

# A City Goes to War: Victoria in the Great War 1914-1918

by

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B.A., Royal Military College 1965

M.P.A., University of Victoria 1978

M.A. (History), University of Victoria 2011

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the Department of History

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University of Victoria

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## Abstract

This dissertation is a combined digital history-narrative history project. It takes advantage of newly digitized historical newspapers and soldier files to explore how the people of Victoria B.C. Canada, over 8000 kilometers from the front, experienced the Great War 1914-1918. Although that experience was similar to other Canadian cities in many ways, in other respects it was quite different. Victoria's geographical location on the very fringe of the Empire sets it apart. Demographic and ethnic differences from the rest of Canada and a very different history of indigenous-settler relations had a dramatic effect on who went to war, who resisted and how war was commemorated in Victoria. This study of Victoria will also provide an opportunity to examine several important thematic areas that may impact the broader understanding of Canada in the Great War not covered in earlier works. These themes include the recruiting of under-age soldiers, the response to the naval threat in the Pacific, resistance by indigenous peoples, and the highly effective response to the threat of influenza at the end of the war. As the project manager for the City Goes to War web-site, I directed the development of an extensive on-line archive of supporting documents and articles about Victoria during the Great War that supports this work (<http://acitygoestowar.ca/>). Once reviewed by the committee, this paper will be converted to web format and added to that project.

James S. Kempling

<http://acitygoestowar.ca/>

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## Chapter 1 - Introduction

Most historians acknowledge that the Great War<sup>1</sup> reshaped the political, economic, social and cultural landscape not only of Canada but of the world. Even in Victoria, British Columbia, a small provincial capital on the fringe of the Empire, eight thousand kilometers from the trenches, the effect was profound. Like any urban micro history, this work will uncover items that are curious or interesting to those with a particular connection to the community studied. At the same time, I will seek out issues that may have broader significance for the history of Canada in the Great War.

Within the national remembrance of those traumatic events, the heroic myths of a nation born on the bloody slopes of Vimy Ridge have often obscured stories that are darker but no less important in how the nation was formed. Even during the war, the constructed image of the Canadian Corps as an elite fighting formation of troops whose fighting spirit was rooted in a shared frontier spirit was being carefully constructed. Over the passing generations, eminent historians like Arthur Lower continued to reinforce that image, boldly declaring that:

Canadians responded to the call as if they were building a new railroad. The qualities that had served them well in their fight against the wilderness could now be directed into the making of war. Men who were familiar with life in the bush, who could use firearms and shift for themselves in the open, were soldiers whether they knew it or not. Canada's war effort might be described as frontier energy in the trenches.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast, this study will show, in Victoria as in much of the rest of the country the soldiers of the Canadian Corps were much more likely to be clerks and craftsmen more familiar with cities than life in

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<sup>1</sup> Use of the term "Great War" rather than World War One reflects usage common to newspapers in Victoria during the period. In 1914 it was often "a Great War" or "the great European war" but by 1917 with the emergence of groups like The Great War Veteran's Association, the phrase was usually capitalized.

<sup>2</sup> A.R.M. Lower, *Colony to Nation*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed (Toronto: Longmans Canada Ltd., 1957), 256.

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the bush. High unemployment and a striking gender imbalance fed by a flood of predominantly male immigrants may be less heroic reasons for high enlistment rates but they are, none the less, significant.

In the last two decades, historians have increasingly begun to challenge those constructed images by focusing on the lived experiences of Canadian cities. This is not simply a local history replete with the peculiar events of a single community. Stories like the fund-raising efforts of Muggins, the Red Cross Dog, or Elliot's Horse, the privately raised cavalry unit from Victoria, may be of interest to local historians but they will add little to the broader history of Canada in the Great War. The challenge of this microhistory is to uncover elements of broader interest that may have been overlooked in more general works. For example, the recruitment of boy soldiers, the resistance of First Nations and the underlying racism that excluded the large Chinese community may provide new insights of significance to the national understanding of the war.

This study opens with a review of the major urban histories that have shaped our approach dating back to the monumental 1997 study of London, Paris and Berlin edited by Jay Winter and Jean Louis Robert. I will also examine Canadian city studies of Toronto and Winnipeg. Although I will follow a broadly chronological approach, I will also engage in a closer examination of smaller communities within the city. Like earlier writers, I use the term lived communities for those smaller groupings of people who have the greatest influence on how we behave, our judgements, and in times of crisis, those life and death decisions we make. In this study the "communities" examined will range from church congregations and sporting clubs to ethnic minorities and militia regiments.

In order to understand Victoria's initial response to the war, Chapter 3 will examine the development of the city in the pre-war period. In particular, the chapter will focus on the place of the military and how the experience of the South African War may have shaped the community response in 1914. Chapters 4 and 5 provide a city-wide perspective, looking first at the initial response to the outbreak of war and then the changing patterns as casualties mounted and the ready supply of

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volunteers diminished. The following two chapters provide a more intimate perspective on the influence of smaller communities. Members of the Victoria Golf Club provide some insight into the response of the social and economic elites of Victoria. Both the rate of enlistment and financial support of the war effort paint a picture of a well-established sense of “noblesse oblige”. The examination of a major downtown church and a small rural parish round out the study of the dominant settler society, painting a picture of steadfast support for the war effort. As a counter balance, the focus in Chapter 7 shifts to the indigenous population of the south-island and the large ethnic Chinese community of Victoria.

Chapter 8 examines the immediate post-war years with a focus on commemoration. In doing so, I examine both constructed memory and enacted memory developed through ceremony and events. Major projects like the planting of memorial trees on Shelbourne and the provincial memorial on the lawns of the Legislature are examined along with more local memorials. I consider the emergence of Remembrance Day as a major annual event as well the response to post-war visits to Victoria by important war time figures.

Perhaps as important as the historic content of this paper is the use of data and the City Goes to War web site that provide much of the foundation for this study. Unlike earlier city studies, this work makes extensive use of a massive database of soldier records not available to historians who wrote before the period of the centennial. While heavily dependent on the records of Library and Archives Canada, this project has indexed the records of over 5,000 soldiers from Victoria to enable analysis of enlistment and casualty patterns, religious affiliation, occupation, unit and age. The study also makes extensive use of a fully indexed newspaper archive of the conservative *Daily Colonist* that was developed in conjunction with this project. That data is balanced by a smaller indexed data set of over 500 articles extracted from the liberal *Victoria Times*. These major data sets are augmented by a large

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collection of images, letters and documents collected as part of this project and available on-line to support future research on the project website at [www.acitygoestowar.ca](http://www.acitygoestowar.ca) .

## The Broader Web Site Project

This paper does not stand on its own, rather it is presented as part of a larger web site project titled *A City Goes to War* ([www.acitygoestowar.ca](http://www.acitygoestowar.ca)). My research has been supported by the work of dozens of student researchers who have examined a very broad range of topics related to the history of Victoria during the period of the Great War. In the lead up to the centennial of the Great War, I proposed a major history web site project to mark the event. With the support of the History Department, I developed a project proposal that attracted substantial funding from the Great War Commemoration program offered by the Department of Veterans Affairs. With that funding, three honours history students and two MA students were engaged for the summer and fall of 2013 to develop a web site examining the history of Victoria during the Great War. Starting in 2014, I developed a senior level history course titled “A City Goes to War” that engaged teams of students in the development of web based micro history projects linked to the site. Both the initial development team and subsequent student teams were given significant latitude in selecting topics of interest to them. The initial project team developed eleven supporting sections ranging from Prohibition to Victoria in the Air Age. While individual team members took the lead for each page, the site as a whole was a group effort. In addition to the descriptive elements of the site, an on-line archive, a time line, a soldier database and support package for high school history teachers were developed.

The course has now been offered four times and produced eleven additional linked web sites on the following topics

- The Princess Sophia - Camas Eriksson, Courtney Reynoldson and Preet Dhaliwal
- Labour - Cedric Young, Connor McLeod, and Rachel Bannister
- The Red Cross - Meagan Hufnagel and David Somerville

- 
- Esquimalt - Shea Baldwin and Catherine Gilbert
  - Victoria Resists - Hanna Baird-Herron, Mike Ross and Adrienne Shepherd
  - Fight the Flu – Jenny Lee, Troy Lemberg, Rebekah Prette and Andrew Stinson
  - The 88<sup>th</sup> Victoria Fusiliers - Geoffrey Hendrie and Nathan Waller
  - HMCS Rainbow - Luke F. Kowalski, Mike Martin and Paul Taylor
  - Victoria Police - Clayton King, Isobel Griffin, and Joseph Yuson
  - The Chinese in Victoria - Kate Riordon and Kate Siemens
  - Indigenous People in the Great War – Heather Currie, Jasmine Peachey, Jordan Christie and Veronica Wilson

The web site project was also supported by the digitization of the Daily Colonist newspaper and the initial development of a soldier database that indexed and linked data for soldiers from Victoria to both data from Library and Archives Canada and other related web sites.<sup>3</sup> The soldier database development was materially assisted by the fulsome support of Marc Leroux, the developer of the Canadian Great War Project.<sup>4</sup> This experience in turn led to the University of Victoria Library agreeing to accept long term responsibility for the Canadian Great War Project. Substantial improvement to that extensive database is an ongoing project. To date the project has delivered a much-improved search engine and has normalized rank, unit, location and job descriptions and added direct links to a variety of other useful data sets. Over the next year or so, the enhanced site will reopen the crowd sourcing function of Marc's original site. The ultimate objective is to establish the University of Victoria as one of the premier on-line sources for data and archival material about Canada during the period of the Great War. The work presented in this study owes much to the efforts of scores of history students who have scoured local and national archives for material about Victoria during the Great War. In particular, this

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.britishcolonist.ca/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.canadiangreatwarproject.com/>

work stands on the shoulders of the initial student project team shown below. In addition to the student team, the project relied on the technical expertise and advice of the Humanities Computing and Media Centre of the University of Victoria led by Mr. Greg Newton.

When the review of this paper is complete, its content will be added to the City Goes to War website. [www.acitygoestowar.ca](http://www.acitygoestowar.ca)



**1 THE INITIAL PROJECT TEAM: LEFT TO RIGHT - HANNAH ANDERSON, KIRSTEN HUWORTH, JIM KEMPLING - PROJECT MANAGER, ASHLEY FORSEILLE, BEN FAST AND JEREMY BUDDENHAGEN. NOVEMBER 2013 BEFORE A RADIO INTERVIEW IN VICTORIA.**

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## Chapter 2 – The Historical Context

Historians writing about the Great War are confronted by a veritable mountain of earlier works. In this section, I will review those major Canadian and European city studies that have had the greatest influence on this examination of Victoria.

In his *Birth of Britain*, after describing the saga of King Arthur, Winston Churchill boldly declared: “It is all true, or it ought to be; and more and better besides.”<sup>5</sup> Churchill, although maligned by some academic historians, captured the idea that national myths can often have as great an impact as the reality of the events remembered. Just as the oral histories and myths of First Nations have provided a historic context of national identity, the myths of the Great War have played a powerful role in shaping the national identities of newly emerging nations like Canada, Australia and others, like Turkey, that emerged from the collapse of ancient empires. The Canadian visitor to the grand monument atop Vimy Ridge, the Turkish schoolchild visiting Gallipoli or the Australian placing a poppy beside his family name at the national war memorial, all carry with them powerful images developed over generations. Whether it is “Canada, born on the bloody slopes of Vimy Ridge” or Ataturk at Gallipoli rallying his regiment with the words; “I am not ordering you to attack. I am ordering you to die,” these stories continue to shape our national self-image.

Canadian historians must face a national mythology as entrenched in public perception as the battle lines of the Western Front. Brian McKenna speaking about his documentary on Vimy put it this way:

I was skeptical of the idea that this country shook off its colonial past in the battlefields of World War I. Now, I feel that’s true. We have [military historian] Roman Jarymowycz saying in the film, ‘People don’t recognize you as a country because you know how to fish and have great lumber.’

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<sup>5</sup> Winston Churchill, *History of the English Speaking Peoples, Volume 1: The Birth of Britain*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1956), 60.

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Sometimes you have to stick your head above the parapet. At Vimy and elsewhere, Canadian troops achieved great, necessary victories at an appalling cost. What they did is a part of who we are. It's burnt into our DNA.<sup>6</sup>

It is acknowledged that more recent studies like Tim Cook's *Vimy*<sup>7</sup> have done much to present a balanced view of the battle and the myth. Nevertheless, what might be described as the CBC version of history continues to dominate public perceptions.<sup>8</sup>

The intent is not to throw poppies in the compost heap of history. But neither can the Canadian myth be simply accepted as an inspiring story not to be tested. The memory of what was great and noble should not obscure the lived experience of those terrible days. Rather, those dark memories should temper our national story. The words "Lest we forget" uttered with such solemnity each November should apply not only to those who died but also to those who faced discrimination, racism and persecution. Indeed, these very words are a striking example of how meanings change over time. "Lest we forget" is a phrase drawn from Kipling's *Recessional* composed in 1897 for Queen Victoria's Jubilee. Rather than a plea to remember only victory and heroism, it is a cautionary warning against jingoism and the excessive hubris that so often marks the remembrance of war. The second, rarely cited, stanza is telling.

The tumult and the shouting dies;  
The Captains and the Kings depart:  
Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice,  
An humble and a contrite heart.  
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

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<sup>6</sup> Stephen Cole, quoting Brian McKenna in "Birth of a Nation: Brian McKenna revisits Vimy and Passchendaele in The Great War" at <http://www.cbc.ca/arts/tv/birthofanation.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Tim Cook, *Vimy: The Battle and the Legend*, (Toronto: Penguin Ltd., 2017).

<sup>8</sup> This term is not intended to suggest that the CBC alone is responsible for historic distortions. While all media have an obligation to provide fair and balanced coverage, the CBC, as Canada's national broadcaster bears a special responsibility to preserve and protect our history.

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Prominent psychologist, Daniel L. Schacter identified seven sins of memory<sup>9</sup>. The human mind forgets what happened either through the passage of time or because it was considered unimportant or too painful. Facts are attributed to the wrong source and distort reality either through personal biases or the suggestion of others. Perhaps most problematic for historians, ideas become embedded through constant repetition reinforced by ceremony, monuments or ritual. In unveiling the lived experience of people in Victoria, these are issues that must be confronted. In doing so, the intent is not to track down the unicorn of historical truth but rather to understand how perceptions of the past have been shaped and are being reshaped by the very process of remembrance.

The sacrifice of soldiers in the trenches is not diminished by the grim reality of a recession that drove them to enlist in search of a job. The relief of the armistice is not lessened by a fear of influenza that kept people out of churches and public meeting spaces and muted their celebrations. The resistance of First Nations around Victoria to the patriotic appeals of recruiters is no less remarkable because the Mohawk in Ontario flocked to the colours as allies of the King. The shameful treatment of visible minorities in Victoria may have greater value in instructing future generations than the cheering crowds who lined the streets to send off the first contingent.

Although the national context is important to the story of Victoria, to understand the lived experience, one must focus more closely on the communities in which it played out. For some, community might mean the congregation where they worship, for others it might be their labour union, sports team, local neighborhood or school or club. For most there are likely to be several overlapping communities of influence and they might change over time. It is what Jay Winter has called the “experienced community”. In this study, our focus will be on five distinct communities. We will glimpse the war from the perspective of the social elite through the members of the Victoria Golf Club. The

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<sup>9</sup> Daniel L. Schacter, *The Seven Sins of Memory: How the Mind Forgets and Remembers*, (Boston, 2001)

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dominant settler community will be represented by the congregation of St Andrew's Presbyterian Church<sup>10</sup> in the heart of downtown Victoria. This was the congregation both of prominent figures like Sir Richard McBride and the urban middle class of Victoria. The rural fringes of Victoria will be viewed through the eyes of the small parish of St Luke's Anglican Church on Cedar Hill Cross Road. The perspectives of local indigenous peoples and the Chinese community will also be examined, while acknowledging the challenge posed by both the scarcity and unavoidable biases of the primary source material.

## Cities in the Great War

In the historiography of the Great War, the monumental two volume *Capital Cities at War* published by historians from Britain, France and Germany in 1997 set the standard for such an approach<sup>11</sup>. Edited by Jay Winter and Jean-Louis Robert, it established a model against which any current project examining cities in the Great War must be measured. At the outset, it is important to understand the collaborative nature of the work. Although some thirteen historians were involved, this is not simply a collection of essays by different authors. Instead teams of four or five researchers worked together to gather material and write parts of each chapter. Chapter conveners would then synthesize the work and circulate it for review and comment. The aim was to create a work where "the authorial is that of the group, rather than any one individual." The high quality of this collaborative effort and the coherence of presentation is a model to be emulated not just for the area of urban studies but for historical writing as a whole. Our collaborative approach in developing the City Goes to War web site that lies behind this effort at synthesis has adopted this approach. Although we have

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<sup>10</sup> For some years I served as the church archivist for St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

<sup>11</sup> Jay Winter and Jean Louis Robert eds. *Capital Cities at War: Paris. London. Berlin 1914-1919*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

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noted principal authors on many web pages, each topic covered represents the collaborative effort of a team of student researchers. This work owes much to their efforts.

Winter and Robert set out the framework of analysis and the rationale for focus on capital cities at war at the outset of their opus. Winter boldly declares:

Nations do not actually wage wars; groups of people organized in states do. ...the concrete visible steps taken by Frenchmen, Germans, or Englishmen to go to war, to provision the men who joined up, and adjust to the consequences – the human dimension of war – were almost always taken within and expressed through the collective life at the local level: communities of volunteers or conscripts; communities of munition workers; communities of the faithful and bereaved.<sup>12</sup>

He differentiated between the nation as an imagined community and a neighbourhood as an experienced community, with the city as the meeting point between the two. He argues that when people use words describing nation or empire, meaning is shaped by the context of their experienced communities. Those experienced communities whether defined by class or faith, gender or geography are both shaped by the context of the city within which they exist. In turn, those experienced communities form the constituent parts of the broader urban history. Their argument for the uniqueness of capital cities has merit in the European context but is not relevant to our project. The unique diversity, cultural richness and wartime importance of London, Paris and Berlin have no parallel in Canada. Nevertheless, even a city like Victoria at the far edge of the Empire has its own story to tell.

Perhaps most importantly, Winter and Robert argue that any analysis must rest not solely on economic measures of well-being like cost of living. Instead they adopt the framework initially proposed by economist Amartya Sen that takes a more inclusive approach. Sen suggests that it is the distribution of entitlements, capabilities and functions as much as the simple quantum of goods and services that shapes a community's sense of well-being. The ability of a government to distribute goods and services

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., Vol 1

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and maintain a sense of equity is a critical factor in how individual citizens and communities evaluate their sense of well-being. Particularly in wartime where there is often a shared sense of sacrifice, the modalities of distribution and community ideas about equity and fairness are critical elements of analysis. Wartime turns on its head the underlying philosophy of capitalism that the collective good is achieved through individuals pursuing their own self-interest. In wartime, all those who are not actively at the front exposed to death or mutilation are, by definition, privileged. How those at home manage this privilege is subject to intense scrutiny. As the war progresses, the shirker or profiteer in pursuit of self-interest may become the target for public invective while those who sacrifice material goods and provide volunteer service are lauded. Equally, the distinction between groups based on religion, ethnicity or class can be intensified by the shared experience of war. The examination of how these communities cooperate or clash with the broader framework of the city is an important focal point of city studies. Both these issues will be important in our examination of Victoria.

Volume one of *Capital Cities* focusses primarily on economic and social history. The challenge of providing comparative data when dealing with three quite different administrative structures is evident throughout. Where global data sets that cover the entire city are not available, the authors rely on subsets of communities within the large city. For example, when determining the chronology of war deaths, they use the London Labour Council data and the district of Clichy in Paris as surrogates for the whole. While useful, such an approach also risks obscuring patterns that might impact communities in quite different ways. For example, it would not be appropriate to use our earlier work in Victoria with a single faith community as a surrogate for the city as a whole. For Victoria, census records, high quality soldier data, newspaper archives and local archives help establish a solid baseline as a context for consideration of more intimate communities. On the other side of the ledger, the larger cities provide ample data on such things as comparative wage rates by gender and employment figures by industrial sector. In Victoria, I will rely on local evidence from census records, newspapers, local directories and documents from local and provincial archives supported by provincial or national trends. For the

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soldiers from Victoria, I was fortunate to have a very substantial data set extracted from the Great Canadian War project web site augmented as needed by source data from the complete service files of Library and Archives Canada. Our data set of over 5000 records for Victoria includes soldiers who attested in Victoria, were born in Victoria or lived in Victoria at the time of their enlistment.<sup>13</sup>

The thematic organization of volume one of *Capital Cities*, although generally strong, also provides some challenges. In most chapters, there is a need to track changes over time. For example, casualty rates and wage rates are compared between cities over time. This structure makes it difficult to capture a more complete picture that might show stronger links between the variables considered. Throughout the volume, there is extensive use of tables and charts to support textual argument.

Volume Two of *Capital Cities* extends the analysis to the cultural history of the war. Not surprisingly, there is little reliance on charts and statistics to support the argument. Regrettably, the graphic material provided, although powerful, is quite limited. For example, we are provided word pictures of posters and other elements where the argument would benefit from the inclusion of an image. Although the chapters are organized by theme, and focussed on physical spaces like streets, schools, hospitals and the home, Winter and Robert add the binary distinction of nostalgia and iconoclasm as a bridging device. Nostalgia is presented in two divergent forms. “Restorative nostalgia” is what we might think of as tradition. Closely linked to the needs of the ruling elites, restorative nostalgia is a sense of what we went to war to try to preserve, the supposedly common values, beliefs or stories of the past at the core of national identity. It is often presented in objects ranging from the kitsch of “its badges and plastic flags, its statues and symbols”<sup>14</sup> to national monuments and ceremonies.

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<sup>13</sup> [www.thecanadiangreatwarproject.com](http://www.thecanadiangreatwarproject.com)

<sup>14</sup> Jay Winter and Jean-Louis Robert eds. *Capital Cities at War: Paris. London. Berlin 1914-1919, Vol 2.*

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In parallel, “reflective nostalgia” serves a wider purpose. Reflective nostalgia acknowledges that a return to the past is impossible but constructs a potential or imagined future based on “shared everyday frameworks of collective or cultural memory”. Memorials, street shrines, hospitals and cemeteries are an acknowledgement of loss and at the same time evoke dreams of the future rooted in the world that is past.

In sharp contrast to the dominant focus on nostalgia, the authors argue that we must not ignore the very small groups of “iconoclasts” who saw the city as a theatre where different interpretations could resist conformity and challenge the more broadly held beliefs. In illustration, Winter cites Picasso in Paris, the Dada movement in Berlin and Jacob Epstein in London who all challenged and outraged the sensibilities of their communities. For Victoria, a small outpost of the fringe of the Empire, it may be more challenging to uncover such trace evidence of iconoclasm. Perhaps our examination of Ginger Goodwin, now anointed as a martyr by labour and the left, will at least provide a taste. Among the hundreds of claims for conscientious objection to military service in Canada examined by Amy Shaw, only one resident of Victoria has been identified. Even he accepted service late in the war.<sup>15</sup>

The benefit of comparative analysis throughout both volumes provides a useful counterpoint to the risk of over-reaching the implications of local findings. For example, distance from the war front does not appear to be closely related to the level of support for the war, while the management and distribution of scarce supplies appears as a more significant factor.

Looking at the experience of communities in London, Paris and Berlin, they uncovered remarkable similarities as well as striking differences. In all three, the powerful currents of the war fundamentally changed the attitudes, institutions, underlying beliefs and behaviors in the communities

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<sup>15</sup> Amy J Shaw, *Crisis of Conscience: Conscientious Objection in Canada during the First World War*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1972), Table 1

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they studied. While I have neither the resources nor the time to replicate the complexity of that opus, I can build on their approach.

A decade later, Roger Chickering examined Freiburg, a much smaller city with a population of only 85,000 in 1914. Described as “the loveliest place to live in Germany” Freiburg was within the sounds of the guns from the opening salvo until the final days. Although casualties were light, it was more exposed to direct aerial bombardment than most cities in Germany. Chickering traces the genesis of his approach to the idea that to fairly capture the history of total war one must necessarily apply the tools of total history, that is:

... an account that integrated all dimensions of a society’s history at a given moment. ... A war that left no one untouched seemed to offer a common theme around which to organize a historical narrative that might encompass the experience of everyone who lived through the conflict. The goal would be to represent the war’s ‘totality,’ to trace its impact into every phase of life.<sup>16</sup>

That expansive ambition created a paradox. It became necessary to narrow the scope to that of microhistory as a counter-balance to the increased comprehensiveness of the analysis. Freiburg seemed to offer a good balance. It was large enough to trace the impact of changing labour patterns and industrial growth and yet was still dependent on outside supply for its basic needs. Freiburg also provided a unique and very rich repository of archival material from the Great War collected over a lifetime by a dedicated city archivist.

The reliance on abundant tables and charts parallels the Capital Cities approach. We can track changing patterns over time of such things as number of women in the workforce and rapid declines in the gap between the wages of men and women as the war progressed. Regrettably many of the charts are so small as to be almost unreadable. As with *Capital Cities at War*, there is an expansive statistical

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<sup>16</sup> Roger Chickering, *The Great War and Urban Life in Germany: Freiburg, 1914-1918. Studies in the Social and Cultural History of Modern Warfare*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 3.

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appendix attached using a random sample of 3000 households living at 1740 residential addresses recorded in the 1914 directory. These same residences are then tracked throughout the war concluding with the 1919 directory to identify changing household patterns. This random sample approach provides a much higher level of confidence than the less rigorous methodology adopted in *Capital Cities at War*. The appendix also includes a fulsome discussion of the sources and limitations of the underlying data.<sup>17</sup> The statistical analysis is supplemented by a rich store of anecdotal material drawn from letters and diaries that provides a more intimate sense of the lived experience.

We also see a much more intimate discussion of cultural issues. In this rather diverse community, we see the growth of anti-French feeling alongside the removal of signs of welcome like “On parle français” and the renaming of establishments like the Café Bristol to Kaiser Franz Josef early in the war.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, in Victoria we will observe German names being anglicized.<sup>19</sup> Instead of the high culture of the Capital Cities study, we see the iconic Iron Tree into which citizens hammered nails to mark their donations to the Red Cross.<sup>20</sup> We see a patriotic tableau enacted on the occasion of the Kaiser’s birthday with the closing strains of *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles* interrupted by the sound of bombs from an allied air raid. We experience changes in the sight and sounds of the city as the gas streetlights are extinguished to save fuel and church bells are melted down to support the needs of the war.

As with the Capital Cities study, the challenge is blending a thematic chapter structure with the importance of changing circumstances over the course of the war. Thus, Chickering writes of a spike in marriages in 1914 and a rapid decline in births and a growing surplus of women. There are similar changes over time in the employment of women, the number of women students and women’s wages

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<sup>17</sup> Chickering, *The Great War and Urban Life in Germany*, Statistical Appendix 569-591.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 410.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 393.

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but it is difficult to draw connections even when there may well be causal links. While the nature of print media makes compromise of this sort unavoidable, a digital presentation should allow readers to view data in a variety of formats.

Chickering chooses to confine his analysis to the immediate period of the war starting in the summer of 1914 and ending with the armistice. After consuming this rich historical account, the reader is left to speculate about the future of the city. The final sentence “And there was ample reason for anxiety,” creates a feeling not unlike the typical season ending cliff hanger of a dramatic TV series. For *Victoria I* will expand the scope to cover the period of immediate post-war commemoration ending with the unveiling of the war memorial on the grounds of the BC legislature in 1925.

