis while others offer mainly a summary with little argument. In some chapters the authors try to write objectively, while in others the authors' biases and passion emerge clearly.

Unfortunately, statistics are in short supply. Only four chapters provide statistics on the number of COs in the Second World War, the number of members in VOW, the number of protesters at La Macaza, and the number of American draft dodgers in Canada. It would be good to have an idea of the number of war resisters in pre-Confederation Upper Canada, in the Anglo-Boer War, the First World War, the inter-war years, the Cadet training controversy, the war-toy campaign, the anti-nuclear movement, and against the Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan

wars. Further, it would be desirable to place these statistics in context, relative to the larger Canadian population. This would help readers gauge the relative strength of the anti-war movement in each chapter and throughout Canadian society over the years.

The subtitle, "Canada's Tradition of War Resistance from 1812 to the War on Terror," is perhaps not quite true to the nature of the book, for the articles, written by separate authors, offer episodes and individual cases of war resistance, rather than a tradition. Thus, continuity is missing; the book is a collection of case studies rather than a study of a tradition or stream. Stronger links from the beginning in 1812 to the end in 2012 would offer a valuable sense of historical continuity. This is important because war resistance is more profound when it is continuous, even in times of peace, than when it is episodic. We need a book with an ongoing narrative to highlight what the title calls a "tradition."

But no book can do everything, and this one does a lot. It has a broad scope and offers an often overlooked but important perspective. It is well worth reading.

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Menno Simons College

**Frederick George Scott, *The Great War As I Saw It*. Introduction by Mark G. McGowan, Carleton Library Series 230, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014, 376 pages. ISBN 978-07735-4424-6, \$24.95 (paperback)**

**Will R. Bird, *And We Go On: A Memoir of the Great War*. Introduction and Afterword by David Williams, Carleton Library Series 229, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014, 280 pages. ISBN 978-07735-4396-6, \$24.95 (paperback)**

**Philippe Bieler, *Onward Dear Boys: A Family Memoir of the Great War*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014, 340 pages. ISBN 978-0-7735-4468-0, \$34.95 (paperback)**

McGill-Queens University Press has published three memoirs of the First World War that remind us of the tremendous human cost of that cataclysmic event. Two of them—F. G. Scott's *The Great War As I Saw It* and Will Bird's *And We Go On*—are re-issues of books that were published in 1922 and 1930, respectively, while the third, Philippe Bieler's *Onward Dear Boys*, is an original publication.

There is a passage in Robertson Davies' novel *Fifth Business* that may have been inspired by Bird's memoir: "Commanders and historians are the people to discuss wars; I was in the infantry, and most of the time I did not know where I was or what I was doing, except that I was obeying orders and trying not to be killed in any of the variety of horrible ways open to me."<sup>1</sup> This fictional passage aptly suggests the difference between memoir and history.

A memoir is not intended to be an appraisal or narration of an event, but rather an account of the experience of that event. A memorialist often steps back to find meaning, but from a personal, not a social or political, perspective. From this perspective, then, a successful memoir should have three elements: a strong personal narrative, a record of sights, sounds and smells, and some articulation of how they felt about that experience. Seen with these criteria, the Bird and Scott memoirs are fine examples of the genre, perhaps the best written by Canadians. Both men had extraordinary experiences, both kept records of what they saw, and both are skilled writers. Bieler, on the other hand, is writing from the present, using an unpublished manuscript of his grandmother, letters and notes from his grandfather and from four of the sons who served overseas,

and his own narrative structure and contextual comments. Thus the book is more family history than the first-person memoirs of the other two books.

*And We Go On* and *The Great War As I Saw It* have merited two very competent introductions. Mark McGowan has the easier task in introducing the better-known work of F. G. Scott. He underlines the significance of the memoir to later generations of historians writing of the war. "It has been read by any serious student of Canada's military history," he tells us, "and remains one of the cited war testimonies among Canadian scholars of the Great War" (p. viii). He then provides some useful context for the memoir, briefly describing the position of churches and the war, the army chaplaincy, and Scott's subsequent post-war pursuits. Perhaps more could have been made of Duff Crerar's *Padres in No Man's Land*, providing more context about Scott's history in the army, and more about the sense of the war as religious crusade. Nonetheless, as an introduction it serves the reader well.