In both these major studies of European cities, we see some remarkable parallels. There is early support for the war from all fronts. Religious groups on both sites earnestly declare the justice of their cause and exhort their parishioners to rally to the cause. Diverse groups set aside their differences in general support for what is expected to be a short war. By 1915, as casualties rise and the magnitude of the struggle becomes apparent, the response is the strengthening of resolve. With increasing pressure later in the war, disputes arise, and fractures appear in the common front. The focus of these disputes is often on local issues rather than the support for the war itself. Wartime propaganda is evident in all four cities. Although propaganda colours public perceptions, ultimately even the most aggressive program cannot hide the grim reality conveyed by direct contact with returning troops. We see for example that as late as the spring of 1918, German spirits remained high, with the expectation of ultimate victory. Ultimately, grievous shortages at home and staggering casualty lists shattered that constructed image. Throughout the war, we also see the fracture and realignment of social structures. The changing role of women, demands for democratization, and labour conflict in the face of wartime inflation are significant themes throughout. Overlying these themes is the apparent willingness of divergent groups in society to set apart their significant interests in support of the more general aims of

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the war. We see clergy of quite divergent theological positions supporting the idea of a just war and rallying their parishioners with the assurance that the Almighty supports their cause. In response to the horrifying reality of a prolonged and bloody conflict, we see not despair but rather a hardening of positions in support of still greater sacrifice. Many of these common themes will find parallels in our examination of Victoria.

This study of Victoria lacks some of the richness of the Freiberg archives. For example, the data on population for Victoria is limited to the 1911 and 1921 national census. In contrast, Chickering had much more detailed accounts that allowed him to examine changing patterns over the period of the war. Nevertheless, data for Victoria includes newspaper archives, local directories, a variety of local community archives and collections of letters and images from the period.

## Canadian Cities – Toronto and Winnipeg

As we move to a consideration of Canadian urban studies of the Great War, it will be useful to pause for a moment to consider how more general works have debated the question of the manipulation of public opinion during the war and the development of public understanding of the war in the years that followed. This side journey is essential because two very different understandings of the war have emerged in Canada and Britain.

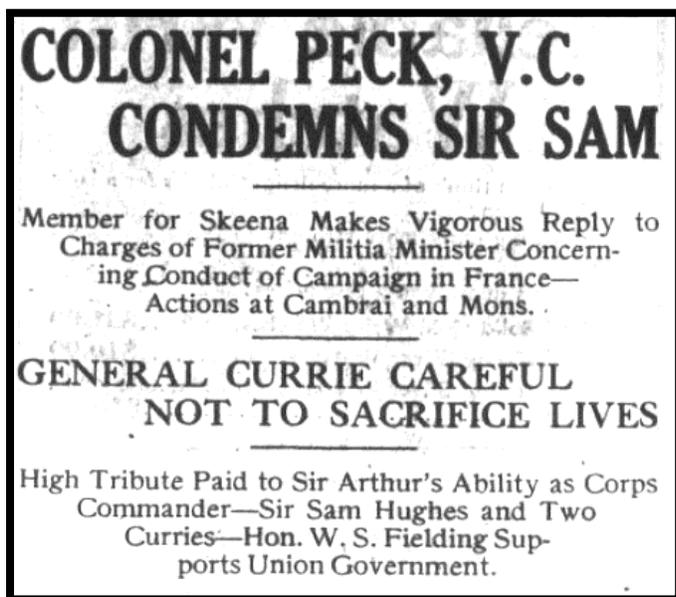
Starting about 1930 with the release of B.H. Liddell Hart's, *The Real War*,<sup>21</sup> there was a flood of historical writing about the war that painted a picture of futility and disillusionment. British commanders were represented as incompetent fools who needlessly sacrificed brave but ill-informed troops in a meaningless struggle. The general theme of "lions led by donkeys" was reinforced by a wave of popular literature and film. Remarque's *All Quiet of the Western Front* and Hemmingway's *A Farewell*

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<sup>21</sup> B.H. Liddell Hart. *History of the First World War*, Pan Books, (London: 1972 (originally published as *The Real War 1914-1918* in 1930 by Faber and Faber).

to Arms are but two prominent examples. In later writing, social historians led by cultural and literary historian Paul Fussell, presented the war as a major cultural shift. Fussell argued that the heroic and romantic language of the pre-war period was used to mislead the public and ultimately led to a loss of innocence<sup>22</sup>. Phillip Knightley, writing at the height of the Vietnam War, went even further to argue that an unprecedented program of press censorship and propaganda was a major factor leading to US involvement in the war.<sup>23</sup> In more recent years<sup>24</sup> British historians like Gary Sheffield have begun to challenge that long entrenched perspective.

For Canadian historians, the “lions led by donkeys” school of disillusionment and futility has never taken root. Unlike Britain, politicians rather than military leaders were judged more harshly by historians. A conflict between Sam Hughes and Arthur Currie in the later stages of the war grew increasingly bitter in the immediate post-war period. Hughes’ initial attack was launched under the



2. THE DAILY COLONIST, VICTORIA, SATURDAY, MARCH 15, 1919 PAGE 1.

cover of Parliamentary privilege while both Currie and the Prime Minister were out of the country. Hughes denounced Currie as a blood thirsty commander who needlessly sacrificed his troops in the pursuit of personal glory. A timely and stirring defense of Currie by newly elected member of parliament, Lieutenant Colonel Cyrus Peck, DSO, VC<sup>25</sup>, who had recently returned from

<sup>22</sup> Paul Fussell. *The Great War and Modern Memory*. (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1975).

<sup>23</sup> Phillip Knightley. *The First Casualty – From Crimea to Vietnam: The War Correspondent as Hero, Propagandist, and Myth Maker*. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975).

<sup>24</sup> Gary Sheffield, *Forgotten Victory - the First World War: Myths and Realities*. (London: Headline Book Publishing, 2001).

<sup>25</sup> Peck had commanded the 16<sup>th</sup> (Canadian Scottish) Battalion, In the 1917 election he had run as the Union candidate in the Skeena riding in British Columbia.

the front quickly put an end to the matter. Later, Currie successfully sued a local Ontario newspaper for repeating the allegations initiated by Hughes. Nevertheless, Currie's reputation as a soldier emerged largely intact.<sup>26</sup>

There have been other equally ill-founded attempts to heap scorn on the competence of Canadian commanders. The seventeen-part CBC radio documentary "In Flanders Fields" was aired in 1964 to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the war. In large part, the series took up the British theme using highly selective editing of over 600 oral history interviews. Although well received by some at the time, the CBC's scholarship has been thoroughly discredited in more recent times.<sup>27</sup> More importantly, this sort of shoddy history, all too common for the CBC<sup>28</sup>, has never successfully challenged the dominant narrative of the war. The enduring story has been that of an army that became increasingly effective during the war. After Vimy Ridge in 1917, soldiers of the Canadian Corps were seen by Canadians as the shock troops of the Empire<sup>29</sup>. The Canadian soldier came to embody the nation as a whole. First Nations were snipers and scouts who flocked to the colours as had their ancestors in previous wars. With minor variations, this overarching myth has survived several generations of historians and has been embraced as part of popular culture. One of the historical debates in Canada concerns how the myth developed. Here we find three competing hypotheses. Jefferey Keshen echoes Fussell and Knightley, arguing that the national myth was a construct of a highly effective campaign of deception, censorship and propaganda. In reaching this conclusion, he focussed primarily on archival material related to Canada's wartime regulatory framework and in particular, the work of the chief censor at home and the official

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<sup>26</sup> For a fulsome coverage of those events see Barbara Wilson, "The Road to the Coburg Courtroom", *Canadian Military History*, Volume 10, Number 3, (Summer 2001): 67-73 and for a broader context Tim Cook, *The Madman and the Butcher*.

<sup>27</sup> Theresa Iacobelli, "A Participant's History?: The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and the Manipulation of Oral History", *The Oral History Review*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (SUMMER/FALL 2011), 331-348.

<sup>28</sup> Widely shown on CBC, coverage of the Vimy battle depicted Currie either as in command or at least playing a dominant role, while commanders of the other three divisions are rarely mentioned. *Historica Heritage Minute – Vimy Ridge*, [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

<sup>29</sup> Tim Cook, *Shock Troops: Canadians Fighting the Great War 1917-1918, Vol 2*. (Toronto: Penguin Books, 2008).

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“eye witness”, Max Aitken, later Lord Beaverbrook. His selective review of press coverage reinforced a picture of compliant newspaper reporters who saw it as their duty to follow the official line, to support the war and maintain public morale. He describes the Canadian program as “among the most brazen affronts to democracy in the country’s history”.<sup>30</sup> There is little doubt that Aitken’s brilliant propaganda campaign did much to establish the dominant story in the eyes of Canadians and others. The real question, however, is whether the campaign was effective in manipulating public support for the war effort.

Jonathan Vance takes a somewhat modified position. Although he does not contest the effectiveness of media control, he argues that the myth was largely a post-war construction. Here, Vance describes not simply public writing about the war, but also the massive program of memorialization that both built and sustained the popular national myth. Most compelling is the transformation of the battle of Vimy Ridge from one of a number of important engagements to a defining moment in Canadian history. The Canadian Corps became the embodiment of the nation and the victory a symbol of the emergence of a new and more confident nationalism. For Vance, the national myth was not merely a construction of social elites but a more local construct that served the interests of a broad spectrum of the populace. Commemoration gave comfort to people who needed a means of dealing with the impact of the war on their lives. Vance argues that post-war commemoration serves the broader society much in the same way that the ceremonials around funerals and gravestones help the grieving cope with loss.

To dismiss the dominant memory as elite manipulation is to do a disservice to the uneducated veteran from northern Alberta who wistfully recalled the estaminets of France, the penurious spinster in Vancouver who sent a dollar to the war memorial fund, or the school girl who marched proudly in a Nova Scotia Armistice day parade. People like this embraced the myth, not because their social betters drilled it into their minds by sheer repetition but because it

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<sup>30</sup> Jeffery Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship in Canada’s Great War*, (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2008), 109.

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answered a need, explained the past, or offered a promise of a better future. They did more than simply embrace the myth: they helped to create it.<sup>31</sup>

The question then, is how do these urban microhistories challenge or affirm these overarching themes? How do they differ from our European exemplars? Perhaps most importantly, what lessons do they teach that will aid in this study of Victoria. For Victoria, I will consider both how the national stories were presented in the local press and the direct role played by local communities in the creating of more local and comforting memories. While I do not dismiss Keshen's picture of a well-oiled propaganda machine, this review of the Victoria newspapers will suggest that people had a more balanced view of the bloody reality of war, where the national story was often coloured by more direct local reports and tempered by almost daily reports of casualties. There are, of course a host of other issues to be considered, but this debate will stand at the centre of our review of Canadian cities.

By comparison to our European exemplars, the two Canadian studies we will consider fall well short of ideal of total history espoused by Chickering. There is little in the way of the detailed economic and demographic studies that characterize both the Capital Cities study and Chickering's study of Freiberg. Instead, the focus is on the public discourse in Winnipeg and Toronto. Nevertheless, both studies provide telling examples of both the strength and challenges of urban studies of the war.

Ian Miller's strength is his fulsome coverage of the recruiting and fund-raising campaigns in Toronto. Here we see an example of how micro-history can challenge more broadly-based accounts. Miller makes a persuasive case that, in 1914, the challenge for military authorities was not recruiting but rather deciding who to enlist. Given a preference for those with previous military service, he argues: "Recent immigrants of British birth were more likely to have had military training, and it was primarily for this reason that relatively few Canadian-born men were chosen initially. Had the criteria for service

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<sup>31</sup> Jonathan Vance. *Death So Noble*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 267.

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included being born in Canada, the ranks would still have been filled.”<sup>32</sup> Thus, the preponderance of British born soldiers in the First Contingent had more to do with the priorities of recruiters than any lack of willingness by other groups. This directly challenges the hypothesis of historian J. L. Granatstein who reflects the long-standing myth of the British-born rallying to the colours: “Their ties to Britain still stronger than their links to the Dominion, the British born were most eager to fight. English Canadians somewhat less so, French Canadians, with ten generations in Canada, no ties to Britain and only ancestral memories of France, were the least eager.”<sup>33</sup>

It is interesting to note that Tim Cook’s most recent account of the war adopts a much more cautious approach than Granatstein, cautioning his readers that “too much should not be made of the high initial content of British-born in the ranks.”<sup>34</sup> Our data from Victoria will reinforce Cook’s more tempered position.

In part, Ian Miller’s study of Toronto in the Great War can also be seen as a micro-historical challenge to Jeffery Keshen’s hypothesis that Canadians were essentially duped by a highly effective propaganda and censorship regime and were isolated from full knowledge of the impact of the war. His detailed examination of Toronto newspapers during the war and review of personal papers, paints a compelling picture of a city solidly united in support of the war and fully aware of both the general conduct of operations and the terrible costs. The flow of information directly from the front through multiple sources like returned soldiers, military chaplains, and foreign press provided a relatively comprehensive picture of wartime operations. With the first major battles in the spring of 1915,

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<sup>32</sup> Ian Miller. *Our Glory and Our Grief: Torontonians in the Great War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 192.

<sup>33</sup> J.L. Granatstein, *Hell’s Corner - An Illustrated History of Canada’s Great War 1914-1918* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2004), 14.

<sup>34</sup> Tim Cook, *At the Sharp End. At the Sharp End - Canadians Fighting the Great War 1914-1916*. Vol. 1. 2 vols. (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2007).

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headlines with news from Second Ypres “Canadians Won Great Glory” vied with other headlines that spoke of the cost: “Canadian Casualties Nearly 6,000”<sup>35</sup> As the bloodbath on the Somme unfolded in the fall of 1916, amid a bitterly cold winter marked by shortages of coal and rising costs of living, Toronto papers reported with some accuracy the disposition and casualties among Canadian troops. Despite the clear understanding that this would be a long and bloody conflict, there was little public appetite for compromise. The efforts of the Toronto Patriotic Fund, raising well over three million dollars, showed a substantial increase from the campaign of 1915.<sup>36</sup> Paralleling the pattern seen in the studies of the *Capital Cities* and *Freiberg*, as pressure increased, and the cost of the war became clearer, public resolve stiffened.

What is strikingly absent from Miller’s account are the voices of the disadvantaged, the minorities, the iconoclasts identified by Winter and Robert. These are voices least likely to be found in newspaper reports and other such public discourse. For example, although Miller provides ample evidence of the support from the major denominations, he ignores groups like the Quakers or Christadelphians who opposed conscription. Even resistance noted in more general accounts of the war is overlooked by Miller. For example, he cites the influence of prominent Methodist clergyman the Rev. Dr. Samuel D. Chown<sup>37</sup> but ignores the voice of his pacifist niece Alice Chown who helped found the Canadian Women’s Peace Party in 1915.<sup>38</sup> The voice of more than two dozen conscientious objectors from Toronto who were imprisoned when they refused to take up arms is entirely absent in his description of the review and appeal process during the period of conscription.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ian Miller. *Our Glory and Our Grief*. 194.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, 61.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*. 24.

<sup>38</sup> Desmond Morton and J.L. Granatstein. *Marching to Armageddon: Canadians and the Great War 1914-1919*. (Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennys Ltd, 1989), 27.

<sup>39</sup> Amy J. Shaw. *Crisis of Conscience: Conscientious Objection in Canada during the First World War*, Appendix, 166.

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Miller ends his account somewhat jarringly with the armistice. As with Chickering's account of Freiberg, we are left with the sense that the story remains incomplete. While setting a tidy end date will be equally problematic for this study of Victoria, it will be important to capture the immediate post-war events including demobilization, the 1917-1918 influenza epidemic and early memorialization and commemoration.

Jim Blanchard's account of *Winnipeg's Great War*, the most recent of the four works considered, is clearly aimed at a more general audience. Like the Toronto study, the use of economic and demographic data is limited and almost exclusively embedded in the text rather than being presented in the charts and graphs that characterize the European works. One of the strengths of Blanchard's study, however, is the use of maps, photographs and direct extracts from letters and diaries to enhance the impact of the text.

Blanchard employs a strictly chronological structure to his presentation using the years 1914 to 1918 as chapter headings. This approach helps to visualize the turmoil of events more clearly but often makes discussion of multi-year themes like the role of women difficult to follow. For example, it is of little use in understanding how the mounting casualties of the 1915 battles play out against a provincial election and the hotly contested question of denominational schools. On the other hand, with issues like the treatment of injured soldiers or the growth of the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire (IODE) and the women's movement one would need to continually revisit earlier events. With print documents this tension between a thematic and chronological structure is inevitable. Fortunately, with new digital media formats this is not the case. In reshaping this work for the accompanying web site, hyperlinks and simple navigation bars and a search function will enable the user to explore thematic issues of interest while examining a chronological period. Fundamentally, the shift to a digital format empowers the user to enter the discussion at any point, make use of such material as they find useful and explore the site using their own self defined path. For this study of Victoria, the supporting web site

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[www.acitygoestowar.ca](http://www.acitygoestowar.ca) will also enable readers to examine the underlying data and archival material at the click of a mouse by providing direct access to a soldier data base and digital archive of documents and images.

Blanchard's Winnipeg is a striking contrast to Toronto. In 1914, Winnipeg was Canada's third largest city with a population of 136,000 but it was a much more ethnically diverse city than the others I have considered. In 1916, only sixty-seven percent were of British origin compared to over eighty-five percent in Toronto. Significant minorities included Germans, Austro-Hungarians, Ukrainians, and Poles with a large French speaking concentration in nearby St Boniface. Although there was a clear Protestant majority, there were significant Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Jewish minorities. The relationship between these groups becomes one of the central focusses of the historical account. In addition to this demographic diversity, political and economic life of Winnipeg was unsettled. Political scandal and heated debates over language and schools would ultimately lead to the defeat of the provincial Conservative Party in 1915. High unemployment and labour disputes further heightened conflict between ethnic and religious groups. With Winnipeg as a major assembly point and training centre, the constant movement of troops in and out of the city further complicated the picture. When Archbishop Béliveau of St Boniface declared "There can be no peace where there is no justice." and when six Mennonite preachers were jailed it was not because they were opposed to the war but because they opposed legislation restricting denominational schools.<sup>40</sup> Thus, in striking contrast to the picture of solidarity in Miller's Toronto, Blanchard presents images of almost constant turmoil and conflict in Winnipeg.

Unlike Miller, Blanchard gives full voice to the minority groups. For example, in his discussion of conscription, the focus is on the war resisters rather than on the appeal process. He provides intimate

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<sup>40</sup> Jim Blanchard, *Winnipeg's Great War: A City Comes of Age* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2010),181.

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detail of the brutal treatment of conscientious objectors and the ensuing public debate. The lived experience in Winnipeg as depicted by Blanchard is a polar opposite to Miller's Toronto. Despite this divergence, the two cities were similar in the number of recruits that were sent off to war and the dollars raised for patriotic funds and war bonds. One wonders how much of the difference lies in the eyes of the historian rather than in the lived reality of either city. Reality is never as tidy as historians might like. The lived life of any group or individual is, in the end, unique. On balance, there is less risk in providing undue exposure to the oppressed than in suppressing their voice by undue focus on the privileged.

## Canadian Cities on the Internet

This project's web site [www.acitygoestowar.ca](http://www.acitygoestowar.ca) has become something of a model for other communities. Although primarily focussed on Victoria, Esquimalt, Saanich and Oak Bay are now linked to the site and the linked database of newspaper articles and other documents applies equally to those communities. The City Goes to War Project is also linked to the expanded on-line newspaper archives of the city and the 1911 census database. Enhanced search functions are now available through the Humanities Computing portal at the University of Victoria at <http://www.britishColonist.ca/> and <http://vihistory.ca/>

Further afield, local historians in Brantford Ontario have developed their own set of data at <http://www.doingourbit.ca> to cover Brantford, the surrounding County and the data for the indigenous peoples of the nearby Six Nations. The Brantford site offers data for a community that is similar in size to Victoria but a striking contrast in other respects. Pre-war Brantford, with a population of just under 30,000 was an industrial city. It was home to Massey- Harris and other agricultural implement

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manufacturers that employed over 9,000 workers. Almost 10,000 new immigrants had arrived between January 1911 and the start of the war with the largest numbers coming from Hungary and Armenia.<sup>41</sup>

## Lessons Learned

I have grouped the lessons derived from this examination in the three broad areas - content and methodology and style. The parallels in these studies are striking indeed. Although there are significant variations from city to city driven by the circumstances of culture and geography, the stories of cities in wartime are hauntingly familiar. At the outset, there is an outburst of patriotic fervor rooted in the vain hope that this will be a short and largely bloodless war – what Miller termed “A Great Adventure” in his opening chapter. By the spring of 1915 the realization that this would be a long and bloody affair had set in and with it a broadly-based determination to commit still more resources. Remarkably this was not contingent on either immediate threat or overwhelming manipulation by national elites but rather a deep-felt feeling that having sacrificed so much it would be a betrayal to give way. Amid these broad majority views, dissent was expressed not against the war itself but rather against targets that were easier to assault. Public anger was instead directed at minorities, profiteers, shirkers, and the inequity of sacrifice or general mismanagement. It was not until relatively late in the war when the resources of the combatants had been bled almost dry that resistance to the war itself emerged and began to clash with even more strident voices urging yet greater sacrifice. In Canada, this became encapsulated in the conscription debate, in Freiberg with rising criminality and in all cities with breaches of public order whether through strikes or protests. In parallel, there were challenges to the established social order. The emerging power of women was evident both in industry and the social and political life of their communities. Demands by workers for greater social equity and an expansion of the franchise can be seen through women’s suffrage in Winnipeg or elimination of the class based electoral system in

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<sup>41</sup> <http://doingourbit.ca/pre-war-snapshot>

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Freiberg. Of course, not all elements are apparent in every city and the intensity and timing varied but the parallels are striking.

While the methodology of the European examples is clearly superior, it must also be acknowledged that the research effort demanded by those studies was dramatically greater than the more limited ambition of the Canadian monographs. The use of economic and demographic data in tabular form is a powerful tool in conveying changing conditions over time. Over reliance on data to the exclusion of experiential and anecdotal material cannot adequately convey the mood of a community. Furthermore, the value of tabular data needs to be carefully linked with the textual argument and presented in a clear readable format. While not being able to replicate the academic horsepower of the Capital Cities project, the City Goes to War project, has engaged both student researchers and community groups over the four years marking the centennial of the Great War. Given these resources, approaching the total history model of Freiberg should be feasible. Rather than limiting the work to a conventional text, the results of this study will ultimately be converted to the more dynamic web-based format, enabling the reader to link directly to a vast archive of supporting material that has been developed by the City Goes to War project team.

Stylistically, the approach taken in this paper departs somewhat from other studies to overcome the issues identified. The temporal scope of analysis has been expanded to examine the critical years leading up to the war. While Toronto and the European cities were relatively stable in the pre-war period, such was not the case for Victoria. The years immediately following the war up to 1925 are also considered in order to examine major post-war memorialization efforts and the issue of post-war re-adjustment. Finally, in true Canadian fashion this examination of Victoria will seek a middle ground between the thematic approach adopted by Blanchard for Winnipeg and the chronological approach of Miller.

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The major transition point of the war had such a profound impact that one is either forced to re-establish the chronological context for each theme or worse present thematic arguments as if the broader war had no impact. The digital model of course will allow the reader to easily link thematic discussions to the broader issues or even other themes. For example, economic themes cannot be neatly separated from considerations of gender or politics. The paper will follow a broadly chronological approach. The Chapter 3 will set the stage with an examination of Victoria in the period before the war and then consider how the city responded to the initial call to arms. Themes of fund-raising, recruiting and the changing role of women will be considered as part of Victoria's response to the bloody battles of 1916- and early 1917. The city-wide analysis will continue with the closing phase of the war, considering the response to conscription including the 1917 election, the impact of the influenza epidemic, returned soldiers and the Siberian expedition. The focus will then be narrowed to consider five different communities within the larger urban area. Here the intent is to gain a better understanding of how these tighter knit communities within the city were both influenced by the larger context and in turn helped to shape it. The dominant settler society will be examined first from the perspective of social elites as represented by the members of the Victoria Golf Club. The congregation of a major downtown church and a small church on the rural fringe of the city will provide an opportunity to consider the role of religion and at the same time look at communities that encompassed a much broader economic and social spectrum. These settler communities will be contrasted with the perspectives of the Chinese and indigenous communities in the Victoria area. Finally, I will conclude this study by considering post-war visits by major war time figures and the campaigns to establish permanent memorials.

## Chapter 3 – Prelude to War

It is tempting to cast pre-war Victoria as a period of romantic innocence - a little bit of Britain on the far-flung shores of the Empire, far away from the centres of power and conflict. Today that image is reinforced by the careful preservation of buildings from the period. The stately Empress Hotel on the harbor, the nearby Union Club, impressive downtown churches like St Andrew's both Presbyterian and Catholic and historic Government Street provide the physical setting. The homes of the wealthy Dunsmuir family at Craigdarroch Castle and Hatley Park compete for the tourist dollar with those of the middle class like the O'Reilly home at Point Ellice, Ross Bay Villa or Emily Carr's House. Everything is well groomed, genteel and for the most part peaceful. The impact of the Great War has been reduced to a few bronze plaques now largely forgotten on the walls of older churches, schools and clubs. Until the approach of the centennial, the main history page of the Oak Bay website made no mention of Willows Camp, where thousands of troops assembled and trained for overseas duty.



3 SIR RICHARD McBRIDE AND SAM HUGHES INSPECT THE TROOPS AT WILLOWS CAMP<sup>42</sup>

<sup>42</sup> BC Archives reference HP059390; 193501-001

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Instead it skipped quickly from the land boom of 1906-1913 to developments after 1945<sup>43</sup>. Even the link to the more extensive work by former Reeve George Murdoch made less mention of the war than the minutiae of council sessions in the 1914-1918 period. Oak Bay, like many other communities, has made a substantial effort to correct these earlier deficiencies during the period of the centennial of the Great War. Today the Oak Bay Remembers web site stands as a model for others.<sup>44</sup> Similarly, the history of St Andrew's Kirk in a massive understatement noted, "The fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the congregation took place during the Great War and it was not as joyous an occasion as it would have been under normal circumstances."<sup>45</sup> The ritual repetition of the words "Lest we forget" each November 11<sup>th</sup> does not lessen the impact of our forgetfulness.

To set the stage for our examination of the Great War in Victoria I seek to present a more complete picture. Starting with an overview of the demographic changes in the pre-war era, I will then shift our focus to the rapid development of the urban landscape. I will limit our consideration of institutional change to three areas: politics, the armed forces and education.

## Demographic Change

For Canada, the period leading up to the outbreak of the Great War was one of dramatic growth. After 1907, the hardy Marquis strain of wheat made large-scale farming on the Canadian prairies much more profitable. Offering free land and assisted passage, the Dominion government conducted an aggressive and highly successful marketing campaign in Europe to attract new migrants.

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<sup>43</sup> <https://www.oakbay.ca/our-community/about/history>

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.oakbay.ca/our-community/archives/oak-bay-remembers>

<sup>45</sup> Session of St Andrew's Presbyterian Church eds. *The Kirk That Faith Built: St. Andrew's on Douglas Street, 1890-1990* (Victoria: Morriss Printing Company, 1989), 128.

With the end of free land in the United States and tough economic times in Europe, the appeal of the “Last Best West”<sup>46</sup> was magnetic.

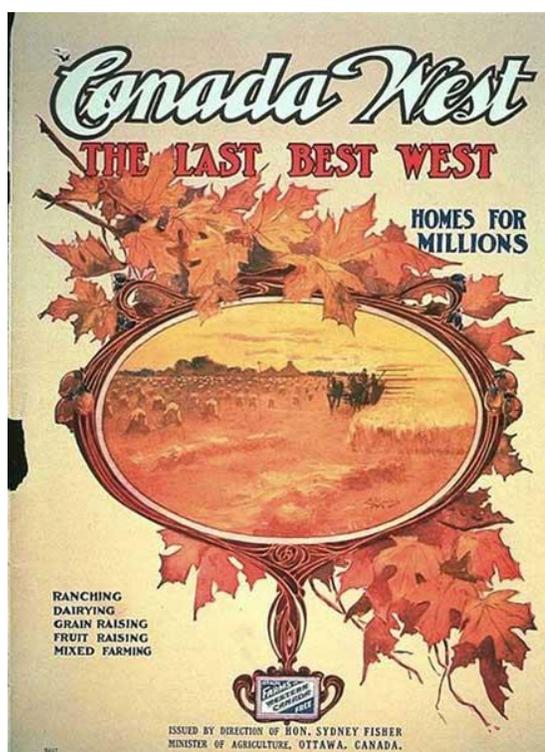


FIGURE 4- 1909 ADVERTISING PAMPHLET

The massive inflow of single males led to a marked gender imbalance. The 1911 census<sup>47</sup> showed a female deficit with only 886 women for every thousand men. This gender imbalance was most striking in the western provinces and in rural Canada. In the west, the deficit ranged from 560 in BC to 688 in Saskatchewan but almost balanced in eastern cities like Toronto. The imbalance was, of course, reversed throughout Europe, the primary source of immigrants. England had 1068 women per thousand men. In Victoria, the gender imbalance meant a surplus of over 2000 men in the target age for recruiters at the outbreak of war. The second major shift was the rapid expansion of the west driven both by immigration and a western movement of native-born Canadians. In the summer of 1914, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the celebrated author of the Sherlock Holmes mysteries was on a speaking tour of

<sup>46</sup> National Archives of Canada File NO. C-30620, June 16, 2010

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1911/pages/about-census.aspx>

Canada. On returning home, he remarked, "What Canada needs now are more women...she wants 100,000 women.... The population is not increasing because so many men in the west cannot get married...they toil on their farms alone and the moment things go wrong they get disheartened."<sup>48</sup> In Duguid's official history, he estimates that the male population between 18 and 45 constituted a full 41% of the population in British Columbia compared to only 24% in Ontario.<sup>49</sup>

Between 1901 and 1911, the Canadian population grew by 34%. By 1913, the permanent labour force had increased by 45%. "No other country in the world has shown so rapid a growth" reported a government study in 1915.<sup>50</sup> But in the west, expansion was even more dramatic. Saskatchewan grew from under 100,000 in 1901 to almost half a million in 1911, to become the third most populous

	1901	1911	% inc
Montreal	267,730	470,480	75.7%
Toronto	208,040	376,538	81.0%
Winnipeg	42,340	136,035	221.3%
Vancouver	27,010	100,401	271.7%
Ottawa	59,928	87,062	45.3%
Hamilton	52,634	81,969	55.7%
Quebec	68,840	78,710	14.3%
Halifax	40,832	46,619	14.2%
Calgary	4,392	43,704	895.1%
St. John	40,711	42,511	4.4%
Victoria	20,919	31,660	51.3%
Regina	2,249	30,213	1243.4%
Edmonton	2,626	30,213	1050.5%
Brandon	5,620	13,839	146.2%
Moosejaw	1,558	13,823	787.2%
Saskatoon	113	12,004	10523.0%
Total	812,457	1,464,029	80.2%

province in the country. This type of dramatic population shift makes any attempt to characterize "westerners" as fundamentally different than "easterners" problematic, as many of those in the west would be relative newcomers.

A rapid period of urbanization accompanied the general pattern of growth. The urban population in cities over 10,000 increased by 80% compared to 17% in rural areas. By 1911, almost

<sup>48</sup> Sandra Gwyn, *Tapestry of War: A Private View of Canadians in the Great War*. (Toronto: Harper Collins Publishers Ltd., 1992) quoting Conan Doyle, 17.

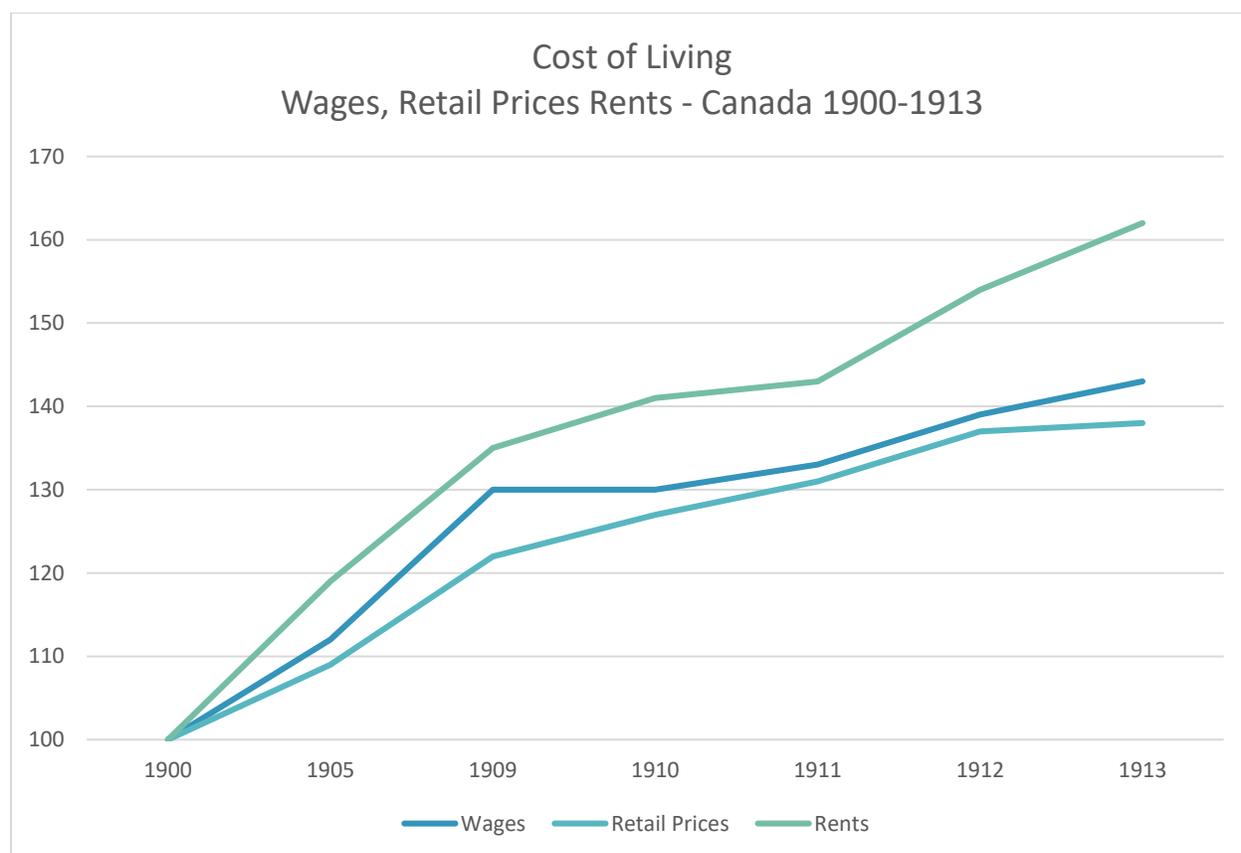
<sup>49</sup> Colonel A Fortesque Duguid, *Official History of the Canadian Forces in the Great War, Vol 1*, 50-51.

<sup>50</sup> John McDougald, Chairman. *Report of Board of Inquiry into Cost of Living* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1915), 1053.

one in three Canadians lived in cities and towns over 5,000. Once again, urban growth was most marked on the prairies. Regina, Calgary and Edmonton all grew from villages of under 4,500 to major cities of over 30,000. Saskatoon emerged from a tiny temperance colony of 113 in 1901 to a city of over 12,000 in 1911.

This was also a period of unprecedented inflation in both wages and prices. The rising expectations of the pre-war period reflected in this extract for a government report from 1915 suggest that war time inflation would be seen by many, not as unexpected shock but rather as a return to

**TABLE 2 - COST OF LIVING IN CANADA 1900-1913**



normal after the brief downturn in 1913.<sup>51</sup>

**COSTS ARE IN CONSTANT DOLLARS WITH 1900 TAKEN AS 100**

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.,1063.

The 50% growth rate in Victoria recorded between 1901 and 1911 was modest indeed compared to over 270% in Vancouver where the population exceeded 100,000. The rapid expansion would continue until the start of the war with immigration to Canada reaching a historic peak at over 400,000 in 1913. While most of those (290,000) came from either Britain or the United States, increasingly immigrants were also drawn from other regions. Almost 7500 came from China to settle in British Columbia after a hiatus early in the decade. There was also an increasing number of Sikhs and Hindus arriving from India. As “British Subjects” the Asian exclusion laws simply did not apply.

These general patterns were also clear in Victoria. Even using the 1911 census data, recruiters in Victoria would see an attractive surplus of almost 5000 unmarried men in the target sixteen to forty age bracket. Of those, over two thousand were Canadian born.

**TABLE 3 GENDER IMBALANCE IN VICTORIA 1911**

	<b>Total</b>	<b>16-40</b>	<b>Cdn 16-40</b>
<b>Male</b>	<b>17054</b>	<b>9801</b>	<b>6749</b>
<b>Female</b>	<b>10866</b>	<b>4959</b>	<b>4613</b>
<b>Surplus</b>	<b>6188</b>	<b>4842</b>	<b>2136</b>

Victoria remained dominantly British throughout the decade before the war with about 75% of the population being recorded as such in both the 1901 and 1911 census. The term “British” however included those born in Canada and even many of those who arrived in Victoria from the United States. The ethnic breakdown of the city is perhaps best reflected by an examination of religious affiliation. The chart on the following page, extracted from the census data of 1911, shows a preponderance of Anglicans. Although predominantly British, the “established churches” also attracted a wide range of

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others.<sup>52</sup> The relatively small, but well established, German population was well represented in most major Christian congregations and in the local Synagogue. The Presbyterians were predominately Scots but also included some prominent members of German and Dutch ancestry drawn from reformed churches. A small Chinese Presbyterian church had also been established in 1892. Methodists were dominantly of the English middle class but, like the Presbyterians, also drew reformed church members from other ethnic backgrounds. The Methodists also made inroads in the Chinese community with a mission school established in 1876.

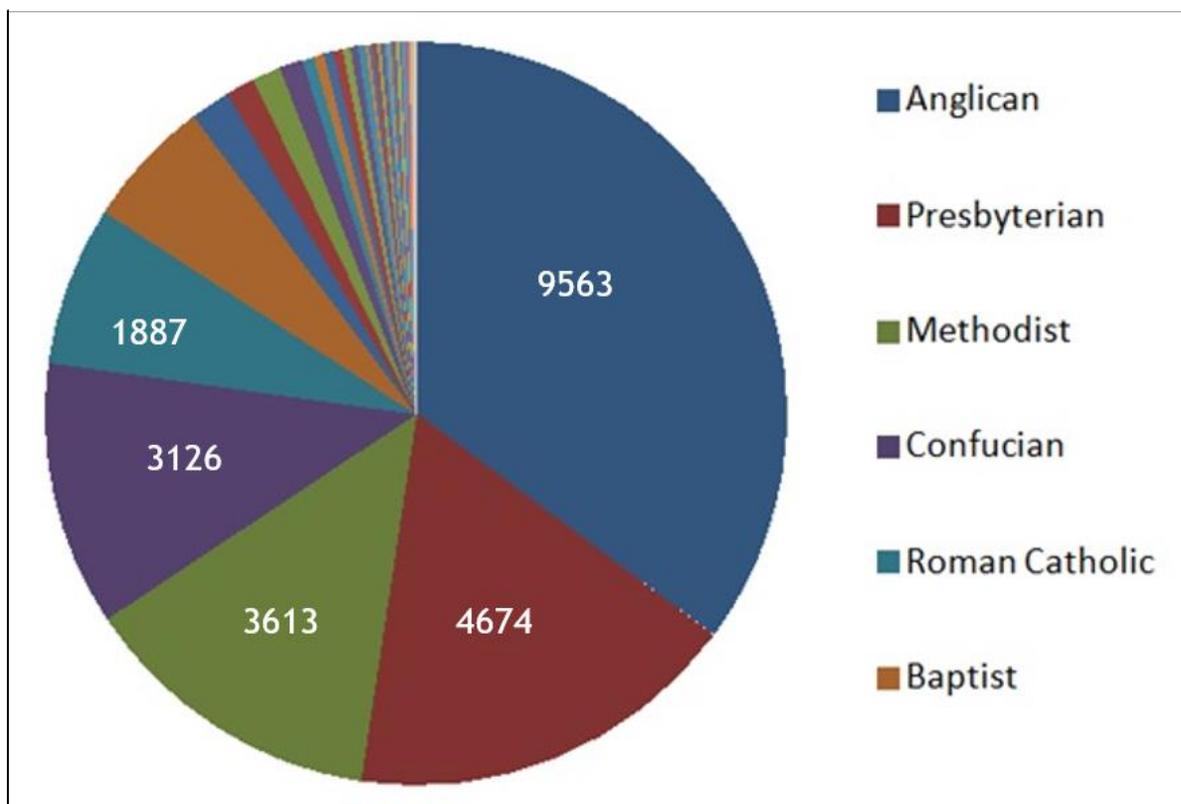
Despite the proselytizing of the Christian churches, those recorded as “Confucian” in the census still outnumbered the long-established Roman Catholics. The Catholic Sisters of St Anne traced their roots back to the earliest days of the colony, arriving from Quebec in 1858 and quickly establishing a school.

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<sup>52</sup> Tylor Richards. *(Re-)Imagining Germanness: Victoria's Germans and the 1915 Lusitania Riot*. MA Thesis, University of Victoria, 2009. Table 3.

Victoria had also been home to a small but prominent Jewish community with the Congregation Emanu-El established in 1863. There were also smaller numbers recorded for Sikh, Buddhist and Russian/Ukrainian Orthodox faith groups. Although barriers against south Asian immigration dated back

TABLE 4 - RELIGION IN VICTORIA FROM 1911 CENSUS



to the 1908 continuous journey legislation<sup>53</sup>, immigrants from India challenged the restrictions on the grounds that they, like those already in Victoria, were “British Citizens”.<sup>54</sup>

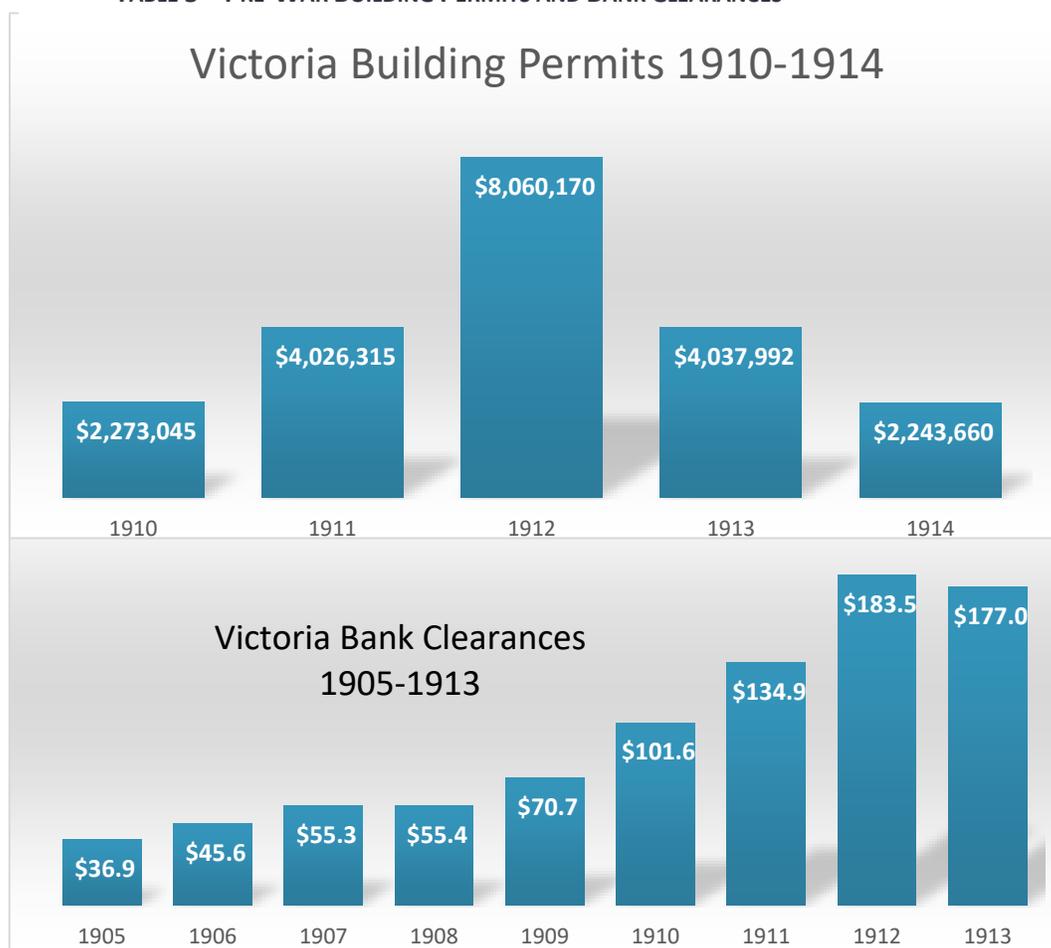
<sup>53</sup> Library and Archives Canada. *Statutes of Canada. An Act to Amend the Immigration Act, 1908*. Ottawa: SC 7-8 Edward VII, Chapter 33

<sup>54</sup> Data extracted from Canada Year Books 1911 to 1914

## The Urban Landscape

*Boundless Optimism*, the title of Patricia Roy's biography of Premier Richard McBride neatly captures the spirit of pre-war Victoria<sup>55</sup>. The city's local directory of 1913 boldly announced that 1912 had a record \$10 million in building permits to mark a period of "marvelous growth" beside a grossly exaggerated estimate of the population at over 67,000.<sup>56</sup> More official figures confirm the surge in

TABLE 5 – PRE-WAR BUILDING PERMITS AND BANK CLEARANCES



activity with a somewhat more modest total. Bank clearances, a common economic indicator of the time, also show a surge in economic activity.<sup>57</sup>

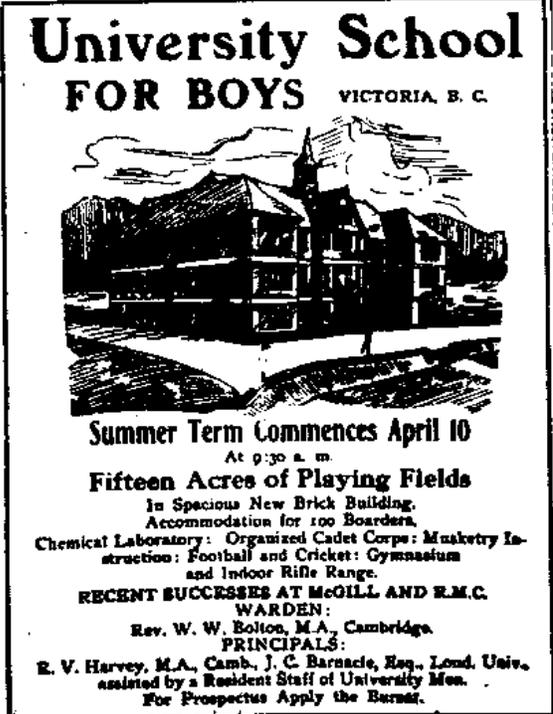
<sup>55</sup> Patricia Roy. *Boundless Optimism* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012).

<sup>56</sup> Henderson's Directory – Victoria.

[http://www.vpl.ca/bccd/index.php/browse/title/1913/Henderson%27s Greater Victoria City Directory.](http://www.vpl.ca/bccd/index.php/browse/title/1913/Henderson%27s%20Greater%20Victoria%20City%20Directory)

<sup>57</sup> Data extracted from Henderson's Great Victoria City Directory 1914, 80 (A clearance is the movement of money or cheques from one account to another.)

A real estate boom and massive capital expenditures by the provincial government in the decade before the war had fueled a buoyant economy. The first ten-story building had been erected and plans were underway for several others. At its peak in 1912, the value of building permits had increased by 350% in three years<sup>58</sup>. Rail lines and the increasingly popular electric street cars connected the city and the Saanich Peninsula. In 1914, the Esquimalt and Nanaimo Railway's final section from Parksville to Courtney was completed. Locally, some still hoped for a bridge to the mainland to link the island with the now completed CPR transcontinental line. Automobiles were increasingly common, albeit still driving in the British manner on the left side of the street. The final link of the E&N railway line from Parksville to Courtney was completed. Many of the buildings that still give Victoria much of its character appeared in the pre-war period. The "new" legislature opened in 1898 was enhanced by the addition of two wings and a library doubling the size of the original structure.<sup>59</sup> The Empress Hotel built on the reclaimed swampland of James Bay opened in 1908 and was enlarged four years later. In 1911, the new Prince George Hotel,<sup>60</sup> developed by wealthy Chinese merchant Lim Bang, opened across the street from city hall. In the same year, the University School for Boys offered an organized cadet corps and musketry instruction on its indoor rifle range in its new building.<sup>61</sup>



**University School**  
**FOR BOYS** VICTORIA, B. C.

Summer Term Commences April 10  
At 9:30 a. m.

**Fifteen Acres of Playing Fields**  
In Spacious New Brick Building.  
Accommodation for 100 Boarders.  
Chemical Laboratory: Organized Cadet Corps: Musketry Instruction: Football and Cricket: Gymnasium and Indoor Rifle Range.

**RECENT SUCCESSES AT MCGILL AND E.M.C.**  
WARDEN:  
Rev. W. W. Bolton, M.A., Cambridge.  
PRINCIPALS:  
E. V. Harvey, M.A., Camb., J. C. Barnack, Esq., Lond. Univ.,  
assisted by a Resident Staff of University Men.  
For Prospectus Apply the Warden.

5. UNIVERSITY BOY'S SCHOOL  
AD MAY 18, 1911

<sup>58</sup> Data from Dereck Pethick. *Summer of Promise: Victoria 1864-1914* (Victoria, BC: Sono Nis Press 2010), 175.

<sup>59</sup> *Discover Your Legislature*. Legislative Assembly of BC, (<http://www2.leg.bc.ca/media/flash/Place.pdf>)

<sup>60</sup> Now the Rialto Hotel – an historical display in the basement notes the contribution on the Lim Bang family.

<sup>61</sup> *Victoria Daily Colonist*, May 18, 1911, 8.

James Dunsmuir, the wealthy coal baron, moved into the magnificent Hatley Castle at what is now Royal Roads in 1908 and by 1914 Jennie Butchart had already spent a decade converting a former limestone quarry into a spectacular garden on the Saanich Peninsula. A new bridge was planned for the Johnson Street crossing of the inner harbor and a new breakwater was built to prepare for the wave of shipping that would surely follow the opening of the Panama Canal. The CP ships *Empress of Asia* and *Empress of Russia* had linked Victoria with Yokohama. The All Red line finally completed in 1911 linked the Empire and Victoria to the world by telephone and telegraph. At home, Victoria became the site of Canada's first artificial ice surface opening on Christmas Day 1911 near the Willows Exhibition Ground in Oak Bay. Two years later, the Victoria team led by Lester Patrick would defeat the reigning Stanley Cup Champion Quebec Bulldogs<sup>62</sup>.



**6. LESTER PATRICK'S VICTORIA PRO HOCKEY CLUB 1913**

In 1913, the Union Club moved into its new building on Gordon Street and the spectacular Royal Theater opened. *The Victoria Daily Times* boasted that Quadra Street would soon be the centre of

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<sup>62</sup> Greater Victoria Sports Hall of Fame at <http://www.gvshof.ca/stories/210-victoria-s-hockey-history.html>

church life with three new churches under construction – St John the Divine, First Presbyterian and First Congregational, with First Baptist on Fisgard Street not far behind.<sup>63</sup>



7 VICTORIA DAILY TIMES, VICTORIA  
JAN 22, 1913 PAGE 16

Arthur Currie, partner in a local insurance and real estate firm, was riding the wave in both business and society. His company offered a small home for sale at the bargain price of \$3,250. In the local militia, Currie had risen from a simple gunner in the 5<sup>th</sup> Regiment to become its popular commander. In 1913, he was recruited to command the newly formed 50<sup>th</sup> Gordon Highlanders with the financial backing of a wealthy local businessman.<sup>64</sup> The cost of kilts, other accoutrements, and band equipment was borne largely by local backers. St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, the centre of Victoria's Scottish community, gave its wholehearted support. Led by a prominent member of the church, the International Order of the Daughters of the Empire (IODE) had undertaken to provide the Regimental Colours.<sup>65</sup>

But underlying this optimistic picture lay some rather grim financial realities. In 1914 Richard McBride's government had spent over \$15 million largely driven by capital projects against revenue of only \$10 million. At \$32 per capita, provincial expenditures would dwarf that of the other provinces of the dominion.<sup>66</sup> To provide some perspective, the Canada Year

<sup>63</sup> *Victoria Daily Times*. Victoria, Jan 22, 1913, 16.

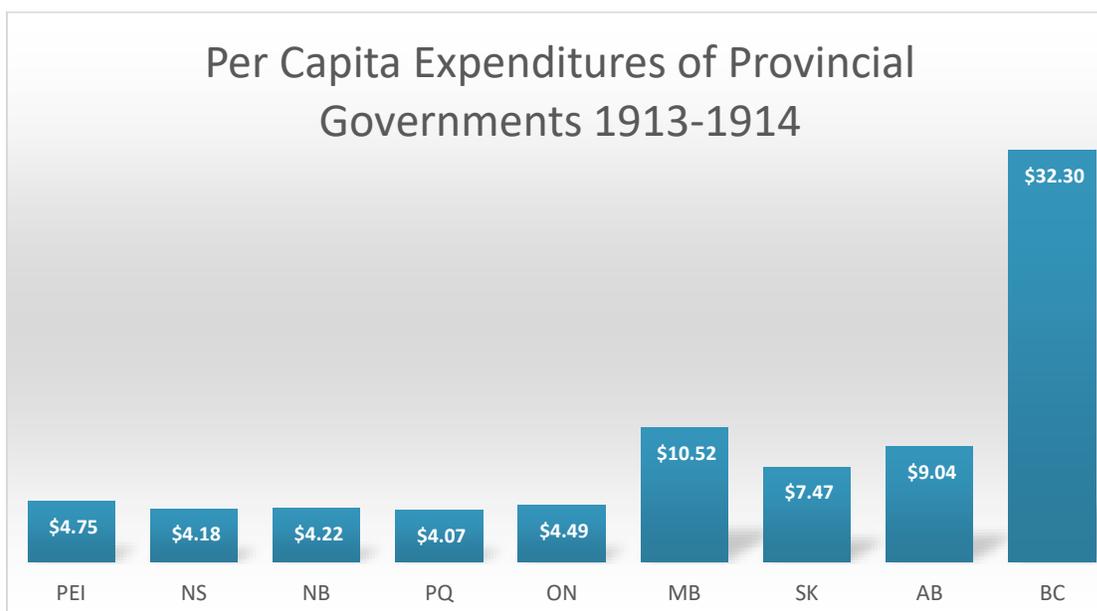
<sup>64</sup> Tim Cook, *The Madman and the Butcher* (Toronto: Penguin Group, 2010), 55.