David Williams' task is more difficult because, although *And We Go On* is a deserving classic, it is largely unknown, having been long out of print and overshadowed by Bird's truncated re-writing of the memoir published in 1968 under the title, *Ghosts Have Warm Hands*. Williams ably sorts out the differences between the two books and makes a convincing argument that the earlier version is the better book. Moreover, he asserts that *And We Go On* is the equal of internationally acclaimed books such as Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* and Siegfried Sassoon's *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* (p. ix), a claim that this reviewer does not dispute. Williams also convincingly suggests the possible influence of Bird's writing on novelists like Robertson Davies, Timothy Findlay, and Joseph Boyden. More could have been written about the historical context of the memoir. For example, it would be useful to know that much of Bird's fighting experience centred on the Canadian Corps' push for Passchendaele after the capture of Vimy Ridge in the spring of 1917. In that short period, the Canadians suffered some 15,000 casualties out of 20,000 troops. Three out of four men were killed or wounded during this offensive, an appalling statistic that would have coloured the perspective of anyone surviving that awful experience. Williams makes use of the Clarke Irwin collection at the McMaster University Library, but does not seem to have availed himself of the Bird papers at Dalhousie. Nonetheless, these quibbles aside, Williams, like McGowan, provides a useful introduction to the subject.

*Onward Dear Boys* is a different sort of memoir, for the memorialist is also the editor and so its introduction works differently from the others. Bieler describes the family's origins, its members, and gives something of their background before going on to explain how the rest of the book works: "There are therefore three voices: those of the boys [Bieler's father and uncles], those of my grandparents, and my own voice relating the news of the day as I have derived it from numerous sources" (p. xviii). Unlike the

other two books, therefore, the contextualization of the introduction continues throughout the text.

While *Onward Dear Boys* is an interesting account of a family's experience of the war — the parents were active on the home front while four sons served overseas — it lacks the immediacy of the narratives of Scott and Bird. The story is broken up between the principal historical actors: the parents, Charles and Blanche, and sons Etienne, Andre, Jean, and Philippe. Much of the story is told through correspondence and, although the letters from home can have considerable detail, the letters from the front tend to be bland, constrained by military and self-censorship. The impact is further diffused by multiple voices: the original correspondence, Blanche's subsequent family history, and grandson Philippe Bieler's historical gloss. The individual stories are not without interest. Brothers Etienne, Andre, and Jean interrupted their studies at the beginning of the war to enlist as private soldiers — Etienne and Andre in the infantry, and Jean in the medical corps. Etienne's mathematical background got him transferred to the artillery as an officer, and toward the end of the war he joined a defence research establishment in London. Andre was wounded and then transferred to an army map unit. A fourth brother, Philippe, was too young to join up at the beginning of the war, but enlisted on his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1916. He died a year later of a sudden illness in France. So, while these are individually interesting stories, they don't form a particularly compelling narrative, and it lacks the broader appeal of the other two books.

The other memoirs, however, have strong stories and read almost as novels. Frederick George Scott was an Anglican minister in Quebec City, senior enough in the church to be addressed as Canon Scott. In 1914 he was 53 years old but, as chaplain to the 8<sup>th</sup> Royal Rifles, he considered it his duty to volunteer for overseas service. Before the end of the year he found himself in the English camp where the Canadian 1<sup>st</sup> Division was being trained. When, in February, 1915, the Division was ordered to France, Scott was determined to stay with his men, despite having received orders to report to a military hospital in England. With no clear chain of command in place for the army chaplains, Scott found it easy to stow away to France where, for several months at least, he became a kind of camp follower, begging transportation, meals, and accommodation.

Canon Scott as a guerilla chaplain, operating independently and without orders, is a main thread of the author's narrative. There is a bumptiousness to Scott, as he presumes on the tolerance of others to support his Quixotic quest to bring Christ's message to his men. Besides leading church services and giving holy communion, he would discourage gambling and lecture the men on the importance of a smart turnout. Sympathetic faces could be rewarded with a poetry recitation, regardless of their fondness for Erato's art. But Scott has many endearing qualities: he showed a genuine concern for the material well-being of the troops, he would venture out to the front

lines, earning him the respect of the men, and, perhaps above all, he has a self-mocking sense of humour as revealed in the following anecdote. One evening he was reciting one of his poems to an officer when shells began to fall near where they were standing.

“In spite of the beauty of the poem, my friend began to get restless, and I was faced with the problem of either hurrying the recitation and thereby spoiling the effect of the rhythm, or trusting to his artistic temperament and going on as nothing was happening. I did the latter and went on unmoved by the exploding shells. I thought that the major would see that the climax of the poem had not yet been reached and was worth waiting for. I was mistaken.... He left me standing in the road with the last part of the poem and its magnificent climax still in my throat. I looked after him for a moment or two, then turned sorrowfully, lamenting the depravity of human nature, and pursued my journey” (p. 196).

This ironic humour appears throughout the memoir, as in the episode when he pursues a British officer believing him to be a German spy, or while recounting his continuing attempts to build up his empire beyond a batman, acquiring a driver, stableman, choir assistant, and boxer. The latter served as a kind of recreation organizer.