<sup>65</sup> *Daily Colonist*, Victoria Nov 13, 1913. (Mrs. McMicking was the wife of St Andrew's Clerk of Session)

<sup>66</sup> *Canada Year Book 1914*, 561

Book reported that a family of five earning an annual income of \$800/year would spend about \$2/day on living expenses.<sup>67</sup>

TABLE 6 - PROVINCIAL PER CAPITA EXPENDITURES 1913-1914



The picture at the municipal level was equally grim. Victoria had invested heavily in capital projects like street paving, electrification, water and sewers in the expectation that a buoyant economy could bear the cost<sup>68</sup>. By the end of 1913 however, the city was in serious financial difficulty. Although the mayor tried to dismiss the crisis as an accounting problem, the city was insolvent and had to rely on several prominent businessmen to extend credit in order to simply meet payroll obligations.

Commercial failures in BC would exceed those of Ontario and Quebec combined.<sup>69</sup> Starting in the latter half of 1913, the situation in Victoria would take a sharp turn for the worse. Faced by these

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 534

<sup>68</sup> *Victoria Daily Times*. Victoria, Dec 27, 1913, 1.

<sup>69</sup> *Canada Year Book 1914*, 568

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grim economic conditions, when the real estate bubble burst, many investors, including Currie lost their savings and many others lost their jobs.

## The Armed Forces

Today some Canadians like to think of themselves as a peaceful people, soldiers with blue berets instead of steel helmets, trainers rather than warriors. In the summer of 1914, 10,000 militia soldiers concentrated at Camp Petawawa near Ottawa for summer training. The Canadian Army has rarely mustered even half that number in the decades since the end of World War II. In pre-war Victoria, there were two full infantry battalions and an artillery regiment in the militia with a total strength of over 1500. Today a city with almost ten times the population, can muster only a few hundred in one very understrength infantry battalion and an equally lean artillery regiment. Pre-war high schools had compulsory cadet training for boys. Military parades, music and formal military balls were at the very centre of social life. If you were an up and coming young businessman like Arthur Currie, service in the militia as an officer helped to cement your status in society.

This embrace of a rather militaristic spirit was by no means unique to Victoria. Some perspective is useful in understanding Canada's military posture in the prelude to war. At the end of 1913, the Canadian Militia had an authorized establishment of over 74,000 with a further 2900 in the regular force.<sup>70</sup> Today with a population four times as great, Canada has virtually the same number of people in uniform. But it is the difference in the size of the militia that is most striking. These after all were the citizen soldiers that every community would see on their streets.

Today's militia is structured as five divisions, but these are pale shadows of the fighting strength implied by their titles. Compared to top heavy structure of today, the prewar militia also had far fewer

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<sup>70</sup> *Canada Year Book 1913*, 611.

generals and many more front-end troops. The entire militia strength of 18,000<sup>71</sup> in 2016 would not have met the needs of a single division in 1918 (full strength 22,000). To have the same impact in Canadian communities today, Canada would need to increase militia strength to over 250,000. The contrast in monetary terms is equally striking. The 1913/14 military budget was about \$11 million having risen from \$4.3 million in 1906<sup>72</sup>. Comparing the pay of a dollar a day for the private of the Great War with the rate of \$137/ day for the highest paid private in the militia a century later, might suggest that a budget of at least \$1.5 billion would be required today to fund the wages for a comparable militia force today.

This very rapid transition of Victoria from a colonial outpost defended by the Royal Navy and Imperial troops was not merely part of a larger wave of populist militarism. It was driven primarily by British rather than Canadian or local decisions. During the South African War, a decade earlier, the British Army learned a bloody lesson from the irregular Boer commandos. The superiority of regular troops had been greatly eroded by the advent of the magazine fed bolt action rifle and the machine gun. The rigid discipline and precision drill necessary to maintain the volley fire of the “thin red line” during the Napoleonic era had become nothing more than a parade ground display tool. The irregular soldier could be quickly trained to use these new rifles firing up to 20 aimed shots a minute with an effective range of 300 metres. For the British, this meant that the colonies could now be trained to take care of their own defence with citizen soldiers. The Dundonald reforms implemented after the Boer War in Canada created a militia that relieved the remaining few British troops for more pressing duties.

International pressures and the great naval race of the pre-war period also led to a greater concentration of the Royal Navy in home waters. The dominions were urged to either contribute ships

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<sup>71</sup> [http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl\\_oag\\_201602\\_05\\_e\\_41249.html#appa](http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_oag_201602_05_e_41249.html#appa)  
(The Auditor General’s Report of 2016 reports effective strength at 14,000)

<sup>72</sup> *Canada Year Book 1914*, 560

and crews to the British fleet or establish naval forces of their own. In 1910, after some heated debate the Royal Canadian Navy was established with a commitment to support the Royal Navy. In due course, the aged HMS Rainbow, first launched in 1891 was recommissioned as the first RCN warship on the Pacific Coast. Although it was recognized that Rainbow was only a training vessel, her arrival at Victoria on November 7th, 1910 was greeted with enthusiasm. The following day, the front page of the *Daily Colonist* declared the event “epoch making” and optimistically proclaimed that the Pacific squadron would soon be returned to its former glory<sup>73</sup>. Over the next several years, HMCS Rainbow would spend most of her time tied up at the jetty in Esquimalt both ill equipped and undermanned.<sup>74</sup>

To counter the perceived threat from Russia, there had been substantial investment in the drydock and port facilities at Esquimalt and associated defence works at Fort Rodd Hill and McCaulay Point. A scheme of defence approved in 1902 was supported by improved barracks at Work Point for the British garrison and newer quick firing guns. By May 1905 with an Anglo Japanese defence agreement in place and the defeat of the Russian Navy by Japan at the battle of Tsushima the threat had been effectively eliminated. The importance of Esquimalt for the Royal Navy declined sharply. An examination of the port completed for the Imperial Defence Committee concluded, “Esquimalt would be of no naval importance in any foreseeable war, it should not be defended in war or in peace.”<sup>75</sup> Responsibility for the naval dockyard and its defences had been handed over to Canada in 1906. For some, abandonment of the port defences was seen as abrogating article 9 of the confederation agreement. To soften the blow, the garrison was designated as a school of instruction to be manned by a training cadre from the 5<sup>th</sup> Battery Royal Canadian Garrison Artillery and a detachment of engineers. While the importance of the artillery declined, both of Victoria’s infantry battalions drew their first

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<sup>73</sup> *Daily Colonist*. Victoria Nov 8, 1910, 1.

<sup>74</sup> Marc Milner. *Canada’s Navy: The First Century*, 2nd ed ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010).

<sup>75</sup> R. Lovatt, *Shoot, Shoot, Shoot: A History of the Victoria-Esquimalt Coast Artillery Defences 1878-1956* (Victoria BC: Fleming Printing Ltd., 1993), 43.

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commanding officers from a pool of enthusiastic gunners in the reserve garrison. Lieutenant Colonel J.A. Hall launched the 88<sup>th</sup> Victoria Fusiliers in 1912 and Lieutenant Colonel Arthur Currie took command of the newly formed Gordon Highlanders the following year.

## Establishing the pattern for a civic response to war.

Although I have focussed on the military response to the South African War, the response of the community at large is equally important to this study. The impact of Canada's first overseas commitment in defence of Imperial interests helped to shape the response to the Great War more than a decade later. As a garrison town far from the centres of power, Victoria understood that it was the Empire that stood as a bulwark against lingering concerns about American expansionism<sup>76</sup> and the ambitions of other powers in the Pacific at the turn of the century. Victorians could empathize with the plight of British settlers on the far-off Cape. They also understood that Imperial defence implied an obligation to respond when called. For Victoria, unlike many other parts of Canada, there was little or no debate about whether Canada should commit troops and the response was disproportionately high. Although exact numbers are difficult to establish, it is remarkable that of the thirty-two names from the Royal Canadian Regiment who died at Paardeberg in February 1900, four were from Victoria.<sup>77</sup> With the rising expectation of war, local pundits declared that "we incline to the belief that it will be short: but it will be long enough to wipe the South African Republic from the map."<sup>78</sup> It was an error in judgement that would not be repeated in 1914. Nevertheless, images of departing soldiers everywhere cheered and welcomed home as heroes would set expectations for another generation of young men.

Just as important would be the experience of wholehearted support for families. From the outset, a variety of fund-raising activities provided support to wives and children who were not "on

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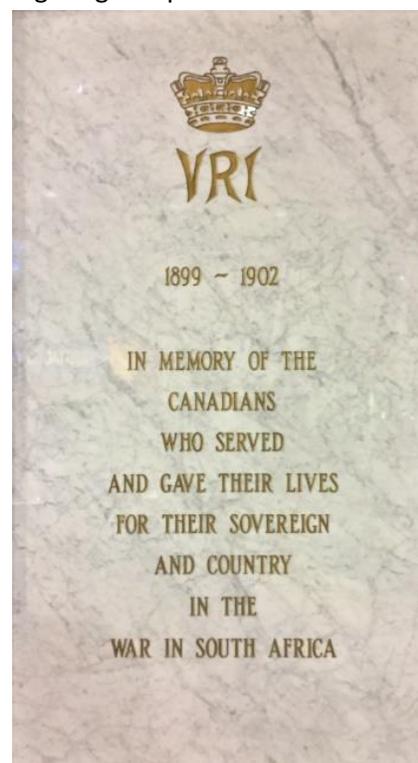
<sup>76</sup> The dispute over the Alaska Panhandle boundary was not settled until 1903.

<sup>77</sup> <http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/memorials/canadian-virtual-war-memorial/>

<sup>78</sup> *Daily Colonist*. Victoria, Oct 11, 1899, 4.

strength” of the regiment. At that time only “half the sergeants and some four in every hundred of the rank and file”<sup>79</sup> were permitted to marry and only with permission of their commanding officer. Despite the regulation there were many, in the comfort of a peacetime garrison, who married without permission. It was understood that in due course they would gain access to family allowances. With the departure of their men, however, these unauthorized wives were left without any means of support and in the event of death would get nothing. Organizations like the Soldier’s and Sailors’ Families Association emerged to administer support. In the post-war period, local responses to this “distressing feature” led to full coverage for all married soldiers in 1914. Across Canada, others like the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire (IODE), established in Montreal in 1901, focussed on fund-raising. Local businesses were encouraged to supplement the pay of those who volunteered or to purchase insurance packages on their behalf.

Local newspapers reported regularly on the progress of the fighting and published heroic accounts of the actions of volunteers from Victoria. The victory at Paardeberg in February 1900 was widely celebrated in Victoria. Thereafter, February 27<sup>th</sup> was marked as Paardeberg Day with parades, banquets and commemorative church services. What is quite different about these events is that the emphasis was more on the celebration of victory than on sombre acts of remembrance. It was a pattern that would be repeated in the immediate aftermath of the Great War. In 1908, 125 veterans of the South African War living in Victoria gathered to



**8. VICTORIA'S SOUTH AFRICAN WAR MEMORIAL**

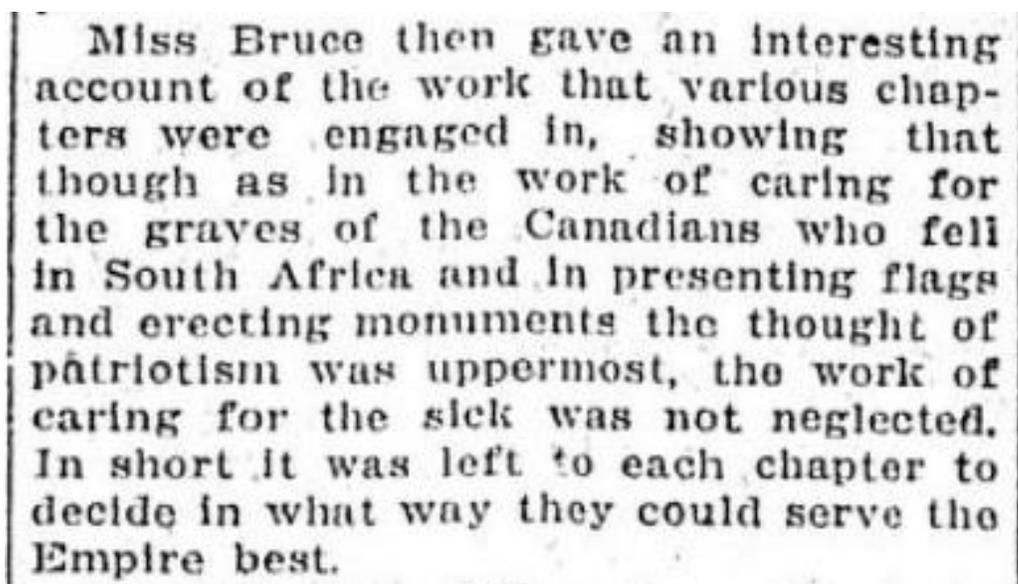
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<sup>79</sup> Ibid. Nov 9, 1899 page 3

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consider how to create a more permanent memorial. Today, the people of Victoria can still see the marks of that effort re-created in the lobby of the Memorial Arena.<sup>80</sup>

These early modes of civic response would be reinforced by post-war memorials and annual celebrations each February to mark the anniversary of the battle of Paardeberg. In 1909, the IODE established its first chapter in Victoria thus engaging the earlier local groups in a what had become a national organization. In that initial presentation, the links to the South African War were front and centre. Thus by 1914, the pattern for a local response to war was well understood by people in Victoria – support for the Imperial cause, concern for families at home, a hero's welcome for returning soldiers and long-term commemoration of their sacrifice.



Miss Bruce then gave an interesting account of the work that various chapters were engaged in, showing that though as in the work of caring for the graves of the Canadians who fell in South Africa and in presenting flags and erecting monuments the thought of patriotism was uppermost, the work of caring for the sick was not neglected. In short it was left to each chapter to decide in what way they could serve the Empire best.

9. DAUGHTERS OF EMPIRE ORGANIZE - *DAILY COLONIST*, VICTORIA OCT 24, 1909 PAGE 17

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<sup>80</sup> The arena on Memorial Arena Blanshard Street in Victoria opened in 2003 to replace the original building opened in 1949.

## Politics

Laurier's decision to walk a middle path with the formation of the Navy along with the controversy over reciprocity led to his downfall in the 1911 election. Victoria, like the rest of British Columbia was solidly in the Conservative camp that swept Robert Borden to power. Nevertheless, the issue would remain controversial for the new Conservative government as depicted in a front-page cartoon in Victoria's liberal leaning *Victoria Daily Times* from January 1913.<sup>81</sup> Borden who had favoured Canadian support for the Royal Navy, quickly introduced legislation to provide up to \$35 million for the purchase of three battleships. Hotly debated, the bill died in front of the Liberal majority in the Senate.

At the Provincial level, the early success of Richard McBride's Conservative government was beginning to unravel with the worsening economy<sup>82</sup>. Although McBride was returned with a majority in the 1912 election, mounting opposition from the nascent labour movement and social reformers was



**10 ROCKS AHEAD AND NO ONE AT THE HELM**  
*Victoria Daily Times* – Victoria  
 January 28, 1913, 1.

<sup>81</sup> *Victoria Daily Times*, 28 Jan 1913, 1.

<sup>82</sup> See Patricia Roy. *Boundless Optimism* for full coverage of the McBride years.

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also beginning to appear. What now appear to be the repugnant and highly racist policies of McBride's government were generally supported. Settler concern about a tide of Asian immigration sweeping over the relatively small outpost on the fringe of the Pacific was fed by an underlying social Darwinism that saw racial difference as a barrier to any sort of ethnically mixed society. In addition, the use of Chinese labour for the construction of the railroad and work in the mines raised labour concerns about job loss. By the pre-war period, tax revenue from the Chinese Restriction Act was also producing a substantial portion of Provincial revenue. At \$1.28 million in 1913/14 revenue from this source constituted more than 12% of Provincial income. In contrast, income tax, personal and real property tax brought in just over \$1 million.<sup>83</sup>

Immigration from India was viewed with equal concern. The issue came to a head in October 1913 with the arrival of the liner, *Panama Maru*. Thirty-nine passengers, who were held and refused entry, appealed to the courts. They were actively supported by the South Asian community in Victoria, centred on the Topaz Street Gurdwara which had been established in 1912. Much to the surprise and outrage of Canadian immigration authorities, the Supreme Court of British Columbia found in favour of the immigrants albeit on rather narrow technical grounds. The vociferous reaction to this decision led to a tightening of regulations requiring an un-interrupted journey. A year later, in one of the more shameful events in Canadian history, the *Komagata Maru* with over 350 board was escorted back to sea under the guns of HMCS *Rainbow*.<sup>84</sup>

Despite Victoria's location on the very fringe of the Empire, it was not isolated from world events. The local newspapers provided extensive coverage of developments in Europe with a mixture of dread and optimism. The Kaiser's birthday was celebrated annually in January by the local German club.

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<sup>83</sup> *Canada Year Book 1914*. 568

<sup>84</sup> <http://komagatamarujourney.ca/intro>

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Typically, the Premier would attend such events as the guest of Carl Loewenberg, the German Consul, with much toasting and declarations of friendship. Military affairs also received extensive coverage including lengthy discussions about the arms race, submarines and aerial warfare<sup>85</sup>. Coverage of peace initiatives by French and German socialists was balanced with this chilling conclusion:

One thing seems certain, namely, that the present competition in armaments cannot possibly continue very long. War or disarmament must come, for the people cannot, even if they were willing, bear much greater burdens than those that are daily being added to their already weighted backs. Depend upon it, the Socialists of Germany and France have sounded a note that will have to be heeded, or else Europe will be deluged in bloodshed.<sup>86</sup>

Despite later cries of German militarism, this pre-war article indicates that readers in Victoria might well have accepted Niall Ferguson's argument that Germany in 1914 was both more democratic and more liberal than Britain. In attacking what he calls "the Myth of Militarism", Ferguson cites a higher enfranchisement rate in Prussia/Germany (22%) than in Britain (18%) and a dramatically higher level of support for the socialists who are the source of hope in this editorial comment (34.8% in German vs 6.4% in Britain)<sup>87</sup>.

It seems evident that at least in Victoria, it cannot be said that people were either unaware or unprepared for the impending catastrophe. The South African War and its aftermath had done much to shape both the military and civic response to the impending war. Local newspapers provided ample coverage both of the deepening political crisis and state of military readiness. While the local German community remained active in the social life of the city the theme of avoiding war marked many events. The following chapter will examine other issues in the immediate lead up to war.

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<sup>85</sup> *Daily Colonist*, Victoria, May 11, 1913, 5 and Jan 4, 1914, 26.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid*, Mar 28, 1913, 4.

<sup>87</sup> Niall Ferguson. *The Pity of War: Explaining World War I* (New York: Perseus Books Group, 1999), 29.

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## Chapter 4 – The Call to Arms 1914-1916

### Outbreak of War

Although the possibility of a great power conflict was well understood, the immediate chain of events that led to the declaration of war on August 4<sup>th</sup> was unexpected by most in Victoria. The assassination of the Austrian archduke made headlines on June 30<sup>th</sup> but the subsequent report of the funeral marked its disappearance from active coverage. It was pushed off the front pages by apparently more pressing issues like Irish home rule, or closer to home the progress of the Kotagma Maru appeal in the courts. On June 30<sup>th</sup>, Victoria's *Daily Colonist* happily reported that the Governor General accompanied by the ever-popular Princess Patricia would visit Victoria in late August<sup>88</sup>. It would have been beyond comprehension at the time that by then, the first contingent of troops from the city would be boarding a ship on their way to Valcartier and war.

Military events were regularly reported but most had little to do with the impending war. On July 9<sup>th</sup>, the *Daily Colonist* reported that eight hundred cadets were now in camp for their annual summer training. *HMCS Rainbow*, the aged flagship of Canada's west coast navy, was to proceed to the Bering Sea at the end of the month to oversee the sealing season. As late as July 16<sup>th</sup>, *Rainbow's* tasking was confirmed with a sailing date of July 29<sup>th</sup>.

On July 22<sup>nd</sup> a headline reporting King George's Plan for Peace referred to home rule for Ireland and not the rapidly worsening situation in Europe<sup>89</sup>. A week later the headlines became more ominous. The headline, "War Clouds in Europe" warned readers that war was almost certain with "some prospect of Russia and Germany being involved"<sup>90</sup>. There was still no comment about possible Canadian

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<sup>88</sup> *Daily Colonist*. Victoria, Jun 30, 1914, 1.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.* Jul 22, 1914, 1.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.* Jul 29, 1914, 1.

involvement. As late as August 1<sup>st</sup>, under increasingly threatening headlines, residents of Victoria still read that there was one small hope of averting war while the ever bellicose premier, Sir Richard McBride declared that the Province stood ready.



11 THE DAILY COLONIST. VICTORIA, AUGUST 1, 1914

## Mobilization

When the declaration of war finally reached Victoria on August 4<sup>th</sup>, there were no large-scale public gatherings or celebrations. The following day, the *Colonist* reported that Canada had agreed to

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send a division of 21,000 men. All the local militia units issued orders for troops to report for duty on the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> of August and enlistment for overseas service began immediately. Recruiting aimed first at unmarried men between 18 and 45 but at the unit level there were other restrictions. Soldiers under 21 needed the permission of a parent. But as we will see later some local recruiters overlooked these age limits. Married men required permission of their wives. The nominal roll of the first contingent from the Gordon Highlanders include such notes as “wife in Scotland” for Private Donald Campbell or “wife’s consent being mailed direct to Valcartier” for Private Henry Evans<sup>91</sup>. The official history records that 379 men of the first contingent were released “on protest by wife or parent”.<sup>92</sup> Although bands were not on the war establishment of an infantry battalion at the time, many units, including the 16<sup>th</sup> Battalion drawn partly from Victoria chose to ignore that restriction. The 16<sup>th</sup> arrived at Valcartier with a full pipe band. Cheering crowds of supporters gathered at unit parades to show their support for these first volunteers.

Many historians have been critical of the decision to scrap the mobilization plan that would have activated individual reserve units. In that plan, militia units would have been mobilized with virtually all members of a newly mobilized battalion coming from the same city. But if Sam Hughes, the bellicose Minister of Militia understood anything, it was the nature of the militia. These were not units ready for combat but rather collections of citizen soldiers with a high profile in their community who had little training beyond drill and marksmanship. Even Arthur Currie, then the Commanding Officer of the Gordon Highlanders, answered the question about previous service on his attestation form with the words, “None, except Canadian Militia”. What the militia units were good at was recruiting and very basic training. While most could provide a number of experienced men, few could hope to muster a full-

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<sup>91</sup> 50<sup>th</sup> Gordon Highlanders Fonds, University of Victoria Special Collections

<sup>92</sup> Colonel A. Fortescue Duguid, *The Canadian Forces in the Great War 1914-1919 General Series Volume 1*, (Ottawa: Kings Printer, 1918), 71.

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strength battalion of nearly a thousand men. Consider what might have happened in Victoria if the 88<sup>th</sup> Fusiliers been activated and the 50<sup>th</sup> Gordon Highlanders left behind. Would the Gordons still have mustered over 200 experienced men within three weeks to enlist? How much more effective to draw on the recruiting power of the Highlanders to muster men to join other kilted regiments in the newly formed 16<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Canadian Scottish). Like many of the numbered battalions, the 16<sup>th</sup> Battalion, drawn from four different militia regiments, quickly established its own unique identity as the Canadian Scottish, complete with their own badges, tartan and regimental dress. The argument that activating existing units might have led to higher morale and a smoother transition to a war footing is little more than speculation. The challenges of Valcartier were largely driven by supply shortages. The other side of the equation, of course, is that with units drawing members from many different communities, the devastating impact of major losses was spread across the country. Perhaps the best most tragic example was the impact of mass casualties in the Newfoundland Regiment on July 1<sup>st</sup> 1916 at Beaumont Hamel. Only 68 of 800 were able to answer the roll call the following day. Newfoundland never recovered and recruiting declined sharply. To this day, July 1<sup>st</sup> in Newfoundland is not Canada Day but Memorial Day.

In the pre-war period, most of the militia training was focussed on shooting, marching and section and platoon tactics. Virtually the only time the battalion worked together was on the parade square or as part of other ceremonial events. Leaving these high-profile militia units in their communities provided a highly effective and very competitive recruiting and training base and at the same time avoided focusing the later impact of heavy casualties on a single region. The competitive nature of recruiting did, however, lead to some excesses.

For Arthur Currie, mobilization was personally challenging. His insurance and real estate business with partner R. A. Power had fallen on hard times. With the crash in real estate values and general economic depression of 1913-14, Currie quickly sank deeply in debt. The requirement that he

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purchase expensive highland dress as the newly appointed Commanding officer of the Gordon Highlanders simply added to his woes. Desperate to avoid bankruptcy, he took over \$10,000 from the Regimental Funds of the Gordons to cover his personal debts. Having been offered command of the west coast military district, his initial hope was to remain in Canada. This would give him an immediate income that would help to deal with his debts. Instead, he responded to pressure from his officers to take up a field command. His friend and second in command, Garnett Hughes, son of the then Minister of Militia Sam Hughes, suggested that Currie be offered command of a brigade in the newly forming First Division. The elder Hughes who had met Currie on several occasions and been impressed by his talents responded positively to the suggestion. He offered Currie command of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade made up largely of troops from western Canada. Recognizing his perilous financial circumstances, Currie appealed to several friends of the regiment to cover his debts with a promise to repay when he was able. With the pressure of war, he did little to follow up on the arrangement and it would come back to haunt him in later years. For the moment at least, it allowed him to focus his formidable energy on the pressing job at hand and he accepted the proffered position arriving in Valcartier on September 1<sup>st</sup>.<sup>93</sup>

In Victoria, recruiting was very rapid, albeit with somewhat rudimentary administrative procedures. The Gordon Highlanders had despatched its first contingent in late August with little more than a nominal role as documentation. Although the first contingent was cheered by enthusiastic crowds when they marched through the streets, it would be a full month before they signed their formal attestation papers. The First Contingent assembled in Valcartier and after little more than a month to organize, sailed for England on October 3<sup>rd</sup>. The process was chaotic, but it is nonetheless remarkable that a nation of only eight million, with a tiny regular force could dispatch a division of over 30,000 men in two months. Historians who are keen to criticize Sam Hughes should ask whether today's Canadian

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<sup>93</sup> Tim Cook, *The Madman and the Butcher*, (Toronto: Penguin Group, 2010), 72-73.

Forces with all the help of modern communication and transportation could replicate the feat. For Victorians, the promotion of Arthur Currie, the popular Commanding Officer of the Gordons, to command a brigade was a point of pride.



**12. ROLAND BOURKE, VC**

The demand for infantry and artillery, of course, did not satisfy the ambitions of all potential recruits. Victoria was home to many former British soldiers drawn to Canada after the Boer War or following service in India. To add to the frustration felt by many such old imperials was the well-known hostility of Sam Hughes, Minister of Militia to “regulars”. Hughes’ penchant for favoring the appointment of serving Canadian Militia officers over retired British regulars was not without merit. Parachuting in those who had chosen not to join the militia could have been a serious blow to

morale. In the end, those frustrated by the intransigence of Canadian authorities found other ways to get to the front. Many returned to Britain to join British regiments. Perhaps Victoria’s most notable example was Roland Bourke. He had initially tried to enlist in the Canadian Navy but was rejected because of poor eyesight. Not to be denied, he returned to England in 1916 and joined the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve to command a motor launch. In April 1918, during a raid on Ostend, he won a DSO for helping to rescue sailors from a sinking British warship. A month later, during a similar action, he was awarded the Victoria Cross when he turned back under heavy fire to rescue sailors clinging to an upturned lifeboat. After the war, Bourke returned to Victoria and served in the Canadian Navy until he retired in 1950.

There are similar stories of ex-British officers making their own way to England to enlist but perhaps the most unusual in Victoria was the saga of Elliott’s Horse. In the spring of 1914, Richard Elliott, a prominent lawyer, gathered together a group of well-to-do friends including the then Premier

Richard McBride to form a mounted unit in Victoria.<sup>94</sup> Stepping outside normal military channels, Elliott and his friends soon assembled and equipped a group of five officers and seventy-eight men, most ex-British Army. They and their horses were quartered in a large Victoria mansion on Richmond Road and drilled in the nearby Pemberton meadows. Despite several attempts to by-pass the normal chain of command and some high-level support, they remained outside regular channels when they sailed for England in October 1914. On arrival, and at the insistence of British authorities, they were then enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force. After completing their attestation in late November, the unit was soon broken up, with most assigned to either Lord Strathcona's Horse or the Royal Canadian Dragoons.

Having earlier considered how Victoria responded to the South African War, the response to the Great War may seem almost pre-ordained. Although the demands of 1914 were dramatically greater than those of 1899 the expectation of community support for departing troops and their families was well established. In part because of the earlier experience, the soldiers of 1914 were in a much better position to care for their families than their counterparts at the turn of the century.<sup>95</sup> First, the general rates of pay for soldiers were generous by international standards. A private soldier was paid \$1.00/day and \$1.10/day when in operations at a time when the King's shilling (about 25 cents)<sup>96</sup> was still the standard for a British private. There are a variety of ways of calculating the historic value of money but using relatively conservative assumptions and a labour rate calculation, the \$33 monthly pay of a Canadian private in the trenches would equate to about \$3,000 to 4,000/month today.<sup>97</sup> In addition, to the \$20/month separation allowance, the wife of a private soldier could expect a portion of his pay

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<sup>94</sup> J F Boshier. *Imperial Vancouver Island : who was who, 1850-1950* (Victoria: Xlibris, 2010), 317-322.

<sup>95</sup> For a more fulsome analysis of the challenges facing soldier's families see Desmond Morton, *Fight or Pay: Soldiers' Families in the Great War*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004.

<sup>96</sup> The British pound was worth about \$5.00 and the Canadian and US Dollar traded close to par.

<sup>97</sup> For an fulsome discussion of the historic value of the dollar visit <https://www.measuringworth.com/>

assigned to her on a regular basis. Typically, this would be an additional \$15 to \$20/month. Even single men were strongly encouraged to make a pay assignment to next of kin to provide savings for after the war.<sup>98</sup> In the opening stages of the war there were very few married men among the junior ranks. Of our cohort of over a thousand who enlisted in Victoria in 1914, there were only fourteen married privates and only six corporals or lance corporals. By the end of 1916 numbers of married privates remained under 5% of all those who enlisted. To further ensure that adequate provisions were in place, in the opening stages of the war, any married man required the agreement of his wife before enlisting. Thus, the wife of a private soldier, relieved of all expenses for his accommodation and meals might expect to have a total of \$40/monthly, equivalent of about \$4,800/month today. For most soldiers' families this was a decent living wage. As the experience of the South African War had shown however, there were always cases of special need. The large family, care of aged parents or a variety of disabilities or special circumstances could lead to special needs. In addition, the soldier who fell afoul military authorities for any number of petty crimes could be subject to stoppage of pay. For example, Private John McDougall, a twenty year old carpenter from Victoria decided to take an unauthorized trip to Glasgow while recovering from injuries sustained in a gas attack in 1917. Having been found guilty of absence without leave he was sentenced to 150 days in detention. Adding in the time of absence and his time awaiting trial he lost a total of 234 days pay. Fortunately, McDougall was single and had assigned his \$15 per month to his father<sup>99</sup>.

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<sup>98</sup> Library and Archives Canada (LAC), *Personnel Records of the First World War*, <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/personnel-records/Pages/personnel-records.aspx> – eg Arthur P Adlard, Richard W. Hamilton, Chester A Scott, William Roy, Walter Johnson and John McDougall are but a few from Victoria who made arrangements to have a portion of their pay sent to their next of kin.

<sup>99</sup> Service record of 706042 Pte John McDougall, Library and Archives Canada.

## The War at Sea

There was also early action in the Navy. With rumours of the German Navy prowling the Pacific, Victorians felt very exposed. With the Royal Navy focussed on the Atlantic, US neutrality and very old coastal defences, there would have been little to prevent shelling of the city by a German warship. On August 5<sup>th</sup>, having escorted the *Kotagama Maru* out of Vancouver the aging *HMCS Rainbow* received the following message:

Nurnberg and Leipzig reported August 4<sup>th</sup> off Magdalena Bay steering north. Do your utmost to protect Algerine and Shearwater steering north from San Diego. Remember Nelson and the British Navy. All Canada is watching.<sup>100</sup>

Undeterred by the gross imbalance in combat power, HMCS Rainbow immediately set sail. At the time Rainbow had no high explosive shells, and only 112 aboard out of an authorized establishment of 229. Of this meagre number 44 were members of the newly formed volunteer reserve, many with no sea experience.

**TABLE 7 - LEIPZIG VS HMCS RAINBOW<sup>101</sup>**

Item	Leipzig	HMCS Rainbow
Enters service	1906	1892
Speed	22.5 knots	19.75 knots
Engine	10,000 hp	7,000 hp
Main weapons	10 x 105 mm	6 x 119 mm
Max range	12,200 m	9,100 m
Rate of Fire	15 rounds/min	5-6 rounds/min
Armour	80 mm	32-51 mm

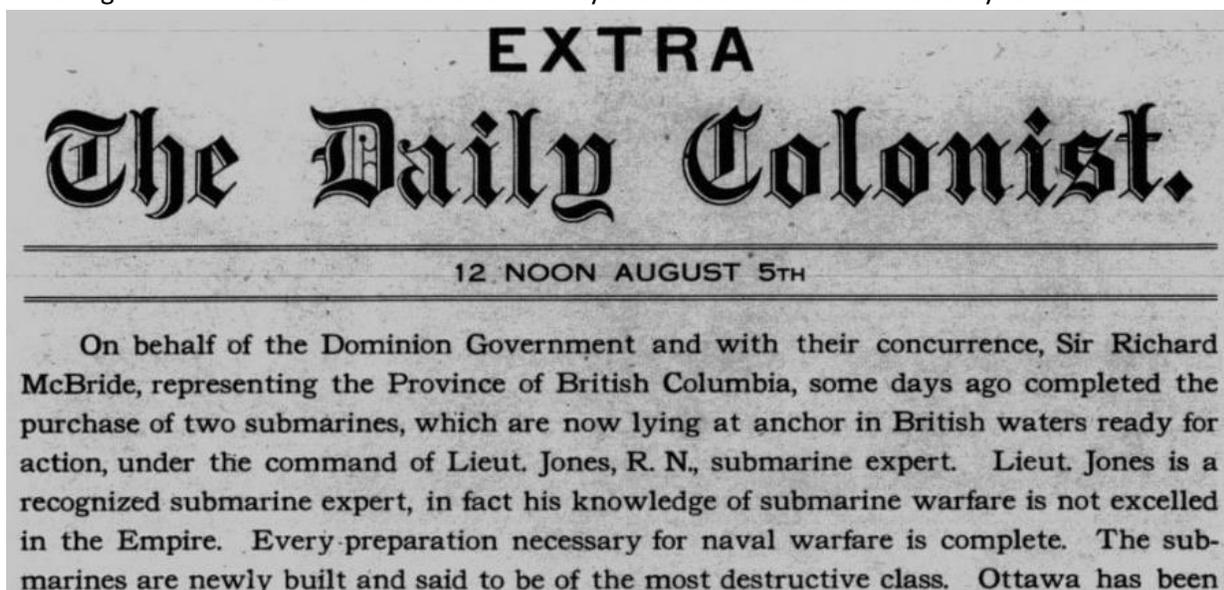
<sup>100</sup> A. F. Duguid, *Official History of the Canadian Forces in the Great War, 1914-1919. General Series Vol. I, from the Outbreak of War to the Formation of the Canadian Corps* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1918), 12.

<sup>101</sup> Ship data from [www.navweaps.com](http://www.navweaps.com)

Algerine and Shearwater were small patrol vessels with no radio contact with Esquimalt. The German Leipzig, on the other hand was a faster, more heavily armored, modern light cruiser with guns that could easily outrange those of the Rainbow. Fortunately, with the blessing of a bit of fog at sea, Rainbow was able to escort the two smaller ships safely home without confronting the Leipzig.

## Submarines

There was also action below the waves. On August 5<sup>th</sup>, the *Colonist* newspaper issued an extra notice to advise Victorians of the arrival of two submarines acquired from ship builders in Seattle. Although the purchase of these vessels by the provincial government appears more than a little bizarre today, it reflects a genuine fear in Victoria that there was very little to defend the city should ships like Leipzig and Nurnberg appear on the horizon. The Federal government repaid the province two days later. Despite the proclamation of the expertise of Lieut. Jones from the Royal Navy, it seems unlikely that the patched together crew would have posed much of a threat in the early days of the war. Nevertheless, the submarines designated CC1 and CC2 remained in Victoria until October 1917 when they were transferred to Halifax. The Royal Navy was in no position to help and it was only by later recalling a retired RN Lieutenant Commander Keyes that the two were made ready for sea.



13 FIRST REPORT OF SUBMARINE PURCHASE  
*Daily Colonist*, Victoria Aug 15, 1914

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A Royal Commission in 1917 later reached a perhaps exaggerated conclusion that “The acquisition of these submarines probably saved the cities of Victoria and Vancouver... from attack”.<sup>102</sup> It was not until some weeks later that Victoria would feel somewhat more secure. With the Japanese declaration of war on August 23<sup>rd</sup> 1914, Victoria and the west coast of Canada would be largely dependent on the protection of the Imperial Japanese Navy until the United States entered the conflict in 1917.

## Soldiers from Victoria

The question of who is from Victoria is more complex than it first seems. For many of First Contingent, the place of enlistment is recorded as Valcartier even if they originated in Victoria. Later in the war, as the recruiting depot at Willows was fully established, soldiers from smaller communities might show Victoria as the place of enlistment even though they had little contact with the community. Early versions of the attestation documents do not record present address. Thus, it is certain that Robert Lorimer lived on Toronto Street in Victoria at the time of his enlistment in 1916. However, although records indicate that James Gray enlisted in Victoria in March 1915, it is only the records of St Andrew’s Presbyterian Church that confirm that he was a resident of the city. The task becomes particularly problematic for some high-profile cases. For example, George Mullin, VC, is prominently displayed among Victoria’s heroes in a newspaper report from December 1918<sup>103</sup>. His attestation papers, however, reveal that he was born in Oregon, enlisted in Winnipeg in December 1914 and his next of kin lived in Kamloops. The only of a Victoria connection is the five months he spent in the 16<sup>th</sup> Light Horse, who were for a time concentrated in Victoria. I must therefore take a multi-source perspective in assembling soldier data. Clearly many communities might “claim” an individual. For our purposes, identification of Victoria as the place of enlistment or place of residence or identification on

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<sup>102</sup> Duguid, *Official History of the Canadian Forces in the Great War 1914-1919* vol 1, 13.

<sup>103</sup> *Daily Colonist*. Victoria, Dec 22, 1918.

any public honour roll will be considered enough to include the record in our data set. Using this approach, I have assembled a data set of some 5000 soldiers “from” Victoria<sup>104</sup> to support our analysis. Nevertheless, I acknowledge that some of those would not have identified themselves as “from Victoria” while others with strong links to the city will have escaped our search or be so limited as to require other sources. For example, young James Dunsmuir, son of the wealthy Dunsmuir family and an impetuous young lieutenant in the BC Horse is shown as enlisting in January 1915 only to resign his commission in April of the same year. Only through the newspaper archives reveal his eagerness to get into action and that he had resigned to take up a commission in the British Army and, having booked passage on the ill-fated Lusitania, perished at sea.

Looking back over a hundred years, one of the most striking changes in the meaning of “from Victoria” comes with the colourful history of the Canadian Scottish. Today the regiment is closely identified with the city. Piper James Richardson VC and Colonel Cyrus Peck VC are now seen as local heroes of the Great War. When the 16<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Canadian Scottish) was originally formed however, it was clearly not a Victoria Battalion. Instead the 16<sup>th</sup> Battalion assumed its “Canadian” name because it was drawn from across the country. Victoria’s Gordon Highlanders did indeed supply a company for the initial draft but drafts also came from the Seaforth Highlanders of Vancouver, the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Hamilton and the Queen’s Own Cameron Highlanders of Winnipeg. What of those two most famous members of what is now Victoria’s regiment? Piper James Richardson was from Chilliwack and the Seaforths while Colonel Peck was from Prince George and a captain in the 30<sup>th</sup> Battalion before later joining the Canadian Scottish in France and ultimately rising to command the battalion. It was not until after the war that he moved to Victoria. In this study I will endeavor not to unduly stretch the

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<sup>104</sup> <http://www.canadiangreatwarproject.com/Stats/Attestations.asp>

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meaning of “from Victoria” or at least make it clear when I need to stretch the geographic bounds of the study to provide context to local events.

## 1914 and Willows Camp

Shortly after the departure of the First Contingent, Willows Camp in the heart of what is now Oak Bay was transformed into a major training and assembly point. In early November, Colonel Ogilvie, the district commander reported that small contingents from Courtenay and Nanaimo had arrived to join volunteers from Victoria. Larger contingents of over 200 were on the way from Prince Rupert, Kamloops and Nelson. New property had been acquired for a rifle range and construction was expected to commence shortly.<sup>105</sup>

## Boy Soldiers

At the outbreak of war, it was common for militia units in Canada to have a significant number of boys under the age of eighteen. Some units examined in Richard Holt’s excellent book had up to 28% of their number under 18. While King’s Regulations for the period permitted underage enrollment of “boys of good character” their role was to be as bandsmen.<sup>106</sup> Given the numbers of those underage, it seems obvious the Commanding Officers took a very liberal interpretation of that direction. While it is comforting to think of young bandsmen on parade, it must be remembered that they also played a role

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<sup>105</sup> *Daily Colonist*. Victoria, Nov 3, 1914, page 7

<sup>106</sup> Richard Holt, *Filling the Ranks: Manpower in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1918*, 789.

in battle. Many units used them as stretcher bearers, but they were also a vital part of the communication system within infantry battalions. Service as a bugler was not simply playing routine



**14 DETAIL FROM DAWN OF MAJUBA  
BY RICHARD CATTON WOODVILLE**

calls like reveille or meal call in garrison but also sounding the call to attack or warning troops to stand to in the event of an enemy attack. On the march, bandsmen were essential to maintaining a steady pace. In, what is perhaps the best-known Canadian depiction the South African War there is a boy bugler at the very heart of the Battle of Paardeburg.

Regimental histories of the great war abound with examples of pipers or buglers

playing key roles. At Vimy Ridge in 1917, the regimental historian of the Patricia's reports "Regimental pipers first playing the men over the top and then following as stretcher bearers"<sup>107</sup>. As late as August 1918 he again reports that "the Pipers could show their influence upon the morale of troops on the march and rose nobly to their opportunity"<sup>108</sup>. It is abundantly clear that infantry battalions of the Canadian Corps made full use of their bandsmen in combat.

As late as 1917, Canadian regulations still permitted the practice of engaging underage boys as bandsmen in the militia. King's Regulations provided that:

<sup>107</sup> Ralph Hodder-Williams, *Princess patricia's Canadian Light Infantry 1914-1919*, 218

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid*, 323.

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299. Boys of good character between the ages of 14 (or in special cases 13) and 15 years may be specially enlisted In City and Rural Corps for employment as bandsmen, drummers, buglers, or trumpeters, but no boy is to be enlisted without the consent of his parents or guardians.<sup>109</sup>

It seems evident that militia Commanding Officers who were largely responsible for recruiting simply assumed that these provisions continued to apply and that others understood that being a bandsman extended far beyond parade square duty.

With medical checks and attestation now completed in Victoria, one might expect that administrative process would be somewhat improved. In his most recent work, Nic Clarke provides extensive evidence of how procedures tightened up as the war progressed following the administrative chaos of the first contingent at Valcartier<sup>110</sup>. But his suggestion that with the abundance of recruits in those early months of the war recruiters could afford to be picky simply highlights the striking example of those who were not rejected in the 1914-1915 period on the basis of age.

Despite the renewed rigour and apparently clear direction that the minimum enlistment age was eighteen for overseas service, it was not unusual at this early date to see under-age boys enlist. The common historical accounts suggest that many simply lied about their age.<sup>111</sup> Tim Cook goes to great length to explain why so many underage soldiers enlisted, citing everything from cadet programs and a history of boy soldiers as buglers and drummer boys during the Boer War to a childhood that "... was hard and dangerous in working class families". He suggests that "Trading coal dust for healthy marching did not raise objections for many in society". For Victoria, at least, this pattern of lying about age or escaping hardship is not supported by the evidence. In the 30 cases of underage enlistment examined,

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<sup>109</sup> Canada, Department of Militia and Defence, King's Regulations and Orders for the Canadian Militia (Ottawa: Kings Printer, 1917, para 299

<sup>110</sup> Nic Clarke, *Unwanted Warriors: Rejected Volunteers of the Canadian Expeditionary Force*.

<sup>111</sup> Tim Cook, "He was determined to go: Underage Soldiers in the Canadian Expeditionary Force", *Histoire sociale/Social history*, Volume 41, Number 81, (May 2008), 41-74.

there are nineteen boys of 15 or 16 who honestly reported their correct date of birth and were still enlisted. Nor is it a case of robust teens who physically appeared to meet a reasonable standard. Young Roland Christy a boy soldier with the 88<sup>th</sup> Fusiliers was sixteen and a scrawny 5 ft. 1 in. tall; a full two inches below the minimum height when he signed on in November 1914. By the end of the war, after serving with the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion in France, he returned home a much-changed young man and a full ten inches taller.<sup>112</sup> Similarly the reports of occupation in these cases rarely give any indication of hard physical labour. Instead attestation papers are more likely to read “student” or some type of office work. Only two cite laborer as their occupation and many reported no occupation at all.

While it might be tempting to dismiss the practice of underage recruiting as mere administrative bungling, it must be noted that both the medical officer and an officer from the receiving unit signed these attestation papers. The recruiting of underage soldiers was not only reported in the local newspaper, it was a point of pride in Victoria. In early 1916, the *Daily Colonist* boasted that a 14-year-

**YOUNGEST FROM B. C.**

Bugler William Nevard, of Nanaimo, 14  
Years Old, Serving in the  
Trenches

Bugler William Nevard, of Nanaimo, who left with the 29th Battalion, and on arriving in France went into the trenches, is the youngest soldier enlisted from B. C. at the front, being only fourteen years of age. Vancouver claims that this honor belongs to a 14-year-old soldier, Pte. A. V. Johnson, of Vancouver, but Nanaimo goes one better, as its boy is not only on active service but actually in the trenches.

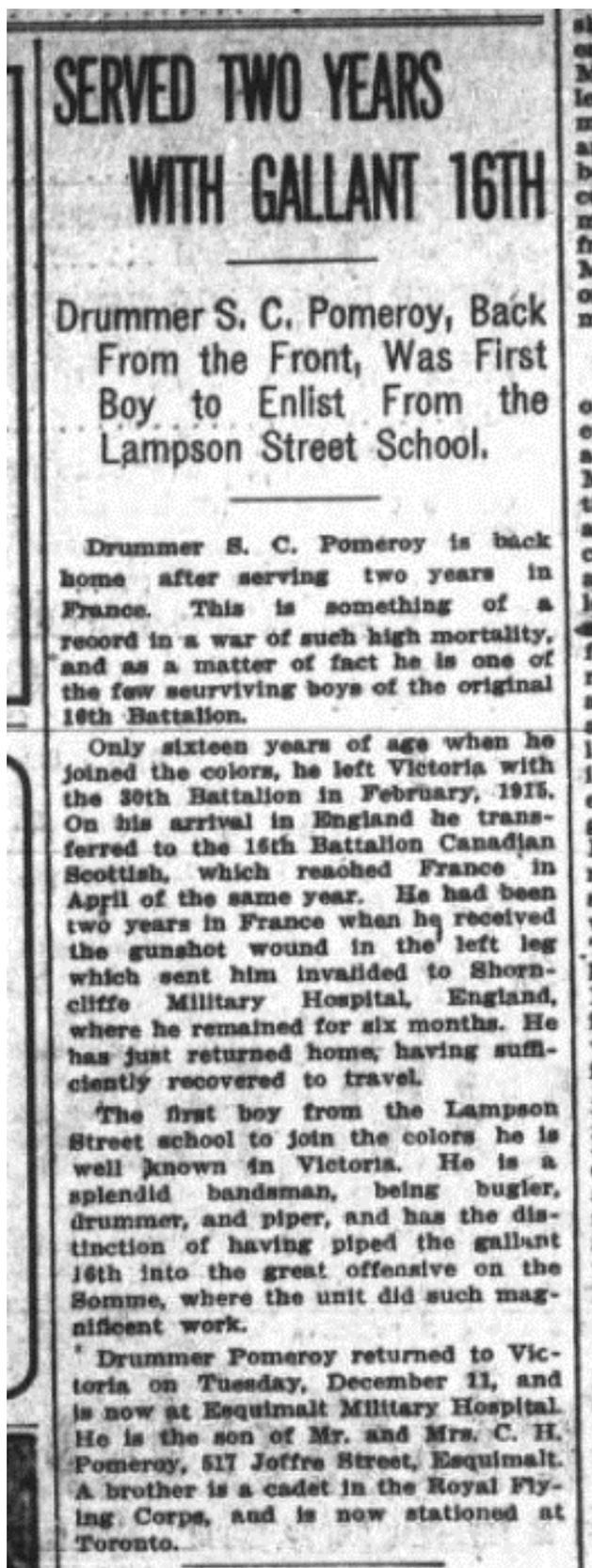
15 – VICTORIA DAILY COLONIST  
JAN 1, 1916, 4.

<sup>112</sup> Service record of 7197 Pte Roland Christy, Library and Archives Canada

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old bugler was the youngest soldier in the trenches. Young William Nevard had been only 4ft 4 ½ tall

when he signed up in November 1914.<sup>113</sup>



Two years later the newspaper was still boasting of boy soldiers. Stanley Pomeroy, another bugler and piper enlisted who enlisted in February 1915 was one of those who lied about his age claiming to be 19 when he had just passed his sixteenth birthday. Having been gassed at Ypres in the spring of 1916, he returned to France in time to pipe the 16<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Canadian Scottish) “into the great offensive on the Somme where the unit did such magnificent work.”<sup>114</sup> As he had been serving as a boy bandsman in Currie’s 50<sup>th</sup> Gordon Highlanders at the time, it seems unlikely that recruiters would have been unaware of the deception.<sup>115</sup> Certainly the local newspaper was well aware that he was “one of the few surviving boys of the original the 16<sup>th</sup> battalion” who had “piped the gallant 16<sup>th</sup> into the great offensive on the Somme”

This example challenges the effectiveness of regulations cited by Holt that after August 1916, “boys were retained in France under specific conditions intended to keep them out of harms way until they turned nineteen”.<sup>116</sup>

Tightening up attestation forms to discourage lying seemed to have little impact on recruiters. Bugler Alan Foster was just three months past his fourteenth birthday when he enlisted in December 1915. Just five feet tall and with a chest only 30 ½ inches at full expansion he clearly did not meet minimum medical standards. The Commanding Officer of the 103<sup>rd</sup> battalion, Lt-Col Henniker, duly noted that the recruit “was cautioned by me that if he made any false answer to any of the above questions, he would be liable to be punished as provided in the Army Act.” The medical officer noted that “I have examined the above-named Recruit and find that he does not present any of the causes of rejection specified in the Regulations for Army Medical Services.” Despite these solemn declarations the medical officer recorded Foster’s apparent age as 14 years 2 months. It is evident that even this apparent tightening of regulations cited by Clarke had little impact when Commanding Officers felt they remained the ultimate authority and were free to make exceptions to the minimum age requirement to accommodate the long-standing practice in the militia of boy buglers and pipers. Similarly, Clarke’s observation that of the more than 2400 men rejected as unsuitable only 1.5% were listed as underage suggests that age alone was rarely considered grounds for rejection<sup>117</sup>. Perhaps a more useful sample would have been to examine the ages of those who, like Foster, were not rejected. By the time Foster arrived in England, however, authorities had begun to screen out the more obvious underage boys. Like many, Foster was retained in England in a boy’s battalion as a potential future reinforcement.

Still later as the number of underage Canadians in England grew, authorities began to return them to Canada shortly after they were discovered. In February 1917, Canada issued regulations to return younger boys to Canada but to retain them in the reserve units until they were of age.<sup>118</sup> Herbert Bromley who enlisted in March 1916 at the age of 16 was returned to Canada in early 1917 with his file

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<sup>117</sup> Nic Clarke, *Unwanted Warriors: Rejected Volunteers of the Canadian Expeditionary Force*. Chapter 5, 3 of 17

<sup>118</sup> Richard Holt, *Filling the Ranks*, 1737.

duly noted that he would not be available for overseas duty until August 1919.<sup>119</sup>

<u>MINOR</u>		<u>RECORD OF BIRTH</u>			Date available for Overseas Duty.
<u>number.</u>	<u>Rank.</u>	<u>Name.</u>	<u>Unit.</u>	<u>Date of Birth.</u>	
707074	Pte.	Bromley H.O.	103rd	14-8-1900	14-8-1919

IMPORTANT

(a) This record is to be attached to the man's Casualty Form B.103.

(b) He is not to be drafted Overseas prior to date stated.

**FIGURE 16 EXCERPT FROM HERBERT BROMLEY'S SERVICE FILE**

By 1917, the very young were no longer recruited. All six in our sample were seventeen. Three of those appear to have lied to indicate that they were over eighteen. The remainder were within a few weeks of their eighteenth birthday. One might speculate that the recruiters simply assumed that by the time they reached England they would be eighteen. I can find no evidence of underage recruiting in 1918.

Of those identified, seven had served in the 88<sup>th</sup> Victoria Fusiliers before enlistment and would have been well known to recruiters. The striking difference between the numbers from the 88<sup>th</sup> Fusiliers and the 50<sup>th</sup> Gordon Highlanders may be explained by the highly competitive nature of unit-based recruiting. Perhaps the attitude of Lieutenant Colonel John Hall towards the recruitment of boy soldiers

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<sup>119</sup> Service record of Pte Herbert Bromley, Library and Archives Canada

can be explained by his service in South Africa where the use of boy soldiers was common with both British and Canadian regiments.<sup>120</sup>

An early decision by Currie's Gordon Highlanders to issue unit orders requiring all men under 21 to have the consent of their parents may have made a difference.

(8) Overseas  
Contingent. The following must obtain the consent, in writing, of their parents before being taken on Active Service.  
 A. Men under 21 years of age  
 B. The only son of parents who are dependent upon him  
 C. Married men must obtain the consent of their wives in writing.