But mixed in with the rollicking yarn thread of the narrative is a very dark view of the war. Two examples stand out. Scott devotes an entire chapter, entitled “A Tragedy of War,” to the story of a soldier to be shot for cowardice. Scott was asked “to go and see him and prepare him for death” (p. 210). Scott spoke with the prisoner and discovered that he had enlisted at the beginning of the war, had participated in many battles, and had only caved in for the last one, probably more from battle fatigue than any lack of moral fibre. He begged the commanding officer for clemency, but was turned down. The inevitable outcome provoked one of Scott’s bitterest statements of the war: “I have seen many ghastly sights in the war, and hideous forms of death but nothing ever brought home to me so deeply and with cutting force the hideous nature of the war ...” (p. 215).

Rivalling the story of the executed soldier is his description of finding his son’s body on the battlefield. This is a shorter and more emotionally detached account than the story of the condemned soldier, but the description is no less moving. Accompanied only by a soldier who knew the location of the body, Scott went out into no-man’s land. Although the body had been buried and marked with a post, a hand protruded from the ground with a signet ring that allowed the father to identify the body as that of his son.

“The mist was lifting now and the sun to the east was beginning to light up the ground. We heard

the crack of bullets, for the Germans were sniping us. I made the runner go down into a shell-hole, while I read the burial service, and then took off the ring. I looked over the ground where the charge had been made. There lay Regina Trench, and far beyond it, standing out against the morning light, I saw the villages of Pys and Miraumont which were our objective. It was a strange scene of desolation, for the November rains had made the battlefields a dreary, sodden waste. How many of our brave men had laid down their lives as the purchase price of that consecrated soil?” (p. 156).

It is ironic that the deepest tragedy can inspire the finest writing.

Besides his vivid descriptions of the war, Scott’s memoir contributed to a thread of post-war memory: the war as a building block of Canadian nationhood. There are two aspects to this theme. The first is a sense of national community that grew from the common experience of the Canadian Corps. When he first saw the soldiers training in England, Scott wrote: “I think that the lessons of unselfishness and the duty of pulling together were being stamped upon the lives that had hitherto been at loose ends” (p. 15). Far from their being the lost generation, Scott repeatedly alludes to the moral superiority of these men, implicitly suggesting that the returning soldiers will contribute positively to the improvement of Canadian society. Scott’s second argument in support of the war as a nation-building event is the notion that it gave Canada a status independent of Britain on the world stage, an idea that is commonplace now but was novel in 1922. Again, describing the formation of the Canadian Corps he wrote: “Here was Canada’s quickening into national life and girding on the sword to take her place among the independent nations of the world” (p. 17).

Will Bird’s *And We Go On* has all the immediacy of Scott’s memoir. It, too, reads like a novel, and is a focussed account of Bird’s experience in the trenches from 1917 until the Armistice. His story begins with him working in a Saskatchewan wheat field in 1916. His brother Steve had enlisted the year before while he had been turned down for health reasons. Steve is killed and his ghost appears before the brother, causing Bird to drop his pitch fork and return to his native Nova Scotia where he joined the newly formed Nova Scotia Highland Brigade.

The ghost is a recurring image in Bird’s memoir. Often it takes the form of his brother tapping him on the shoulder to warn of imminent danger or guide him back to his trench from no-man’s land. But ghosts are also conflated with the many soldiers that died on the battlefield, whose spirits formed an invisible host, as apparent in the author’s visit to the Mont St. Eloi battlefield one evening:

“In the twilight, just before darkness, we stood and looked down over the Ridge on the enemy side. The first flares rose, in scattered places, and we

could not distinguish the lines. The air was damp and chilling, an unearthly feeling predominated. The dead man, the solitary flares, the captured ground gave me a sense of ghosts about and one realized the tragedy of the stricken hill. Many, many men had died on that tortured cratered slope" (p. 46).

This single scene, reminiscent of Scott's description of the battlefield in front of Regina Trench, can serve as a portrait of the entire western front.

At a time when the entire Canadian Corps was suffering an enormous number of casualties, Bird's occupation as scout, sniper, and reconnaissance patroller repeatedly going out into no-man's land and occasionally raiding enemy trenches, was particularly dangerous. While his account of these exploits makes for exciting reading, one can also see how it must have been extremely stressful as, one by one or two by two, his comrades disappear. It is in this context that the two forms of ghost serve a useful purpose. The presence of a personal ghost explains why he survived when so many of his companions did not, while on the other hand, as name after name goes on the casualty list, the growing army of ghosts behind him takes form, rather like the dead in the famous poem by John McRae. This sentiment is articulated by Bird's friend Tommy at the end of the war: "'Bill,' he said, 'while it lasted I didn't

want to get mine. I sweat buckets when I was in it those last few weeks, but now I wish — oh how I wish — that I was under one of them white crosses. I don't want to go back and leave the boys'" (p. 223).