17 EXTRACT FROM 50TH GORDON HIGHLANDERS ORDER NO 118 DATED 29 OCT 1914.<sup>121</sup>

By the time of peak enlistment in November and December of 1915, authorities would also have been painfully aware of the realities of life in the trenches. By late 1916 and 1917, there is another change in the pattern. Those who were underage are all 17 and, with the sole exception of John Will who enlisted in the Bantams<sup>122</sup>, all met the minimum height requirement.

What is clear from the evidence in Victoria is that the enlistment of underage boys was not only common but well known and accepted as normal in the early years of the war. This, despite apparently clear policy on enlistment age from both Ottawa and London. What seemed more important were unit orders and the reaction of British authorities. Certainly, there was no public pressure in Victoria to change the practice.

Rather than condemn what appears to have been a fairly common practice of recruiting boy soldiers a century ago, it is perhaps useful to draw some parallels with current practice. In 2002 there was a public outcry over the detention of child soldier Omar Khadar. He was just two months short of his

<sup>120</sup> One of the best-known paintings of Boer War titled *Dawn of Majuba* prominently shows a boy soldier as a bugler with the Royal Canadian Regiment.

<sup>121</sup> 50<sup>th</sup> Gordon Highlanders Fonds, University of Victoria Library Special Collections

<sup>122</sup> Bantams were units both in Britain and Canada for recruits who did not meet the minimum height standards.

sixteenth birthday when he killed an American soldier and was taken prisoner by US forces in Afghanistan. In Canada, we continue to recruit youth at age 17 for the regular forces (with parental consent) and even 16 for the primary reserve. No doubt, a mother of 1914 would be alarmed by the

**TABLE 8 - BOY SOLDIERS FROM VICTORIA**

Name	DOB	Enlisted	Occupation	Age at enlistment	Military Service	Height inches	LAC Ref	DOB Corrected	Notes
Pomeroy, Stanley Clark	12/1/1899	2/11/1915	Student	15	50th GHoC	64	B7893-S068	1/12/1896	16th Bn
Barker, William Sidney	9/25/1900	11/9/1914	farmer	14	RMR	68	B0436-S014	no	
Christy, Roland Gilbert	4/12/1898	11/10/1914	clerk	16	88th VF	61.5	B1703-S030	no	
Nevard, William	7/25/1900	11/21/1914	High school	14	104th Bn	52.5	B7279-S012	no	
Beynon, John Andrew	3/6/1899	1/1/1915	page	15	no	64.5	B0713-S043	no	
Hine, Alfred Kimberly	1/9/1900	11/1/1915	labourer	16	88th VF	63.5	B4380A-S057	1/9/1899	
Rossiter, Terrence	2/16/1900	11/1/1915	none	16	88th VF	61	B8491-S021	no	
Steele, Russell William	12/30/1899	11/1/1915	none	15	88th VF	62	B9258-S027	no	
Youngs, Theodore Norton	4/28/1900	11/1/1915	?	16	88th VF	66	B10670-S056	no	
Donaldson, David	4/23/1901	11/23/1915	painter	15	no	64	B2585-S006	11/23/1900	
Whitfield, George Wilfrid	7/1/1900	11/23/1915	none	15	88th VF	63.25	B10318-S057	no	
MacDonald, Peter	1/20/1900	11/29/1915	none	16	no	61.5	B6757-S015	no	
Foster, Alan Richard	9/4/1901	12/4/1915	teamster	14	no	60	B3225-S024	no	
Clark, Orville Edward	12/30/1900	12/8/1915	none	15	no	65.5	B1757-S027	no	
Bailey, Walter	12/28/1900	12/10/1915	shoemaker	15	no	64	B0351-S008	no	
Snelling, Frederick George	8/9/1900	12/13/1915	none	15	no	67	B9134-S045	8/9/1898	
Russell, Arthur Leo	3/8/1901	1/3/1916	office man	15	no	66	B8551-S039	3/8/1897	
Saunders, Stewart Roberts	5/12/1900	1/3/1916	scholar	16	no	68.25	B8662-S018	no	
Kerr, Alexander	7/1/1900	1/5/1916	none	16	88th VF	65	B5113-S004	no	
Jones, Harry Sinclair	8/5/1900	1/20/1916	messenger	15	no	62.5	B4939-S036	no	
Smith, Thomas	6/27/1900	3/4/1916	dairyman	16	no	64	B9106-S014	6/27/1899	
Bromley, Herbert Oscar	8/14/1900	3/10/1916	student	16	no	63.25	B1095-S052	no	
Savage, Michael	11/28/1900	5/31/1916	errand boy	16	no	61.5	B8669-S007	no	
Henslowe, Cecil	6/22/1900	6/23/1916	farmer	16	no	70.5	B4280-S014	no	
Edwards, Gerald Carlyon	5/30/1900	7/10/1916	student	16	no	65	B2838A-S001	no	
Carver, Clifford	2/26/1900	12/16/1916	electrician	17	no	65.75	B1557-S002	12/16/1898	
Murray, Robert Sangster	3/8/1900	12/21/1916	printer	17	no	62.5	B6539-S001	3/8/1898	
Will, John Green	9/16/1899	1/13/1917	labourer	17	no	60	B10373-S058	9/16/1898	143rd Bantams
Ridgway-Wilson, Hebden	6/24/1899	4/2/1917	student	17	5th Regt CGA	72.0	B8270-S043	no	
Flinton, John Eric Norman	10/29/1899	5/8/1917	steel plater	17	no	68	B3154A-S053	no	
Levors, James	07/15/1899	6/24/1917	mixologist	17	Cadets 7 yrs	67	B5613-S053	no	



army of today that would willingly accept her sixteen-year-old daughter as a soldier in the infantry.

## 30<sup>th</sup> Battalion Broken Up

By November 11<sup>th</sup>, a second contingent was fully manned and had commenced training as the 30<sup>th</sup> Battalion under the leadership of the 88<sup>th</sup> Fusilier's Commanding Officer, 46-year-old Lieutenant Colonel John Hall. The departure of the battalion in February 1915 was once again marked by crowded streets and a parade past the legislature. The fate of the 30<sup>th</sup> Battalion, however, was to be much different than the 16<sup>th</sup> that preceded it. Some more experienced soldiers left early to join Princess



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18 DATA EXTRACTED FROM LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES SERVICE RECORDS



Title: The 30th Battalion leaving to participate in the ...

Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI). When the rest of the battalion arrived in England in the spring of 1915, it was clear that what would be needed was not a new battalion but rather substantial reinforcements for the units of the First Division that had suffered so heavily at Ypres. The 30<sup>th</sup> was

therefore broken up into reinforcing drafts and sent to France to bring the bloodied battalions of the First Division back up to strength. One of those reinforcements was twenty-seven-year-old electrician Private Arnold Jephson who had served with the British Army and the 88<sup>th</sup> Fusiliers in Victoria. As an experienced soldier, he was in high demand and ready for duty when he reported to the PPCLI on March



**19 LIEUTENANT COLONEL JOHN HALL**

1<sup>st</sup> 1915. He was killed at Bellewaerde Lake a little more than two months later. In Victoria, his widow, Mrs. Ada Jephson received the balance of her war service gratuity of \$180 on July 20<sup>th</sup>. It was the equivalent of about six months' pay for a private soldier.<sup>123</sup>

Not surprisingly there was much greater demand for the rank and file than for officers. For his part, Lieutenant Colonel Hall was sent to work in an important but very safe staff position with the British War Ministry concerned with the supply of munitions. He would survive the war and return to Victoria to play an active role in the 88<sup>th</sup> Regimental Association.

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<sup>123</sup> Service record of 51276 Pte A H Jephson, Library and Archives Canada

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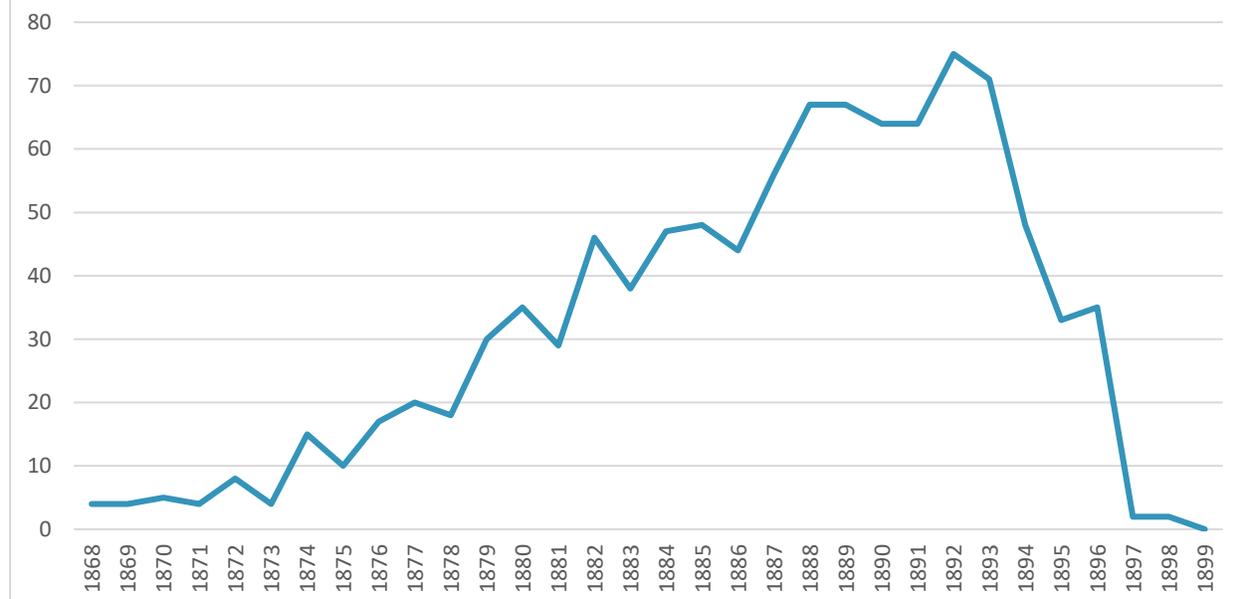
## Impact on the City

While our focus has been on the military response, the impact of the sudden departure of over a thousand men in the first few months of the war also demanded substantial adjustments on the home front. For the Victoria Police Department with only 54 officers, the immediate loss of trained men was a double challenge. Their members were highly attractive recruits, and many were also active in the militia. The type of compromise needed is typified by the Foster brothers, Ulster protestants who had emigrated from Ireland some years earlier. After an attempt at farming both later joined the Victoria police force. Robert, the younger of the two at age 27 enlisted with the first draft from the Gordon Highlanders while his older brother John remained with the police force until the following year,<sup>124</sup> enabling the department to adjust. A new prison at Wilkinson Road relieved local police from the care of prisoners and military police increasingly took care of their own. There was also some relief afforded by adding a small number of women to the force but it is worth noting that the first woman constable was appointed in 1913 and not as a result of any manpower shortage.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>124</sup>. Attestation papers from the Service Records of John and Robert Forster. Note that typical of the rather lax procedures early in the war Robert's paper records his name as "Foster" while his signature clearly reads "Forster". Library and Archives Canada

<sup>125</sup> The first woman joined the Victoria Police Department in 1913. Derek Pethic, *Summer of Promise: Victoria, 1864-1914* (Victoria, B.C.: Sono Nis Press, 1980), 178.

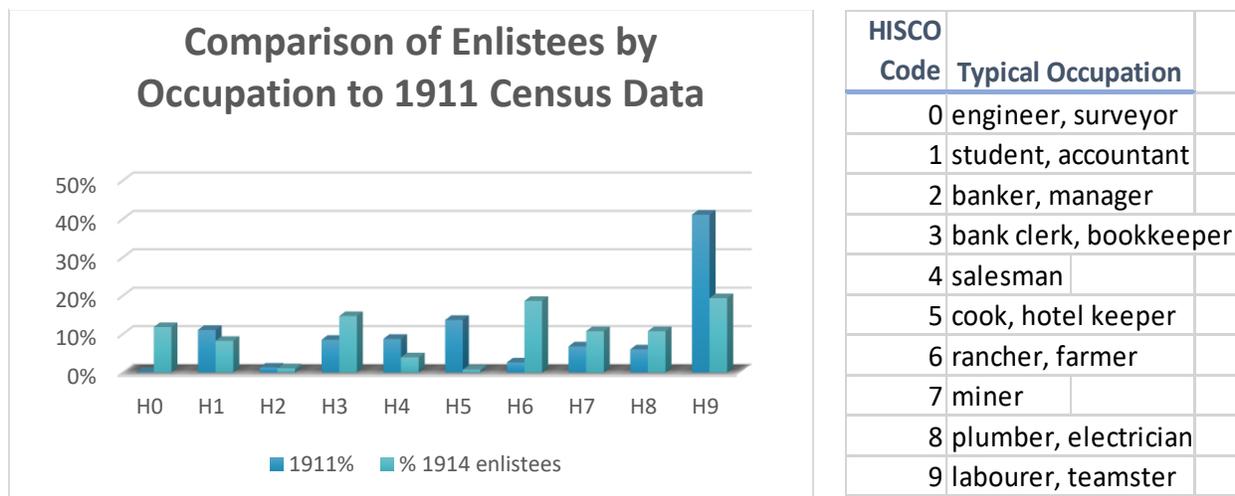
**TABLE 9 ENLISTMENTS IN VICTORIA IN 1914 BY YEAR OF BIRTH**

**20 BASED ON DATA FROM OVER 1000 SOLDIERS ENLISTED IN 1914**

To understand the impact on the city it is useful to consider the occupation of those who enlisted. The cohort of over 1000 who enlisted in Victoria in 1914, reveals a very wide range of occupations from professionals like a physician, several engineers, accountants and teachers to tradesmen, clerks and government workers. The cohort is also replete with agricultural workers. Only 15% were married and a full 83% reported previous military service. Both the experience of those who volunteered and the speed at which the demand for troops was filled, suggest that recruiters could be very selective. It is no surprise that large numbers were British born and that most of those reported previous military experience. Nevertheless, almost one in five were born in British Columbia. One in ten would be dead by the end of 1915 and 28% would die by the end of the war. This picture from Victoria reinforces the idea that recruiters had a very broad range of potential recruits. The ethnic make-up of the first contingent is overshadowed by the reality that in 1914 at least, soldiers were enlisted based on a relatively rich talent pool. The fact that the talent pool of experienced soldiers and tradesmen was dominantly of British extraction was quite simply a consequence of the selection process.

Another interesting perspective emerges on comparing enlistment rates using the somewhat limited data set of just over 1000 files where occupation was captured. Occupation descriptions from attestation papers were normalized using HISCO<sup>126</sup> codes and compared to the reported occupations from the 1911 census data for greater Victoria to yield this comparative data.

TABLE 10 - 1914 ENLISTEES BY OCCUPATION



Perhaps the most surprising result is that farmers (H6) are significantly over represented. It may be that farms in the area were of a smaller scale and less dependent on family labour than in other parts of the country. Alternatively, it may be that use of indigenous and Chinese sources of labour became more common during the war. In a similar way, the shifting employment patterns may explain the over representation of clerks and book-keepers as men enlisting were backfilled by women. In contrast, labourers and teamsters were occupations where only a few women started to replace men later in the war.

<sup>126</sup> HISCO codes are based on the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) adapted for changes over time. For more detail see <https://socialhistory.org/en/projects/hisco-history-work>

By mid 1915, any lingering thoughts of a quick and glorious victory had long since been destroyed. By late April, the local newspapers were replete with stories of bloody battles, poison gas and the opening of the Gallipoli campaign. There was of course particular interest in the fortunes of the 16<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Canadian Scottish) with well over a hundred troops from Victoria. Along with the publication of a congratulatory note from the King, came graphic descriptions of the charge of the 16th

21. *DAILY COLONIST* TUESDAY  
APRIL 27, 1915, 1



Battalion at what was to become known as Kitcheners Wood. This was followed by a brief notice that the 30<sup>th</sup> Battalion with more troops from Victoria was on its way to France. That news of bloodshed at the front and the demand for more troops had little impact on local support for the war. The steady stream of new recruits is hauntingly like the response Chickering reported in his study of Freiberg in Germany. At this stage, propaganda had little impact. The machine being constructed by Max Aitken was still in its infancy. It would soon make its presence felt.

With the intensity of the war reporting came renewed propaganda. In early May, the sinking of the Lusitania by a German submarine became an icon of German brutality, highlighted by stories of heroism and the death of innocent civilians. The reality that the ship was carrying stores of ammunition was, of course, carefully hidden. In Victoria, rumours spread that members of German community had toasted the sinking in the bar at what was known as the Kaiserhof Hotel. Although renamed the Blanshard Hotel by manager Frederick Kostenbader as war approached in 1914, the interior spaces still reflected a German theme. The bar was seen as a common gathering spot for members of Victoria's German community.<sup>127</sup>



**22. POLICE IN FRONT OF THE KAISERHOF HOTEL.**

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<sup>127</sup> Tylor Richards. "(Re-)Imagining Germanness: Victoria's Germans and the 1915 Lusitania Riot". MA Thesis, University of Victoria, 2009, Chapter 3 provides a detailed account of events.

At the same time, names of the casualties including locals like the popular James Dunsmuir appeared in the press. “Boy” Dunsmuir, an ardent horseman and heir apparent of the wealthy Dunsmuir family of Hatley Park had become frustrated by delays in getting to France. Intent on joining a British Cavalry Regiment, he resigned his commission and booked passage on the ill-fated Lusitania.

There followed several days of rioting led by troops from nearby Willows camp. One should not exaggerate the intensity of these “riots”. A BC Archives film clip and photos of the crowds suggest a rather more subdued event with a group of probably drunken soldiers blowing off steam and looting downtown businesses that had seemingly German sounding names. They were watched by a larger group of curious bystanders and a few eager to join in the looting.<sup>128</sup> Ultimately several hundred police and troops were called out to re-establish order, but only after the hotel and several other supposedly “German” businesses sustained significant damage. In the following days, many took steps to assure customers of their loyalties while civic officials expressed their displeasure at such improper behavior in their proper city.<sup>129</sup>



<sup>128</sup> <https://youtu.be/OikH8Vl3psA>

<sup>129</sup> <https://onlineacademiccommunity.uvic.ca/vicpdgreatwar/the-may-riot-of-1915/>

The year 1915 ended with the resignation of Sir Richard McBride as premier. There was an outpouring of accolades from the conservative *Daily Colonist* describing him as an empire builder with a career full of achievement. Praise for the incoming cabinet of William Bowser was equally effusive. In sharp contrast, the opposition liberal Times declared “never have there been so many unsolved problems of vital moment to this province as there are today”. While provincial politics remained divisive, there was solid support for the war from across the political spectrum. With the relative quiet on the Western Front, war reporting and list of casualties was no longer front-page news. The appointment of Haig as the new Commander of the British Expeditionary Force was tucked in beside an article about renewed interest in a trans Canada highway. Arthur Currie’s promotion to Major General and a modest list of casualties (11 dead, 16 wounded) was relegated to page 16. Stories of support for the war had become somewhat routine.

In parallel, the community fund-raising machine and support programs for returned soldiers were rapidly expanding. Organizations like the Red Cross and the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire were bolstered by an amazing array of fund-raising events ranging from dinners and concerts to recruiting Sundays supported by local churches. In December 1915, *Daily Colonist* listed, without further comment, the names of fifty-six business and a dozen vessels that were now making regular monthly contributions to the Patriotic Fund. A posting from the Returned Soldier’s Employment Committee offered to assist employers noting that “There will be from now on, an ever-increasing number of soldiers returning from the front”.<sup>130</sup> While some of the organizations like the Patriotic Fund, the Red Cross and the Belgian Relief Fund were national or international in scope, all depended on the volunteer

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<sup>130</sup> *Daily Colonist*. Victoria, Thursday 16 Dec 1915.

work and the fertile imagination of local people. Almost without exception, the organizations behind these efforts were dominated by women volunteers.

Perhaps the most unique for Victoria was the story of Muggins. He was a small white Spitz owned by Mrs. G. W. Woodward. In the early days, he would simply accompany his owner as she carried out her fund-raising efforts on behalf of the Red Cross or some other worthwhile cause. By mid 1916, however, he had become a bit of a local celebrity. He was in the habit of greeting ships, appearing in parades and sometimes on his own simply wandering about downtown Victoria with two small collection bags on his back. By October 17<sup>th</sup> he had been granted a special licence to carry out his duties by city council.<sup>131</sup> Over the course of the war, Muggins would collect over \$20,000 for the Red Cross and become know internationally. When he died in 1920 he had received medals in recognition of his efforts from among others, the YMCA, the French Red Cross, the Great War Veterans Association and several ships. He had been photographed by celebrities ranging from Arthur Currie to the Prince of Wales.<sup>132</sup>



<sup>131</sup> *Daily Colonist*. Victoria, Oct 17, 1917, 6.

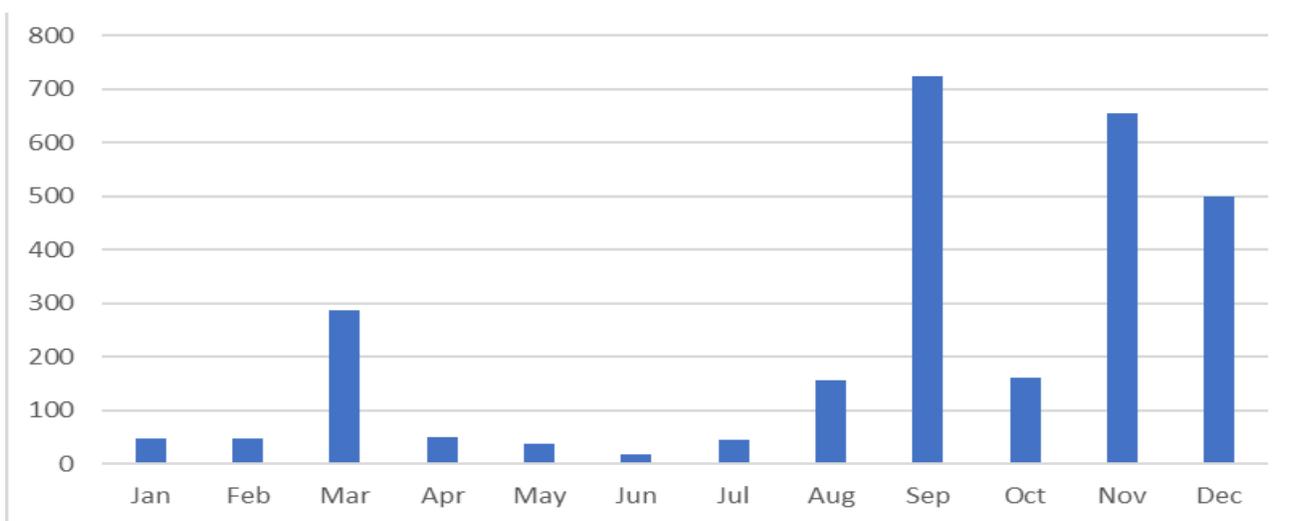
<sup>132</sup> *Victoria Daily Times*. Victoria, Jan 15, 1920, 4.

## The Routine of War

Recruiting throughout 1915 had become routine. The initial chaos of the yearly months gave way to a regular pattern of building up new units in response to the demands for reinforcements. By the fall, the decision to expand the Canadian contribution to a full corps of four divisions meant another spike in recruiting. It would be late 1916 before that fourth division finally joined the Canadian Corps on the Somme. Drafts were quickly assembled at Willows camp and despatched after initial training. A new rifle range was under construction and an expanded armoury on Bay Street was opened to accommodate militia training close to the downtown core. The peak in monthly recruiting that came late in 1915 was limited more by the capacity of military authorities to process and train recruits than any lack of volunteers.

### 23. MUGGINS WITH SIR ARTHUR CURRIE (SAANICH ARCHIVES PHOTO)

**TABLE 11 – NUMBER ATTESTED BY MONTH 1915**



**24 DATA EXTRACTED FROM OVER 5000 SOLDIER FILES**

Although the recruiting and training of soldiers was now a matter of routine, the process of handling wounded returned from the front remained chaotic. Although returned men were greeted

with bands and welcoming committees, ongoing support was not well organized. It was not so much that the rates of pay and contributions from the Patriotic Fund were inadequate but rather that the process of tracking returned soldiers and arranging timely payment and treatment was not yet prepared for the numbers returning to Canada. In December, the *Victoria Daily Times* reported the formation of the British Columbia Veteran's Club along with numerous stories of hardship under a headline reading "Are Returned Men Properly Treated?"<sup>133</sup>. The early focus of the fund-raising effort had been providing for troops overseas. Local charities raised money for motor ambulances for the 5<sup>th</sup> Canadian Field Hospital while others sent tobacco, socks or other treats. Even the Belgian Relief Fund appeared to have had a higher priority than care for returned soldiers. That focus would change quickly as the flow of wounded returning to Victoria grew from a trickle to a steady stream in later 1915 and 1916, fed by the wounded from the bloody battles around Ypres and later the Somme. The summer of 1915 had seen a frenzy of local fundraising across the country to purchase more machine guns for the infantry. Initially equipped with only two guns per battalion, by the time of the Somme battles in the fall of 1916, each section would have two Lewis light machine guns. Victoria papers reported local businesses supporting a Vancouver initiative to buy twelve machine guns for the 47<sup>th</sup> battalion<sup>134</sup>. At the same time competing fund-raising efforts by the local Red Cross to purchase motor ambulances were being supported by wealthy local families like the Dunsmuirs<sup>135</sup>. Increasingly, the implication of such movements was that government was somehow incapable of properly equipping the troops it had sent to war.<sup>136</sup> By the end

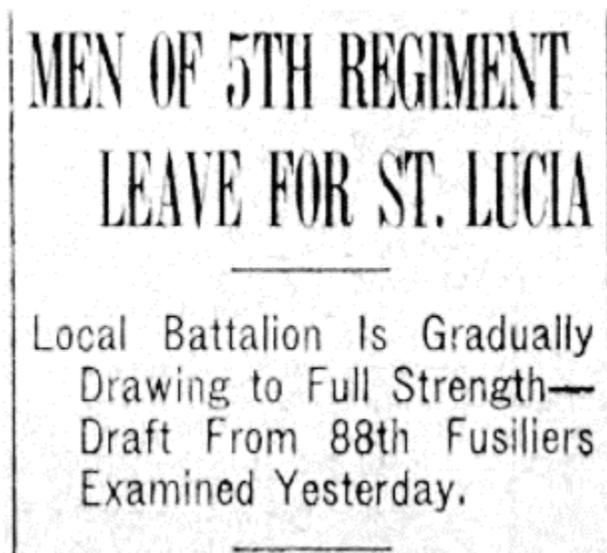
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<sup>133</sup> *Victoria Daily Times*. 16 Dec 1915, 13.

<sup>134</sup> *Daily Colonist*, 13 July 1915, 5.

<sup>135</sup> *Daily Colonist*, 10 July 1915, 1.

<sup>136</sup> See Cameron Pulsifer, "The Great Canadian Machine Gun Mania of 1915: The Public, the Press, and Government Decision Making in Procuring Machine Guns for the Canadian Expeditionary Force." *Histoire sociale/Social history*, vol. 46 no. 1, 2013, pp. 91-120. *Project MUSE*, [muse.jhu.edu/article/512041](http://muse.jhu.edu/article/512041). For a fulsome discussion of this movement.



of the year, Borden had established a more regular pattern of supply and fund-raising efforts began to focus on the needs of returned soldiers and families.

By the fall of 1915, reports of yet another group of soldiers from Victoria departing for the front had become almost as routine as the demand for reinforcements to replace casualties and expansion of the Canadian

Expeditionary Force. The second division had joined the corps by this point. Two more would follow in 1916.

25 THE *DAILY COLONIST*, VICTORIA  
MAR 16, 1915, 8.

## 1916 – Turn of the Tide

In 1916, the pace of training in Victoria had picked up and the recruiting process had become increasingly sophisticated. Advertisements and even unit newspapers helped to spread the word. This

**Are You Interested in the  
WESTERN SCOTS?**

The Battalion is now under orders to proceed on active service. Before many more months have passed, it will be doing its part in the trenches. You can keep in touch with it weekly by subscribing now to

**“THE WESTERN SCOT”**  
25c a Month in Advance  
Mailed to Your Address

This bright, newsy paper will be published weekly wherever the Battalion may be. It will contain interesting news of the boys of the 67th. It will be published (with permission) at the front.

26 THE *DAILY COLONIST*, VICTORIA  
MAR 24, 1916

Western Scots notice offered readers a close-up look at a unit under training. To add to the appeal, the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Lorne Ross had returned to Canada after being wounded while a company commander with the 16<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Canadian Scottish). Despite such efforts to create a unit identity,

most such newly formed units would be broken up on arrival in England. The 67<sup>th</sup> (Western Scots) however, remained intact for a time but was redesignated as a pioneer battalion in the newly forming 4<sup>th</sup> Division, before finally being absorbed by other units of the Canadian Corps after the battle of Vimy Ridge in the spring of 1917.



27 PHOTO FROM C SCOT R MUSEUM

For some units, the expansion of the Canadian Corps provided opportunities to remain together. Such was the case for the 88<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Victoria Fusiliers). Once again, the unit was commanded by a distinguished officer and sent-off with full honours in May 1916. The Commanding officer was Lieutenant Colonel H.J. Rous

Cullin who had distinguished himself as an officer in the British army during the Boer War before moving to Victoria and joining the newly formed 88<sup>th</sup> Battalion on its formation in 1912. Although blessed with a distinguished record, Rous Cullin, age 41 suffered from arthritis and was discharged as medically unfit shortly after arrival in England.



**28 VICTORIA DAILY TIMES, APR 16, 1916, 8.**

The 103<sup>rd</sup> Battalion was the final unit despatched in 1916. Recruiting during this period was often accompanied by stories of groups responding to the call to the colours. Here the local newspaper reported a story about members of the National Lacrosse Team based in Victoria. Six members including the manager had already enlisted. Three had joined the 103<sup>rd</sup> Battalion. Once again, the unit was to be disbanded on arrival in England. As a consequence, commanding officer, Lieutenant

Colonel Henniker was out of a job. In his case,

he was seconded to the British Army and found employment as a staff officer in Army Headquarters in France. As one might expect, this pattern of recruitment and training, while effective, had the impact of producing an excess of senior officers. The Canadian Corps in France was generally inclined to look for its battalion and company commanders among those who had proven themselves at the front.

During this period, yet another rather unique unit was under training in Victoria. At the instigation of Lieutenant Colonel Bruce Powley, a "bantam" battalion was authorized in the spring of 1916 to recruit men under the minimum 5 ft 4 in requirement then in effect. There is little to suggest that this change was an act of desperation by recruiters facing a shrinking manpower pool. Rather the impetus seems to be eagerness by the vertically challenged to join. Powley, like Lorne Ross of the Western Scots before him had already served in France. He had returned to Canada in the summer of 1915 to recover from wounds. It is also worth noting that at almost 5 ft 9 in he would have towered over most of his men. Several other officers assigned to the Bantams had had also seen service in France. With space for additional troops at a premium, the Bantams had to build their own camp in

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Beacon Hill Park aided by a grant from the City of Victoria for materials. Soon the colorful unit won the hearts of the people of Victoria. Despite the appeal, the battalion had some difficulty in recruiting enough smaller men. Although recruited and trained as infantry, when they finally left Victoria in the spring of 1917, they were designated as a railway unit.

With the continued positive response to recruiting, there was little need to resort to more aggressive forms of recruiting like the White Feather campaign which was used by women in Britain to mark men who were not in uniform as cowards.

## Politics on the Home Front

While the war raged in Europe, another campaign was being fought in British Columbia. After more than a decade in power, the provincial Conservative government was under attack. In the well-established pattern of the day, the *Victoria Daily Times* strongly supported the opposition Liberals under Harlan Brewster. As leader of the opposition, Brewster led the attack on corruption and patronage in government while advocating votes for women. He was also praised for the establishment of a fishery and canning business that effectively excluded Chinese workers. In contrast, the *Daily Colonist*, remained steadfast in its support of the Conservative government, decrying the Liberals as “a party without either platform or definite policy, except lying and slander”<sup>137</sup>. In addition to the general tide of discontent with the ruling Conservatives, the power of women was evident. In the spring of 1916, a deputation of women had interviewed the Premier to seek his support. By this point, all three prairie provinces had already extended the franchise. Despite the rising tide of support for the enfranchisement of women, Premier Bowser stood by like King Canute of old trying to hold back the rising tide. Having earlier voted against women’s suffrage, he now promised only a non-binding referendum on the topic as part of the 1916 election. There seems to be an obvious interplay of

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<sup>137</sup> *Daily Colonist*. Victoria, Aug 4, 1916, 2.

women's groups that were so instrumental in raising funds for a wide range of war related charities with other causes like women's suffrage and prohibition. This was a striking contrast to Britain where eminent leaders in the suffrage movement like Emily Pankhurst urged others to put aside the question of votes for women until after the war. Perhaps the rapid change in attitude that coincided with the war was best expressed by the recalcitrant Bowser himself after his crushing defeat and overwhelming support for women's suffrage in the referendum.

**"Women do more actual work in connection with their meetings than the men do. They could not have been given the franchise at a better time. We have all changed greatly in the last few months since the war began, but some of us never thought we would see the day when women would vote on an equal basis with the men. I must plead guilty in voting against granting the franchise to women, but when we have seen how the women have suffered and sacrificed themselves, and observe what they are doing for the Empire in a hundred different ways in their homes and in their societies, it changed our view and those of all men in public life.**

29 FORMER PREMIER BOWSER  
SPEAKING AT A CONSERVATIVE  
WOMEN'S MEETING  
*DAILY COLONIST,*  
VICTORIA APRIL 18, 1917, 7.

In parallel with the suffrage movement came the demand for prohibition. Here, many in the church community joined women's groups in demanding prohibition. Organizations like the Women's Christian Temperance Union were established in Victoria as early as 1882. As early as 1909, then premier William McBride agreed to a local option referendum that would allow communities to prohibit the sale of alcohol within their boundaries. Amid speculation of widespread fraud, the referendum was defeated. Later, as prohibition took hold in neighbouring provinces and states, the demand for action rose in British Columbia. In the summer of 1916, local churches invited prominent American evangelist

Billy Sunday to preach on the evils of “Booze”<sup>138</sup>. The day following his appearance in Victoria, a crowd reported at over 9,000 flocked to hear his message in Vancouver. Led in large part by the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, Sunday drew his admirers from a broad coalition of churches. Once again, in Victoria there was a striking contrast in coverage by the local daily newspapers. The Liberal *Victoria Daily Times* was supportive of the Temperance movement. The Conservative *Daily Colonist*, on the other hand, cautioned that any move toward prohibition would have grave financial consequences and involve millions in compensation for BC breweries should the proposed referendum be approved. In the 1916 election, Premier Harlan Brewster promised a binding referendum on both prohibition and women’s suffrage. Initially, it appeared that the prohibition referendum had been defeated due in large part to overwhelming opposition from men at the front. Subsequently, a judicial inquiry found widespread fraud apparently initiated by Richard McBride, a long-time opponent of prohibition then serving as BC’s agent general in London. With most soldier’s votes disallowed, the referendum was declared passed and prohibition came into effect in 1917. By 1920, the program was widely seen as a failure and was replaced by a system of provincial regulation after a second referendum.<sup>139</sup>

At the municipal level, today’s reader of the newspaper archives cannot help but be struck by how much some issues in Victoria today reflect those of a century ago. In the spring of 1916, the citizens of Victoria read of two major infrastructure issues – improving the Johnson Street Bridge by adding a rail line extension into downtown Victoria and improving the sewage system with a pipeline across the Selkirk Water. Labour difficulties at the dockyard had disrupted the summer of 1916, with workers demanding an eight-hour day<sup>140</sup>. At least the year closed on a positive note as citizens

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<sup>138</sup> *Victoria Daily Times*. Aug 8, 1916, 4.

<sup>139</sup> Hannah Anderson, <http://acitygoestowar.ca/prohibition-and-provincial-politics/>

<sup>140</sup> *Victoria Daily Times*, Aug 21, 1916.

celebrated the harbour breakwater as “all but complete” and the opening to Resthaven Hospital in Sidney, as an extension of the Esquimalt military hospital, just before Christmas in 1916<sup>141</sup>.

## Reporting the War

Remarkably, despite their division on so many provincial political issues, both local newspapers were unstinting in their support of the war. It may well be that a highly effective propaganda campaign mounted by the British had some influence over support of the war in later stages. In the early period however, there is little to suggest that newspaper coverage and support for the war was anything other than a reflection of local sentiment. By the Somme battles in the late summer and fall of 1916 however, the propaganda machine was fully developed. Perhaps the most striking example is coverage of the disastrous early days of the Somme campaign. July 1<sup>st</sup> 1916 is widely regarded as the most costly day in the history of the British army. Yet in Victoria as elsewhere in the Empire front page headlines in the

**EXTRA** **The Daily Colonist.** **EXTRA**

NO. 176—FIFTY-EIGHTH YEAR VICTORIA, BRITISH COLUMBIA, MONDAY, JULY 3, 1916 PRICE FIVE CENTS

# ALLIES SWEEP AHEAD ALONG 25-MILE FRONT

## PERONNE IS THREATENED BY ADVANCE OF ALLIES

### Chief Rail Highway From German Centre at Cologne Endangered—Furious Hand-to-Hand Fighting Characterizes Struggle for Ruined Village of Donpierre—Scotch Bravery

### FIFTY SQUARE MILES ARE NOW ENVELOPED

Counter-Offensive on Outskirts of Hardecourt, Repulsed With Heavy Losses, Ends in Precipitate Rout—Terrain Now Occupied Is One of Exceptional Strategic Importance—Paris Maintains Calm Amid Momentous Happenings.

PARIS, July 2.—The battle of the Somme now is in full progress and marks the opening of the Franco-British offensive, long expected as a critical test, if not the decisive stage of the war.

Early reports today show that the British and French forces are sweeping forward along a 25-mile front. The French already have taken more than 5,000 prisoners, while the Allies have enveloped, within the last 24 hours, nine villages and fifty square miles of French territory held until now by the Germans.

The theatre of operations for the British forces runs between Louvain court, north of the River Aisne, to a point just south of the Somme, while the French attacked on both sides of their experience in the war, quickly threw up strong earthworks around the villages that taken, in order to protect them against counter-attacks. It was not before night however, that the Germans were able to deliver any counter-attacks. They were repulsed against the French positions on the outskirts of Hardecourt, and it was repulsed with heavy losses, ending it a precipitate rout.

Throughout last night the French continued their drive, capturing the village of Cerny, in which they already had occupied the outskirts, and penetrating much of the Somme between Hardecourt and Asserettes.

In addition to the military advances, the terrain, covered by the British Allies troops, has an exceptional strategic importance.

On the other hand the Germans gave themselves up being able finally to take Verchin, and are concentrating their chief effort on the north.

The French public and the press are following the great offensive with intense interest, but without excitement. Paris maintains the serene calm.

**Fighting at Verdun.**

The French now have taken the age-old town of Verdun, today's report showing an attack in Verdun's DEE with heavy German losses and the taking of prisoners by the French. The French are thus keeping the Germans fully occupied at Verdun and are preventing them from sending reinforcements to relieve their weakened line on the north.

On the other hand the Germans gave themselves up being able finally to take Verchin, and are concentrating their chief effort on the north.

The French public and the press are following the great offensive with intense interest, but without excitement. Paris maintains the serene calm.

**Directs Allied Offensive**

## 10,000 PRISONERS ARE TAKEN BY ALLIES

### British Capture Fricourt and Advance East of Village, Where Substantial Progress Is Made—Enemy's Losses Heavy

### MUCH WAR MATERIAL SEIZED

French Obtain Footing in German Second Line Trenches South of Somme, Seizing Frise and Moreaucourt Wood—Allied Casualties Low Because of Efficacious Artillery Preparations



LONDON, July 2.—Fricourt, a town three miles east of Albert, the scene of desperate fighting between the British and Germans since the Allied offensive was begun yesterday, has been captured by the British, according to an official statement issued this evening.

The rest of the official announcement says:

"Substantial progress has been made in the vicinity of Fricourt, which was captured by us at 2 p.m. today. 'Up to now today some 800 more prisoners had been taken in the operations between the Aisne and the Somme, including the total of 10,000, including those captured on other parts of the front last night.'

A further report tonight from British general headquarters says: 'Heavy fighting has taken place today in the area between the Aisne and the Verchin section. Allied Artillery 'Sergeant Charred' has brought down his fifth German aeroplane, which crashed to earth near Peronne on the night of the 1st. One of our air squadrons dropped 40 bombs on the railroad and eight on the station at Thoyval. Another squadron dropped 40 bombs on the station at Brimelles. Our prisoners tonight include the railroad sections at Assange and Louper in the Ardennes. Many houses struck buildings and railroads. A train was destroyed.

'The Germans have dragged bodies of war dead close to the neighborhood of Hency and others near Ballois. A strong air squadron bombed several towns on the spot town of Laucelle. This is stated in view of reports.'

**OTTAWA NEWS**

30 DAILY COLONIST. VICTORIA, JUL 3, 1916, 1.

<sup>141</sup> Daily Colonist, Victoria, Dec 7, 1916, 2.

*Daily Colonist* proclaimed, “German Front Broken on Extended Line” and “Heavy Loss Inflicted on Enemy”<sup>142</sup>. The following day the reports were even more effusive.

By November the full impact of the British propaganda machine had turned the bloodbath on the Somme into a turning point in the war. At last the allies were on the offensive. A film release simply titled “The Battle of the Somme” became the most widely viewed film of its day and the first to show live film footage of combat. Despite regular and lengthy reports of heavy casualties, in Victoria at least, the official “story” reflected the prescribed commentary of the British press. Reprinting

31. THE *DAILY COLONIST*,  
VICTORIA NOV 25, 1916

commentary from the *London Weekly Dispatch*, the film was described as “the greatest success in point of public appreciation that the kinematograph has ever known....There has never been anything like this in the history of the moving picture.”<sup>143</sup> Shot in the early days of the battle, the footage which greeted audiences in Victoria contained no footage of Canadian troops. Although the film has often been criticized for its staged footage, at the time of its release the inclusion of images of dead soldiers was considered shocking by many.<sup>144</sup> On November 25<sup>th</sup>, *The Colonist* reported that the *Battle of the*

*Somme* would play in the Variety Theatre for a full

<sup>142</sup> *Daily Colonist*. Victoria, Jul 2, 1916, 1.

<sup>143</sup> *Daily Colonist*. Victoria Nov 25, 1916.

<sup>144</sup> John Hodgkins. “Hearts and Minds and Bodies: Reconsidering the Cinematic Language of *The Battle of the Somme*”, *Film & History*; (Cleveland, OK Vol. 38, Iss. 1, 2008), 9-19.

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week with continuous performances from 1:00 pm to 11:00 pm daily. The film played to much acclaim despite heavy daily casualty reports. Only two months earlier those same audiences had been shocked by a list of casualties taking up a full two columns as a result of the first major engagement of the Canadian Corps on the Somme.<sup>145</sup>

In many ways the experience of Victoria paralleled that of Toronto and Winnipeg but with some significant local differences. An abundant supply of willing recruits and strong support for fund raising in the early years were common across all three cities. The naval threat of course was unique to Victoria and the west coast. Halifax or other eastern seaboard cities would have felt the protective presence of the Royal Navy. Victoria's brief but striking anti German riot sparked by the sinking of the Lusitania seems to have quickly subsided in the face of overwhelming support for the war. Apart from this one brief flare up, none of the dissent reported by Miller or Blanchard is evident in Victoria. As will become evident as the election campaign of 1917 is considered, the debate, such as it was, centred on how best to provide more support not on the merits of the war itself.

Other issues may simply have been overlooked in those earlier studies. It seems unlikely that the recruitment of underage boy soldiers would have been unique to Victoria. In part, at least, this is due to the very limited availability of digitized soldier records for those earlier studies. By limiting the timeframe to the war years, the Toronto and Winnipeg studies did not consider the likely impact of the South African War nor the pervasive social presence of the militia and cadet movements that evolved in the decade leading up to the war.

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<sup>145</sup> *Daily Colonist*. Victoria. Sep 17, 1916, 15.

## Chapter 5 - The City at War 1917-1918

### Optimism on the home front

#### **Will 1917 Be the Allies' Year of Victory**



—From *Peace*  
Bernard Partridge's figure of "Winged Victory," in honor of our air services, is typical of the hopes, aspirations, and determination of the Entente nations to make 1917 "Freedom's crowning year."

Riding on a wave of a highly successful propaganda campaign that painted the bloody campaign on the Somme as a great allied victory, the good people of Victoria were treated with optimistic stories that predicted that 1917 would surely see the end of the war, with Germany being forced to negotiate peace. The image of winged Victory on the front page of the *Colonist* at year end was presented as a symbol of "the determination of the Entente nations to make 1917 'Freedom's crowning

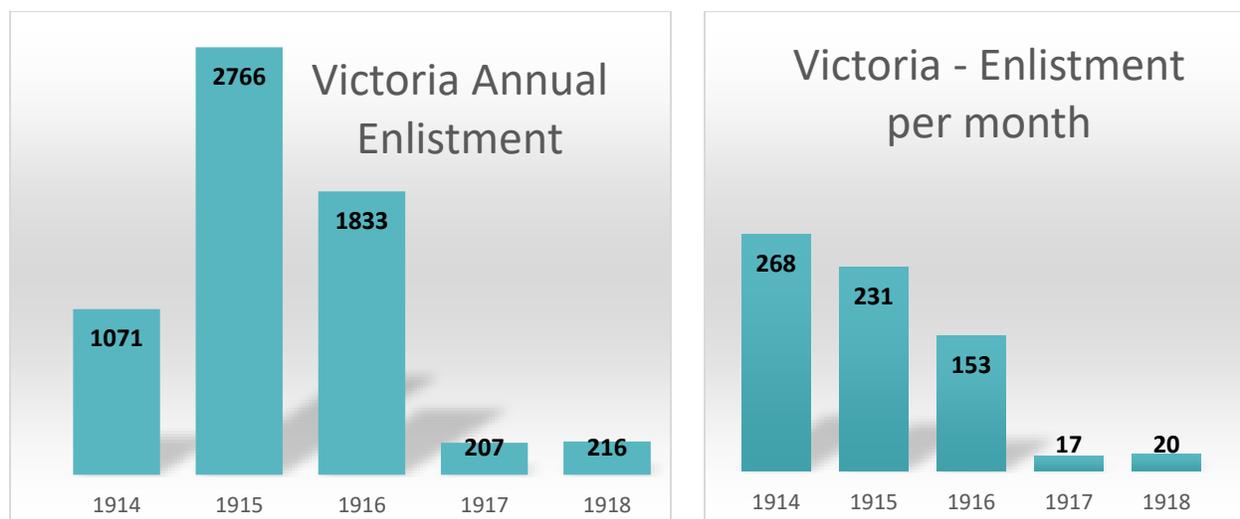
year'."<sup>146</sup> It was accompanied by fulsome and supportive coverage of the rejection of the German proposal to open negotiations about peace. The *Victoria Daily Times* was even more optimistic, declaring that, "There is Profound Conviction That 1917 Will Bring Absolute Victory to Allies and Lasting Peace to the World."<sup>147</sup>

<sup>146</sup> *Daily Colonist*. Victoria, Jan 31, 1916, 1.

<sup>147</sup> *Victoria Daily Times*, Jan 1, 1917, 1.

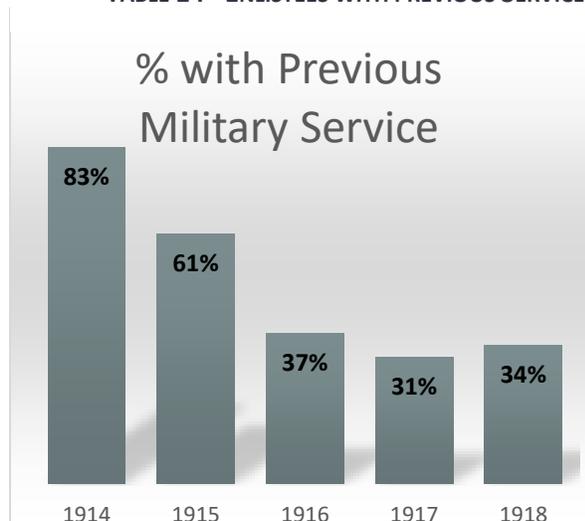
## Changing Patterns of Enlistment

**TABLE 12 CHANGING PATTERNS OF ENLISTMENT BY MONTH AND YEAR**

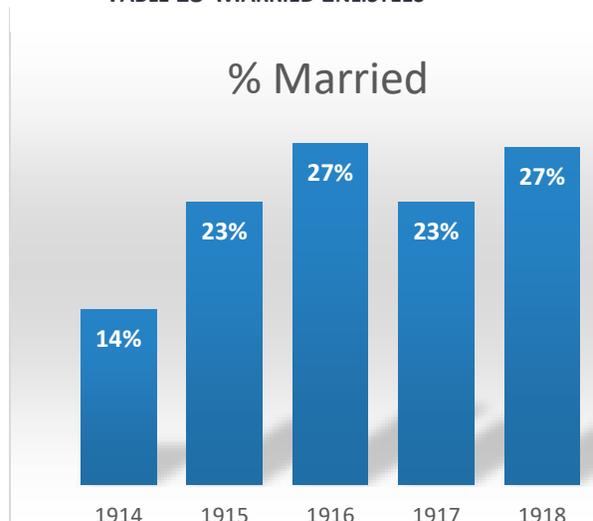


There is little doubt that there had been a substantial turn of the tide but not for the reasons suggested by the propagandists. In Victoria, as was the case across the country, the rate of enlistment was in sharp decline with monthly rates at a fraction of the previous year. At the same time, the demand for reinforcements for the now fully formed Canadian Corps of four divisions was reaching its peak. The Fifth Division, waiting in England, would never join the Corps as the demand for reinforcements to replace casualties peaked. The marked decline in those with previous military service

**TABLE 14 - ENLISTEES WITH PREVIOUS SERVICE**



**TABLE 13 MARRIED ENLISTEES**



and the rise in number of married men suggests that recruiters were accepting candidates who might well have been excluded from the first contingent.

## Reporting the War

1917 by any measure was a tumultuous year. The Russian Revolution, the US entry into the War and the great conscription debate in Canada to name but a few, dominated the news. On the home front, the newspaper coverage shifted dramatically from stories of yet another contingent of troops departing for war to lengthy lists of casualties and wounded soldiers returning. The impact was softened somewhat by regular accounts of yet another well deserved promotion, medal or heroic action by Canadian troops. By 1917 there is increasing sophistication of uniquely Canadian content in contrast to the film account of the Battle of the Somme which focussed entirely on British troops. In the spring a new film was presented specifically targeting the Canadian market. The headline read in part "Have you heard of the Battle of Courcellette?". The text then lamented the fact that "Three Canadian Divisions took part, an army equal to that of Napoleon at Waterloo, and yet the story has not been told." Thankfully, Sir Max Aitken and the Canadian War Records Office<sup>148</sup> had come to the rescue with a brilliant account including film of the first use of tanks. 1917 would see this pattern repeated with Vimy later in the year. The initial account is British. Reading the headlines in the newspapers of Victoria the word Vimy is relegated to a minor subtitle below a headline that declares "Famous Hindenberg Line Turned by British Army". Within months a counter narrative that highlighted the Canadian role emerged to take centre stage. By April 20<sup>th</sup>, in a report that also featured two full columns of names of Canadian casualties, the newspaper reported that a captured German officer had described "The loss of Vimy ridge as the greatest defeat they have suffered since the war began." The reality that the entire British action against the Hindenberg line was a supporting effort for the major French attack to the south

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<sup>148</sup> Tim Cook, "Documenting War and Forging Reputations: Sir Max Aitken and the Canadian War Records Office in the First World War", in *War in History* (2003).

under Nivelle was lost in the news. Later French mutinies and the firing of Nivelle as a result of the failed attack quickly disappeared to the rising tide of the myth of Vimy Ridge as a battle of great strategic significance, captured by brave Canadians where both French and English troops had failed before. The replacement of Nivelle was relegated to page 24 immediately beside a notice of a change in appointment of the teller in the Bank of Montreal in Merritt.<sup>149</sup>

By the fall, the Canadian propaganda machine was in full swing. With the Battle of Passchendaele in October, Victorians were treated to daily glowing reports of the battle. The contrast between the official British reports and those from Canadian sources was shown in sharp contrast in the initial reports on October 27<sup>th</sup><sup>150</sup>. Intensive coverage would follow throughout the battle with stories of heroism and awards for valour balanced against the growing casualty list. Later reports give less coverage to the British reports and feature those from “Canadian Headquarters in France” prominently. By October 31<sup>st</sup> the headlines declared “Canadians Push on to Crest of Ridge at Passchendaele”. The front-page article featured a photo of Victoria’s own Lieutenant General Sir Arthur Currie being congratulated by Haig for his great success. Although historians have generally lauded Currie’s planning and execution of the four phased attack over a period of six weeks, the cost in death and destruction in the muddy fields of Passchendaele was staggering.<sup>151</sup> The Canadian Corps had almost 16,000 casualties during the battle and by the end of the German advance in the spring of 1918 nearly all the ground gained would be lost.

The battle also became a powerful tool in supporting the cause of the union government in the election. On election eve, the headline in the *Daily Colonist* read “General Currie Sends His Appeal to Canada”. This highlighted message followed: “From the Agony of the Battlefield Goes Forth the Prayer

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<sup>149</sup> *Daily Colonist*. Victoria, May 13, 1917, 24

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid*, Oct 27, 1917, 1

<sup>151</sup> Tim Cook, *Shock Troops: Canadians Fighting the Great War 1917-1918*, 309-366.

that Our Homeland Does Not Desert Us in the Hour of Our Need and Our Approaching Triumph. –

Currie”

***British Official Report Oct 27, 1917***

“Operations with limited objectives were undertaken by the French and British armies early this morning on the Ypres front. After a fine day yesterday, with a fine drying wind, which gave promise of improved fighting conditions, the weather changed during the night, and a heavy rain has fallen almost without a break since a very early hour this morning.

“Notwithstanding the great difficulties with which the Allied troops had to contend, progress has been made and valuable positions have been won on the greater part of the front attacked.

***Canadian Official Report Oct 27, 1917***

CANADIAN HEADQUARTERS IN FRANCE, via London, Oct. 26.—(By W. A. Willison, special correspondent of the Canadian Press.)—Back again in the bloody salient, smashing forward toward the Passchendaele ridge, the Canadians, fresh from destroying the enemy forces in Lens, advanced at daybreak this morning on the front extending roughly from Passchendaele, on the Zonnebeke road, to Wallenclemen. They had many strong points in front of them, such as Wolfe Copse, Bellevue Spur, Augustus Wood, and the higher land to the northwest, but the Canadian troops, avoiding the impassable swampy area, swept forward in two waves. First, taking the high ground to the north of the marsh, they launched the brunt of their attack against Bellevue, while the second wave to the south advanced against Augustus Wood, Heine House and Hillside Farm.