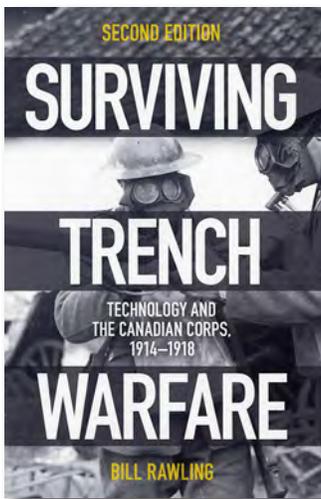
It is this survivor syndrome that leads Bird, along with other returning veterans, to always feel apart from the rest of Canada, tied more to the dead than the living. "We could no more make ourselves articulate than could those who would not return; we were in a world apart, prisoners, in chains that would never loosen till death freed us" (p. 231).

Both Scott and Bird feel immense sadness at the end of the war at a time when others may have felt a reason to celebrate. Although Scott always remains more positive in tone than Bird, he, too has a downbeat ending to his narrative in contrast to the optimism of 1914. While listening to the cathedral bells of London celebrate the peace accord, Scott reflected: "The monstrous futility of war as a test of national greatness, the wound in the world's heart, the empty homes, those were the thoughts which in me overmastered all feelings of rejoicing" (p. 326).

The solemn mood of Scott and Bird is connected to the sense of mourning, mixed with remembrance of that ghost army, that still envelops many Canadians on Remembrance Day. In articulating this national sensibility, their memoirs are indeed classics of Canadian literature.

C. J. Taylor  
Ottawa

**Bill Rawling, *Surviving Trench Warfare: Technology and the Canadian Corps*, second edition. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016, 337 pages. ISBN 978-14426-2678-2, \$34.95 (paperback)**



A popular image of trench warfare of the First World War is of troops waiting idly behind the front lines, and periodically sent over the top into intense assaults on entrenched enemy positions, only to be cut down by machine gun fire and survivors driven back to the same trenches, with little or no ground gained despite massive loss of life. For nearly four years between 1914 and 1918, Allied and German armies remained seemingly entrenched in

the same positions, locked in an interminable war of attrition along the former Western Front. Bill Rawling's fine book, *Surviving Trench Warfare*, perhaps does more to revise these conventional notions than any other book on the history of the Canadian Corps in that war. Through a careful examination of original sources, Rawling effectively

documents rapid changes in technology and accompanying tactics that changed warfare over the course of that conflict, eventually enabling the Canadian and Allied forces to break the stalemate and win the war.

This is the second edition of *Surviving Trench Warfare*, which was first published in 1992. The book is organized roughly chronologically around three defining battles of the Canadian Corps and stages of the war—the Somme in 1916, Vimy Ridge and Passchendaele in 1917, capped by the Hundred Day offensive of 1918 that ended the war. The narrative explains not only the technological advances of Canada's forces, but also the vernacular adaptations of this technology by ordinary soldiers on the ground that helped produce the Allied victory.

At the beginning of the war the British military commanders deployed their armies in much the same manner as their predecessors had done during the Napoleonic wars a century before. They emphasized offensive rather than defensive strategy and tactics, and had not seriously considered the possibility that their adversaries would take steps to avoid being hit by machine guns, artillery, or the rifle fire of advancing infantry. The emergence of defensive trench warfare on a large scale

introduced a form of combat with which the adversaries had little prior experience, knowledge, or methodologies to break such stalemates.

Rawling takes an expansive approach to his discussion of technology and includes under its rubric military planning, tactics, and vernacular adaptations of military equipment. Some of the major technological innovations are well known. The military use of aircraft, in its infancy at the start of the war, became a major strategic component by the later stages of the war. For example, at Hill 70 near Lens, France, the site of a pivotal battle in August 1917, Canada's pilots shot down six German balloons, bombed railway junctions, aerodromes and other facilities, and may have played a key role in the battle.

Rawling argues that the great Canadian victory at Vimy Ridge, part of the larger Battle of Arras, was significantly achieved through the astute application of the available technology, including the Canadian commanders' effective deployment of counter-battery gunners, careful observation through photography, and precise calibration of distances to ensure the accuracy of artillery fire. To these he adds the sheer weight of firepower: with 12,000 rounds fired on Easter Monday 1917 alone, Vimy represented one of the most devastating barrages of the war up to that point in time, accompanied by the tactical use of bombs, rifle-grenades, rifles, and machine guns.

Contrary to the conventional notion of extended intervals between battles as periods of relative inactivity, Rawling shows that Canada's military made good use of these periods to develop and hone their troops' techniques and knowledge. The Canadian commanders put their men through repeated training regimens and numerous drills, during which they simulated the use of technology in combat. Across the Canadian Corps, soldiers at every level learned from applying technology on the ground, resulting in modifications that enhanced their battle readiness and effectiveness. The Canadian Corps' refinement of battle tactics continued throughout the war, including the summer of 1918 that preceded the famous Hundred Days advance between 8 August and 11 November, that concluded with the armistice that ended the fighting.

Assessing the impact of these initiatives, Rawling divides the war into two distinct phases: 1915 to late 1916 coinciding with the end of the Somme campaign; and Vimy Ridge in April 1917 to the end of the war in late 1918. The first phase was characterized by a preponderance of military defeats, while the second phase occasioned more victories than defeats. The casualties are enumerated for the two phases in a table and comprehensively tabulated in an appendix. Notwithstanding the great loss of life at Passchendaele in late 1917, its casualties were still significantly lower than the disastrous Battle of the Somme of the previous year.

The emphasis on the casualties of individual battles somewhat misconstrues the overall tallies, as in the case of the Hundred Days offensive during which Canada

suffered 45,835 casualties, or about 20 percent of the total losses sustained during the entire war. However, the point about the last two years being a period of military success relative to the earlier period is well founded.

Among the most important insights of the book are Rawling's observations regarding the role of ordinary soldiers in adapting the technology for practical use on the battlefield. Previous historiography stressed the role of the Canadian commanders such as Arthur Currie and especially A. G. L. McNaughton in embracing and advancing the science of technology and applying it to tactics on the Western Front. Rawling does not challenge these interpretations but amplifies them with his discussions of the role of lower-level military personnel in developing various practical applications of the technology. The role of lower-level commanders and ordinary soldiers is well illustrated by a case study of a trench raid involving members of the Canadian Corps on the Douve River on the night of 16-17 November in the lead-up to the Battle of the Somme. With methodical planning—including building and testing bridging ladders to cross ditches in No Man's Land and rehearsing the use of mats to cross barbed wire emplacements—they facilitated the infantry's passage towards the German trenches. Soldiers were given specialized roles including the cutting of barbed wire, bombing and blocking parties were assigned the role of assaulting the targeted trench on either flank, while a trench rifle party was ordered to capture the centre, take prisoners, and sketch the site. Rawling concludes that the Canadians learned four valuable lessons from this raid: the importance of careful rehearsal and training that prepared these men to accomplish their task; the usefulness of artillery to cut off Germans from their reserve troops, enabling the Canadians to retreat in safety; the value of advance scouting enabling the cutting of barbed wire left uncut by the artillery barrage; and the importance of carefully selecting specialists to form a team that could work effectively as a unit.

At the level of ordinary soldiers, Rawling discusses their roles in producing their own jam-tin bombs, cutting off the stocks of their rifles to lighten the guns, and developing slings for their Lewis small machine guns, enabling them to fire them from the hip. Taken in ensemble these and numerous other adaptations deployed across the Canadian Corps helped ensure military success and the Allied victory in 1918. Rawling effectively brings out the agency and resourcefulness of Canada's soldiers in that terrible conflict, revising the popular, but inaccurate, perception of them as lambs led to the slaughter. The book is illustrated with some well-chosen historical photographs, although it would have benefitted from the inclusion of maps illustrating the typical spatial relationships of entrenched fortifications of the two sides. Specialists and non-specialists alike will learn a great deal from this insightful and engaging book.

Lyle Dick  
Winnipeg

Cool Things in the Collection:

# The Canon Wilmot Collection

by Wayne Chan  
University of Manitoba

Much has been written about women and the home front during the two world wars—from their entry into the workforce to their volunteer efforts. What is sometimes overlooked, however, is the perspective of women with young families, who may not have been able to work outside the home and had limited time to devote to volunteer activities. It is of interest to understand how they managed with day-to-day life during wartime, with their husbands away from home, and how they dealt with issues like maintaining long-distance relationships, raising children alone, and coping with changes in family dynamics. The Rev. Canon Laurence F. Wilmot Collection housed at the University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections offers some unique insight into these issues for one Winnipeg family during the Second World War.

Laurence (Laurie) Frank Wilmot was born in 1907 on a farm near Clanwilliam, Manitoba to Thomas Herbert Wilmot and Fanny Campbell. He graduated from St. John's College in 1931, and was ordained deacon in the same year and priest a year later. In 1932, he married Edith Louise Hope Littlewood, a schoolteacher from Winnipeg. They had three children: Laurence Sydney, Francis Mary Louise, and Hope Fairfield. After serving as rector for a number of congregations in rural Manitoba, Wilmot became a chaplain in the Canadian Army in 1942 and was eventually transferred to Italy, where he served as chaplain to the West Nova Scotia Regiment. He was awarded a Military Cross for his role in evacuating the wounded during the Canadian offensive against the Gothic Line at Foglia River. After the war, Wilmot became Central Western Field Secretary for Christian Education for the Anglican Church. In 1950, he was appointed Warden of St. John's College at the University of Manitoba and served in this capacity for 11 years. Wilmot then studied at Oxford University for two years and wrote a thesis for which he received a Master's degree in philosophy from the University of Manitoba in 1963. He remained in England for four more years, serving



UMA, Laurence F. Wilmot fonds, PC 132, Box 1, Fd. 5

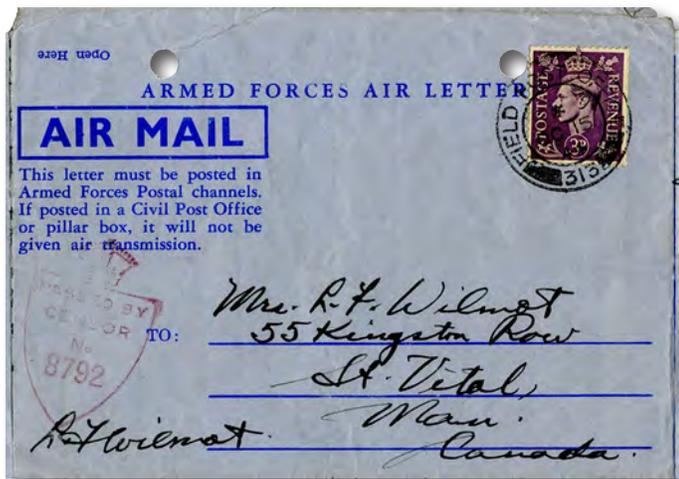
**Wilmot family, June 1942 (L to R):** Laurence, Jr., Hope, Hope Fairfield (on lap), Laurence, Sr., and Louise.

as Sub-Warden at St. Augustine's College in Canterbury. After spending two years receiving training in clinical pastoral care at hospitals in Texas and Washington, D.C., he returned to Canada in 1969 when he became chaplain at Whitby Psychiatric Hospital in Whitby, Ontario. Wilmot retired in 1972 and came back to Winnipeg, where he completed a second Master's degree in history at the University of Manitoba in 1979. His wife became ill during this period and Wilmot fully retired to care for her, until her passing in 1986. In his retirement he published three books: *Whitehead and God: Prolegomena to Theological Reconstruction* (1979), *St. John's College: A Documentary* (2001), and *Through the Hitler Lines: Memoirs of an Infantry Chaplain* (2003). He remarried in 1995, at the age of 87. Laurence Wilmot died in 2003.

Laurence Wilmot's first wife, Hope (née Littlewood), was born in Newburgh, Ontario in 1905. Her family came to Manitoba when she was six. She was raised and educated in Winnipeg, and graduated from Kelvin High School. She then attended Normal School, where she received her teacher's training. Hope subsequently taught in rural



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UMA, Laurence F. Wilmot fonds, MSS 122, Box 7, Fd. 2

Most of the wartime letters between Laurence and Hope Wilmot used the standard Armed Forces Air Letter forms seen here.

Manitoba as well as in Winnipeg until her marriage to Laurence Wilmot in 1932. The couple moved to Pilot Mound, Manitoba, and then to Swan River four years later. When Laurence became an army chaplain in 1942, the family moved to Winnipeg. After her children grew up, Hope went back to school and earned a BA in 1963 and a BEd in 1969, both from the University of Manitoba. When the couple returned to Canada in 1969, Hope taught at the special adult school at the Whitby Psychiatric Hospital where her husband was chaplain. In 1984, Hope was elected an honorary fellow of St. John's College. She died two years later.

Jody Perrun, author of *The Patriotic Consensus: Unity, Morale and the Second World War in Winnipeg*,<sup>1</sup> found the Wilmot fonds to be an invaluable resource and cited the collection extensively in the chapter on family separation in his book.<sup>2</sup> According to Perrun,

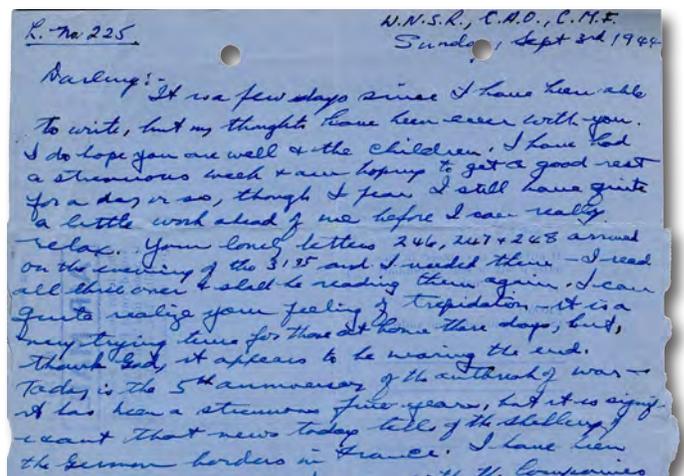
The papers of Laurence (Laurie) Wilmot, a chaplain from Swan River, Manitoba, who served with the West Nova Scotia Regiment in Italy, are an important source of primary evidence for an inquiry into how separation affected families, for two reasons. First, his work as a regimental chaplain entailed regular counselling to men with domestic problems and his comments offer insight into the difficulty of maintaining morale during a period of prolonged separation and high anxiety... Second, Wilmot's papers contain a set of wartime letters exchanged with his wife Hope, who spent much of the war in Winnipeg. This particular collection is unique because most servicemen in combat units, lacking storage facilities, were unable to preserve significant volumes of correspondence from home. As an army chaplain, Wilmot usually had the use of an office or caravan where he could keep his papers. Laurence and Hope Wilmot wrote to each other almost every day during a two-year

separation that lasted from September 1943 until the end of the war in August 1945.<sup>3</sup>

The wartime correspondence of the Wilmots often reflected common concerns of the era. For example, many servicemen feared that their young children would not remember them after they had been absent for several years. Hope Wilmot tried to allay those fears in her letters to her husband. Writing about their youngest daughter, she says, "It is remarkable how real you are to her, one would gather from her attitude that all she had to do was run to the next room and see you...I think this is lovely dear...they do not feel an awaysness from you except in the matter of sight and sound and touch...which of course is a pretty big except, but you are very much beloved, and the children are right up to date on all your doings, and very enthusiastic about you in their conversation, and there certainly won't be any strangeness when you come home..."<sup>4</sup>

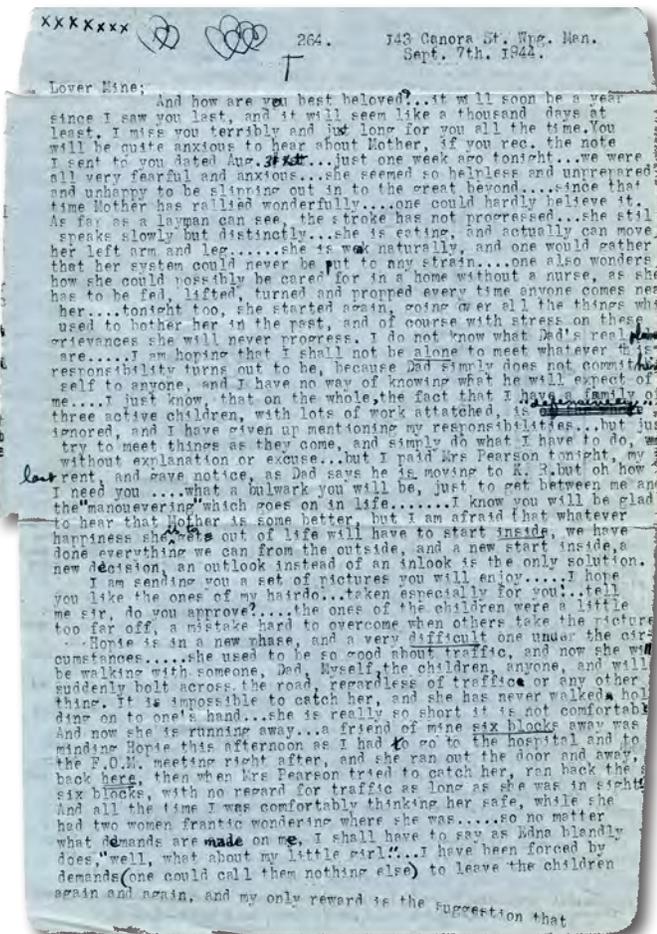
The stress felt by many women in having to manage their families without their spouses during the war is also evident in the Wilmots' correspondence. In her letters to Laurence, Hope frequently expressed the loneliness and strain that she was under, caring for the children on her own and also dealing with her aging parents. This was compounded in August 1944, when her mother suffered a debilitating stroke. In addition to worrying about her mother's prognosis, Hope was also afraid that she would be expected to care for her. She writes,

I do not know what Dad's real plans are...I am hoping that I shall not be alone to meet whatever this responsibility turns out to be, because Dad simply does not commit himself to anyone, and I have no way of knowing what he will expect of me...I just know, that on the whole, the fact that I have a family of three active children, with lots of work attached, is 'defensively' ignored, and I have



UMA, Laurence F. Wilmot fonds, MSS 122, Box 7, Fd. 2

Excerpt from letter 225, Laurence Wilmot to Hope Wilmot, 3 September 1944.



UMA, Laurence F. Wilmot fonds, MSS 122, Box 6, Fd. 10

**Letter 264, Hope Wilmot to Laurence Wilmot, 7 September 1944.**

given up mentioning my responsibilities...but just try to meet things as they come, and simply do what I have to do, without explanation or excuse...<sup>5</sup>

Laurence tried his best to give support and advice from a distance:

The [letter] regarding your mother's condition has made me a little anxious regarding your relationship and arrangement at K.R. [the home of Hope's parents on Kingston Row in St. Vital, where Hope and the children were then living]...

I do not think it is wise for you to attempt to care for your mother in her present condition. I realize the difficulty your dad is working under and I suppose it is very difficult to obtain any one to care for one in her condition – but if your mother comes home he will simply have to have someone... I am a little afraid that you are being caught in a pincer movement of your common sense and your emotions. Your dad is in a difficult position and will be inclined to lean more on you than he should. If you try to shoulder the whole load you will only help (I fear) to bring about the collapse of the whole arrangement.<sup>6</sup>

Other letters show Hope's worries over her son's misbehaviour, which she ascribed to the absence of his father and the instability of their living arrangements, echoing commonly attributed causes of the rise in juvenile delinquency during the war.<sup>7, 8</sup> The Wilmots' correspondence also frequently touched upon matters of faith and spirituality.

The Wilmot collection was donated to the University of Manitoba by Laurence Wilmot in 1995 and 1996, with the final instalment donated by his second wife, Grace Nunn, in 2004. The fonds consist of 7.9 m of textual material and other material, including 346 photographs, 43 audio cassette tapes, and 5 audio reels. The collection is divided into seventeen series, which cover much of Laurence and Hope Wilmot's lives, from the 1920s until their respective deaths, and a significant portion of the collection covers Laurence Wilmot's service in the Second World War.

Of main interest here is the second series, which deals with Laurence Wilmot's personal correspondence, and in particular, Boxes 6 and 7, which hold Wilmot's wartime correspondence with his wife, and her responses. Box 7 also contains excerpts from Wilmot's diary on days when he wrote to his wife. The extant correspondence is extensive, consisting of dozens of letters. What is noteworthy from an archival standpoint is that both sides of the correspondence have survived. The Wilmots also carefully numbered each letter to make them easier to refer to in their replies. Of related interest is Box 2 which contains Hope Wilmot's diary for the 1942-1943 period, as well as correspondence to her from family and friends.<sup>9</sup>

**University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections**

The University Archives has many collections pertaining to the First and Second World Wars. You can use the search box to locate materials of interest, including digital photographs on every aspect of war, here and abroad.

[umanitoba.ca/libraries/archives/](http://umanitoba.ca/libraries/archives/)

Notes for this article are available on the MHS website: [www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb\\_history/82](http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb_history/82)

or scan the QR code at right to go directly to the notes.



# "Western Canada at War" Launch Events

9 November 2016  
Prince of Wales Armouries Heritage Centre  
Edmonton, Alberta

12 November 2016  
Millennium Library  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

14 November 2016  
Nutana Collegiate Library  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

21 November 2016  
Brandon Public Library  
Brandon, Manitoba

30 November 2016  
Dr. Foster James Penny Building  
Lethbridge, Alberta

## Canada's EGG Opportunity

**Britain's Shortage due to War**  
124,786,750 DOZ.

**Britain Normally buys**  
190,850,520 DOZ.

**2 Years ago Canada Sold**  
2,128,500 DOZ.

**16 Years ago Canada Sold**  
10,860,536 DOZ.

**"Very little eggs for such a big bird"  
CANADA must do better.**

## Canada's Butter Opportunity!

**Britain bought before the War**  
452,795,264 lbs.

**Britain's shortage due to the War**  
209,148,784 lbs.

**12 Years ago CANADA sold**  
33,888,074 lbs.

**2 Years ago CANADA sold only**  
6,993,100 lbs.

**CANADA must do better than this  
"Keep Britain's Butter Plate Full"**

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