The 1917 spring edition of Henderson’s Directory for Victoria had listed five full infantry battalions that had assembled at Victoria along with 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Mounted Rifles and five somewhat smaller Artillery reinforcement drafts. The garrison in Victoria had reached its peak with the Gordon Highlanders and the 88<sup>th</sup> Victoria Fusiliers at Willows camp. Support troops and garrison artillery units at Work Point Barracks and a host of other units covered a full two pages in the directory, all under the

command of the 11<sup>th</sup> Military District.<sup>152</sup> By the end of the year however, the rapidly increasing demand for troops and the shrinking pool of recruits meant that the need for such a large organization in Victoria had dramatically declined. By late October as the timeline to register for the draft approached, units like the 50<sup>th</sup> Gordon Highlanders and the 88<sup>th</sup> Victoria Fusiliers were no longer needed. Following overly optimistic projections that up to 5,000 Victorians might be included in category 1, the *Daily Colonist's* front page reported that only 670 had registered.<sup>153</sup> The same edition reported that the 50<sup>th</sup> Regiment was in the process of winding up. Only the 5<sup>th</sup> Artillery Regiment remained for local protection.

The only warships noted in the directory were the aged *HMCS Rainbow* and the equally ineffective submarine tender *HMCS Shearwater*, whose principal task in 1917 was to escort the two submarines that McBride had purchased to the Atlantic coast. In reality, the naval defence of Canada's Pacific coast was now entirely dependent on the ships of the Imperial Japanese Navy. Visiting Japanese warships and senior officers were regularly feted in grand style in Victoria. In February 1917, a visit by a Japanese naval squadron under the command of Rear Admiral Takashita was enthusiastically reported<sup>154</sup> Ironically, only a few months earlier Japanese Canadians from Vancouver who were trying to enlist were forced to travel to Calgary before they were finally accepted. By the spring of 1917, despite their excellent performance on the Somme, they were grouped together in a largely Japanese battalion before the battle of Vimy Ridge in April.<sup>155</sup>

## Political events

In municipal politics, following what was described as a very friendly campaign with "never and unpleasant word", long time councillor A. E. Todd replaced the retiring Alex Stewart who had served

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<sup>152</sup> *Henderson's Directory – Victoria*. April 1917, 46-47.

<sup>153</sup> *Daily Colonist*. Victoria, Oct 28, 1917, 4.

<sup>154</sup> *Daily Colonist*. Victoria, Feb 10, 1917, 6.

<sup>155</sup> [www.birthofaregiment.com](http://www.birthofaregiment.com)

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since 1914.<sup>156</sup> Once again, the issues of the day will sound hauntingly familiar to today's readers. Todd promised to "Take up the matter of the construction of the Johnson Street bridge .... with a view to pushing work on a bridge built and controlled by the city" and securing the election of the Victoria police commissioners.

At the provincial level, British Columbia would enter a prolonged period of dominance by the Liberal Party. The death of Conservative Sir Richard McBride and a year later the death of the idealistic Liberal, Harlan Brewster marked a sea-change in provincial politics. Following Brewster's death in mid 1918, John Oliver became premier. A straightforward man of the people who wore his brown tweed suit to his first official function at government house, "honest John" would serve almost a decade as premier. Although he would win by a razor thin margin when he first faced the electorate in 1920, the Liberal hold on power would not be broken until after his death in 1927. In the 1917-1918 period, the major challenges for the city were rising inflation, the demands of returned soldiers, and increasing difficulty with the enforcement of provincial prohibition laws.

In response to an ever-rising cost of living labour unrest grew and the growth of the union movement accelerated. The labour section of the 1917 city directory listed over thirty unions ranging from saddle-makers to steel workers. Most were craft unions, but more broadly-based industrial unions were also emerging. In Victoria at least, union issues were merely ripples compared to the rising tide of union power in the mining areas of the interior and mid island and there is little evidence that unionization was accompanied by political support for socialism.

In parallel, there was an emergence of organizations advocating for returned soldiers and improved benefits for soldiers' families. Local firms were increasingly being asked to guarantee

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<sup>156</sup> *Daily Colonist*, Victoria, Dec 12, 1916, 1.

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positions for their employees who enlisted. Some went so far as to “top up” a soldier’s pay. The want ads in both local newspapers regularly featured words like “soldier’s wife” or “returned soldier”. When, a local golf pro, T.S. Gallop enlisted, the Victoria Golf Club continued his salary for a month during the enlistment process and the club secretary promised to make best efforts to either bring him back to the club or find him equivalent employment on his return<sup>157</sup>. Similar arrangements were made for staff of the Union Club in downtown Victoria.

The good citizens of Victoria, like others across Canada, watched the unfolding of events in Canada and around the world. The Halifax explosion, the fall of Russia, and the entry of the United States into the war were all headline grabbing news items. Closer to home, there was regular coverage of the progress of both individuals and units linked to Victoria. Victorians read of the steady rise in rank and reputation of Arthur Currie – the former teacher and real estate agent, who, by mid 1917 had become Lieutenant General Sir Arthur Currie, Commander of the Canadian Corps. Newspaper ads for Currie and Power, the company he left behind, continued to appear. Regular almost daily casualty lists were softened with tales of heroism and medals awarded. The most striking change, however, was the disappearance of the regular parades through downtown Victoria as yet another battalion departed for the front. The harsh reality that the flow of volunteers could no longer match the rising battlefield losses was reflected almost daily in press coverage.

## The 1917 Election

The election of 1917 has often been cited as the most divisive in Canadian history. Certainly, the accounts from Toronto provide ample evidence of conflict in those cities. In the spring of 1917 Borden made a lengthy visit to Europe to consult with Imperial authorities and view first-hand the state of the

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<sup>157</sup> Letter from Victoria Golf Club archives to T. S. Gallop, Aug 19, 1917 – Gallop would die of complications from an attack of measles while undergoing training with the RAF in May 1918.

Canadian Corps. Although much cheered by the Canadian victory at Vimy ridge in April, he also became painfully aware that the supply of replacements from a purely voluntary system could not continue to meet the demand. He returned to Canada in mid May convinced that conscription was essential to sustaining the Canadian war effort. The term of parliament had already been extended for a year and discussions with Laurier and the Liberals on further extensions or joining in a union government ultimately failed. Laurier rightly feared that support for conscription would alienate the francophone base of the party and push them into the waiting arms of Bourassa. The French schools question in Ontario and Manitoba and the ham fisted anti French attitudes of Sam Hughes<sup>158</sup> had already built a rising tide of well justified resentment in the province. Seeing an opportunity to split the Liberal party, and convinced the conscription was essential, Borden was determined to press ahead. Although Borden was forced to soften the original terms of his legislation and increase the grounds for exemption to include farmers. When the act eventually became law in August 1917, the Liberal party had been effectively split. Quebec members supported Laurier in opposing the bill while most Liberals from predominantly English speaking ridings supported the government. Buoyed by his success, Borden then introduced two pieces of legislation designed to ensure victory in the inevitable fall election. The Military Service Act gave the vote to all serving and former soldiers including those underage, Indians and women. The most offensive provision however was that the counting of military votes was delayed until after the general vote. Where no riding was specified, the vote might be assigned to any riding.<sup>159</sup> The Wartime Elections Act that quickly followed was also designed to increase the number of voters likely to support conscription and slash the numbers opposed. For the first time the vote was extended to large numbers of women as long as they met citizenship, age and residency requirements and were

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<sup>158</sup> Under Hughes, there was not a single French Canadian battalion commander in the First Contingent. See Tim Cook, *The Madman and the Butcher*. Chapter 2.

<sup>159</sup> See Patrice Dutil and David Mackenzie, *Embattled Nation: Canada's Wartime Election of 1917 for fulsome coverage of this issue*.

related to someone who was serving or had served. On the other side, the vote was denied to conscientious objectors, those born in an enemy country who became naturalized citizens after 1902 or anyone convicted of an offense under the Military Service Act. In conjunction with the passage of these gerrymandering pieces of legislation, Borden reached out to Liberal supporters of conscription to form a union government to contest what would quickly become a single-issue election.

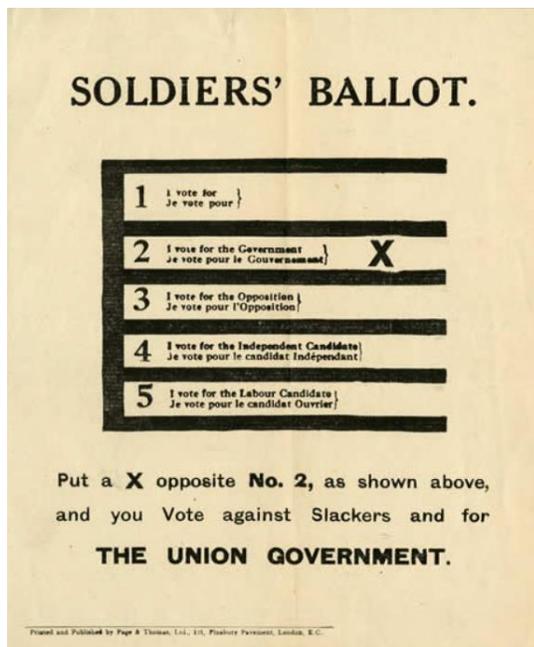


FIGURE 32 CAMPAIGN POSTER

Over the summer as the legislation proceeded through the house, there was strong support in the west. Liberal Premier Harlan Brewster had given Borden public assurance of his support and BC liberals quickly joined the cause. Brewster's son Raymond enlisted in May 1917. At age twenty-four and despite being a newly qualified dentist, Raymond enlisted as a gunner in the Artillery rather than seeking out a much safer position treating soldiers' teeth behind the lines.<sup>160</sup> Although rarely in agreement of political issues, both the *Times* and the

*Colonist* were fully supportive of Borden and the need for conscription. In May an editorial in the *Colonist* identified a common enemy for both Liberals and Conservatives by declaring that "Outside of Quebec, those who are opposed to conscription are mainly Socialists, though in some instances masquerading under the garb of organised labour."

Unlike Ontario and the Maritimes where old political rivalries often frustrated a united approach, in Victoria, as in most of the west, Union candidates generally won support of both Liberals

<sup>160</sup> Service record of 2044136 Raymond Harlan Brewster, Library and Archives Canada. Brewster was killed in action on Nov 1 1918.

and Conservatives. The Union candidate in Victoria was a respected local Veterinarian, Dr Simon Fraser Tolmie a prominent Conservative. Throughout his campaign he was actively paired with Mr F.A. Pauline the local Liberal MPP. Even the local churches were openly in support of the Union position. The Rev. Dr. Leslie Clay, popular minister of St Andrew's Presbyterian Church in downtown Victoria chaired one of Tolmie's political rallies. (Figure 32). In an unprecedented show of support, a week before the election,

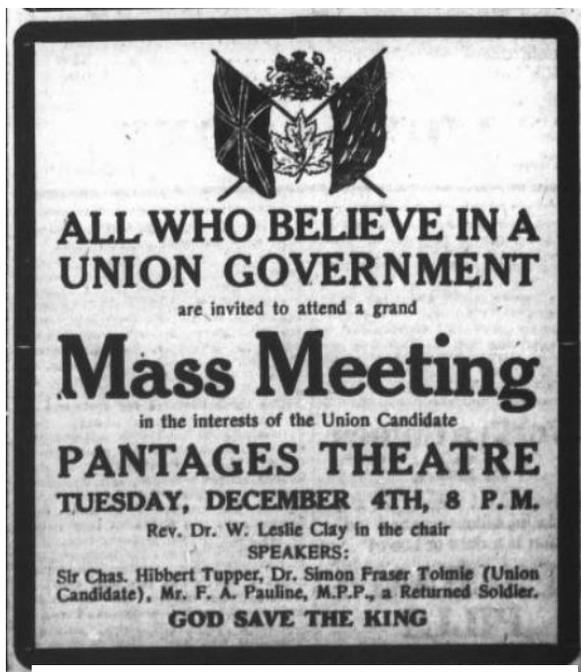


FIGURE 33 DAILY COLONIST 12 DEC 1917 PAGE 1

even Catholic Bishop Alexander MacDonald also openly declared his support for the Union candidate.

Although the Liberals would field candidates in all but one BC riding, the provincial party machine, led by Liberal Premier Harlan Brewster, was solidly in support of the Union. Women's votes were also critical to the success of the Union. The day before the election, the Daily Colonist presented a full page directed at women voters under the headline "Victoria Women Tell Why they Will Vote for Union" and providing detailed instructions on how to register at the polls on election day. Across the country, voter turnout was at an all time high at over 85%. In what surely must be the most unusual result, the turnout in BC was 103.6% of the initial voters list with the surplus likely due to those women

who registered on election day. On election day, Victoria marked the highwater mark of support for the Union with both Laurier Liberal and Socialist candidates losing their deposits.<sup>161</sup>

Although often seen as one of the most divisive in Canadian history, there is little to suggest any anti-Quebec feeling in Victoria. Unlike the images of conflict that appear in the histories of Toronto and Winnipeg where there were substantial nearby francophone communities, Victoria stood virtually united in support of the Union government. As if to reinforce the need for conscription, newspaper reports of a decisive Union victory sat alongside news of the move of the best German troops from the Russian front to the west and yet another air raid on London.<sup>162</sup> As the campaign drew to a close, there was one report of a “Noisy Meeting in Vancouver” where opposition candidates were “given an indifferent hearing .... by a crowd inclined to turbulence.” Even in this instance, however, the issue had little to do with the opposition in Quebec. Even the bloody riots in Quebec that followed the election in the spring of 1918 were received with fulsome support for the government and an editorial comment that perhaps “there are secret influences at work sedulously fanning the flames of unrest, and it would not be at all surprising if these are eventually traced to enemy agencies.”<sup>163</sup>

<b>1917</b>		<b>BC</b>	<b>AB</b>	<b>SK</b>	<b>MB</b>	<b>ON</b>	<b>QC</b>	<b>NB</b>	<b>NS</b>	<b>PE</b>	<b>YK</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Union</b>	Seats	13	11	16	14	74	3	7	12	2	1	153
	%	68.4	61	74.1	79.7	62.3	24.7	59.4	48.4	49.8	54.3	56.9
<b>Laurier Liberal</b>	Seats		1		1	8	62	4	4	2		82
	%	25.6	30.6	23.4	20.3	32.1	73.4	40.6	45.5	50.2	45.7	38.8
<b>Other</b>	Seats											
	%	<b>6</b>	<b>8.4</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4.3</b>

TABLE 15 1917 ELECTION RESULTS BY PROVINCE

<sup>161</sup> *Daily Colonist*, Dec 18, 1917, 1.

<sup>162</sup> *Victoria Daily Times*. Dec 19, 1917, 1.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.* Apr 2, 1918, 1 and editorial 4.

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## The Final Push and a series of unfortunate events

By January 1918, the optimism of the year before had faded. Prospects of a major German offensive on the western front become a harsh reality. By the end of April, the front page of the *Victoria Daily Times* was covered with news of the German advance with headlines declaring that “the allies expect prolonged struggle similar to that before Verdun”<sup>164</sup>. It would be another month before there was any sign of renewed hope. In the final months of the war, the nation and the world focused on the dramatic events taking place on the western front - the rapid build up of American Forces and for Canadians, the leading role of the Canadian Corps in the last hundred days. In many ways, the picture as viewed from Victoria reflected the broader national perspective. However, a dramatic series of events would set this provincial capital on the fringe of the Empire apart from other cities. Labour unrest leading to the death of a labour leader, twin disasters at sea, the onset of the influenza epidemic and preparations for the Siberian expedition all served to shape the final months of the war in Victoria.

## The Death of Ginger Goodwin

The first of those unique events was the death of Albert (Ginger) Goodwin on July 27<sup>th</sup> 1918. The rising power of the union movement in the final years of the war was not uncommon but nowhere was it stronger and more engaged in a struggle for the rights of its members that in the mining country of British Columbia. It is almost impossible to write about such a case without becoming embroiled in the politics of labour. In British Columbia at least, Ginger Goodwin has been raised to near saintly status as a martyr for the labour cause, brutally murdered by police sent out to make an example of a leader who personified labour’s opposition to the draft.<sup>165</sup> My purpose here is not to engage in that debate

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<sup>164</sup> *Daily Colonist*, Victoria, Apr 31, 1918, 1.

<sup>165</sup> Susan Mayse. *Ginger: The Life and Death of Albert Goodwin*. (Madeira Park BC: Harbour Publishing, 1990) provides a useful if decidedly left leaning account.

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but rather to illustrate how the aftermath of that tragic event was viewed in Victoria compared to other centres in the province. A few basic facts for those unfamiliar with the case will suffice to set the scene.

Born in England in 1887, Ginger moved to Canada at nineteen to begin work in the coal mines of Nova Scotia. By 1910, he had moved west with so many other young immigrants and after a brief stay in the Kootenays finally ended up in Cumberland on Vancouver Island. There he became active in the labour movement. By any modern criteria the conditions in the coal mines of the region were appalling. Those who protested were at risk of being blackballed in the tough economic times of the pre-war period. An active sportsman who played for the local rugby team, Ginger was popular among his fellow miners and not adverse to speaking his mind. Although still only twenty-five, he played an active role in the bitter labour disputes in the island coal fields before the outbreak of war. Blacklisted by the mining company, he was forced to move on. Finally settling in Trail by 1916, he worked in a smelter and soon joined the Trail Mill and Smeltermen's Union. In the 1916 provincial election, he ran as the Socialist candidate on an anti-war platform and was soundly defeated. Even in Trail, the very heart of the labour movement in the Ymir riding, he stood third with only 27% of the vote. Conservative James Schofield handily won the riding, holding back the Liberal tide that swept much of the province. In December of 1916 Ginger was elected secretary of the Trail Mill and Smeltermen's Union where he worked tirelessly for improved working conditions, adherence to an eight-hour day and opposition to automatic deductions from worker's pay to support the Patriotic Fund. He also continued his vocal opposition to the war and in particular to the looming prospect of conscription.

In November 1917 at the urging of Goodwin representing the Trail Trades and Labour Council, the workers at Trail walked out on strike. In extensive coverage of the event, the *Daily Colonist* described the strike as "ill advised and deplorable .... occasioned by the arbitrary action of a small

minority of workers”<sup>166</sup>. Rhetoric aside, what was clear was that Goodwin’s action was not supported by the international Mine Mill and Smelter Workers Union who had negotiated a contract with the Consolidated Mining Company. In the midst of this dispute Goodwin was also going through the registration process required by the Military Service Act. Although initially classified as medically unsuitable, that classification was overturned by the local appeal board in January 1918. The appeal was again rejected by the national board in March. Goodwin was then declared fit for service and ordered to report for duty. By that time, his appeals for union support had also been rejected largely due to his challenge to the Smelter Workers Union. Faced with the imminent prospect of military service, Goodwin chose to go into hiding near the familiar territory of Cumberland. After months on the run Goodwin and several others were finally tracked down to a remote cabin in the rough interior of the island around Comox Lake. In a one-on-one encounter, Goodwin was confronted by Special Constable Dan Campbell, part of a Dominion Police patrol sent out in search of draft dodgers and deserters. There is little doubt that Goodwin would have been considered a high-profile case and an attractive target. In Campbell’s account, he came upon Goodwin who was armed and appeared to be ready to shoot. The autopsy later revealed that Goodwin was killed at fairly close range by a single shot from Campbell’s gun. Other police witnesses who arrived shortly after the shooting testified that Goodwin’s body fell with his hands near his fallen rifle. What followed marks a striking difference between Victoria and areas of the province with a more activist labour element.

There were labour and socialist demonstrations in Cumberland, Nanaimo and Vancouver. Stories were fabricated with great abandon, painting the death of Goodwin as everything from a deliberate assassination and coverup to a gross miscarriage of justice. In Vancouver there were counter demonstrations by returned servicemen, accusing labour supporters of being little more than cowards,

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<sup>166</sup> *Daily Colonist*, Victoria, Dec 30, 1917, 12.

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happy to take wages four times that of a soldier but unwilling to obey the law of the land. In Victoria however, there was little debate outside the courtroom. The detailed reporting of events in the *Daily Colonist* gave every indication of a thorough and balanced hearing of the matter, despite claims to the contrary. By October 3<sup>rd</sup>, the Grand Jury had concluded that there was no case to be made against Constable Dan Campbell.<sup>167</sup> In parallel with the case against Campbell, Joe Naylor, a long-time friend and mentor of Goodwin and president of the BC Federation of Labour was charged with assisting draft evaders including Ginger Goodwin.<sup>168</sup> But like the Campbell case, the charges against Naylor were ultimately dropped. Arguably, Naylor played a much more important role in the developing socialist and labour movement in British Columbia. That his name is now largely absent from the historic memory is due in no small part to the sensational rhetoric and myth-making that have accompanied the tragic death of Ginger Goodwin on that remote hillside near Comox Lake.

Although socialists had effectively penetrated the labour movement in Victoria, at the level of the ordinary worker there was little enthusiasm for their socialist rhetoric. Decent wages and working conditions were easy to advocate but the overthrow of capitalism was neither understood nor supported. The dismal showing of Socialist candidates in the 1917 election and later Victoria's very mild response to Winnipeg general strike echoed the general lack of support shown for the cause of socialism espoused by Ginger Goodwin.

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<sup>167</sup> *Daily Colonist*. Victoria, Oct 3, 1918, 5.

<sup>168</sup> *Daily Colonist*. Victoria, Aug 17, 1918, 5.

## Tragedy at Sea <sup>169</sup>

As the war was drawing to a close and most in the country were focussed on the progress of the Canadian Corps in the final advance towards Mons, Victoria was struck in rapid succession with two major maritime disasters. The first was the sinking of the *Princess Sophia*. The ship and her crew were



**35 THE SS PRINCESS SOPHIA LEAVING VICTORIA, LOADED WITH TROOPS BOUND FOR THE FRONT IN THE GREAT WAR. IMAGE SOURCE: BC MARITIME MUSEUM ARCHIVES.**

well known in Victoria. This was one of the vessels the first troops boarded on their way to the front in 1914. In 1918 she was engaged in coastal traffic and on her final run of the season was bringing miners and riverboat crews out of the north before freeze-up via Skagway Alaska. In the early hours of October 25<sup>th</sup> driving against a heavy storm, the *Sophia* ran firmly aground on Vanderbilt Reef. Rather than try to abandon ship as others had done before with disastrous results, Captain Leonard P. Locke ordered all to remain aboard, trusting that the ship would float clear on the rising tide. Initial reports in Victoria reflected this optimistic tone. The *Daily Colonist* reported on the 25<sup>th</sup> that the ship was ashore in the Lynn Canal but that as the “waters are well protected no loss of life or boat is feared”<sup>170</sup>. The following

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<sup>169</sup> <http://acitygoestowar.ca/cities/victoria-at-war/student-projects-2/>

<sup>170</sup> *Daily Colonist*. Victoria, Oct 25, 1918, 14.

day however the full scope of the tragedy emerged with this headline in the *Victoria Daily Times*.

**WEATHER FORECAST**  
For 24 hours ending 4 p. m. Sunday: Light and variable, strong wind at times, mostly westerly and southerly, increased and cold, with rain.  
Lower Mainland—Moderate and southerly winds, fresh to high on the Gulf, unsettled and cold, with rain.

**NO MEETINGS TO-NIGHT**  
All meetings are cancelled owing to prohibitory Order-in-Council against public assemblies.

VOL. 53, NO. 100 VICTORIA, B. C., SATURDAY, OCTOBER 26, 1918 TWENTY-TWO PAGES

# DISASTER OVERWHELMS PRINCESS SOPHIA

## PRINCESS SOPHIA LOST WITH ALL HANDS, ON VANDERBILT REEF; RELIEF SHIPS COULD NOT ASSIST

### Steamer Had Been Exposed to Northern Winds Since Stranding; Rough Sea Was Pounding Vessel and Passengers Had Not Been Transferred to Relief Ships in Lynn Canal

The worst marine tragedy in the history of the Pacific Coast...

**Kravelo, Sixty Miles Northeast of Nish, Taken by Serbians**  
London, Oct. 25.—Kravelo, sixty miles northeast of Nish, was captured by Serbian troops, says a Serbian official statement issued here to-day, in the same region (Serbian troops crossed the Temeze River).

## BRITISH GAIN NORTH AND SOUTH OF VALENCIENNES AND FRENCH ON OISE-AISNE FRONT PUSH FORWARD

**TURN BACK THE CLOCKS**  
To-day is the last day of this Daylight Saving period. Clocks must be turned back an hour at 3 o'clock to-morrow morning. Make sure by turning them back before you retire to-night.

**Germans Have Lost 7,000 Square Miles of Belgium and French Territory Since July 18; Coalfields in North France Recovered by Allies**  
London, Oct. 26.—British forces continue to progress

36 VICTORIA DAILY TIMES OCTOBER 26TH 1918

A violent storm had apparently twisted the vessel on the top of the reef tearing a gaping hole in her side. Rescue vessels had been unable to reach her during the stormy night and would find only her mast protruding from the water the following day. All aboard had been lost. The recovery of bodies took several days with over 150 recovered by the time the *Princess Alice*, the "Death Ship" proceeded south to arrive in Victoria the day after the end of the war. Of the 157 bodies recovered, 27 were delivered to Victoria and laid out on the pier in alphabetical order. Although families could recover the bodies for burial, no public gatherings for funerals were permitted due to the influenza epidemic.

**WEATHER FORECAST**  
For 24 hours ending 4 p. m. Sunday: Light and variable, strong wind at times, mostly westerly and southerly, increased and cold, with rain.  
Lower Mainland—Moderate and southerly winds, fresh to high on the Gulf, unsettled and cold, with rain.

**NO MEETINGS TO-NIGHT**  
All meetings are cancelled owing to prohibitory Order-in-Council against public assemblies.

VOL. 53, NO. 100 VICTORIA, B. C., WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 30, 1918 SIXTEEN PAGES

# DISASTER MAY HAVE OVERTAKEN GALIANO

## Allies Drive East of Piave Berlin Sends Another Note to Washington

**WITH MORE THAN 20,000 PRISONERS ALLIES IN THE ITALIAN THEATRE CONTINUE HURLING AUSTRIANS BACK**

**MELBOURNE COUNCIL SAYS GERMANY MUST INDEMNIFY AUSTRALIA**

## NAVAL PATROL STEAMER GALIANO BELIEVED TO HAVE FOUNDERED OFF QUEEN CHARLOTTE ISLANDS

37 VICTORIA DAILY TIMES OCT 30, 1918

By this time a second maritime disaster was news. *HMCS Galliano*, an auxiliary patrol vessel under command of Lt (RCN) Robert Pope, was the only Canadian Navy ship lost during the Great War. She went down with all hands only five days after the sinking of the *Sophia*. By November 2<sup>nd</sup> naval authorities had confirmed that she had capsized in a violent storm south of Cape Scott off the west

coast of Vancouver Island. Thirty-nine were lost including five boy sailors under training. Only one body, that of Able Seaman Wilfred Ebbs of Nelson, was ever recovered. Remarkably, the early onset of influenza in Victoria may well have saved a number of the regular crew who had fallen ill and had remained ashore.

These two maritime disasters that coincided with the armistice cast a decided pall over local celebrations. To further dampen spirits, the dreaded influenza epidemic reached Victoria. Likely carried by returning soldiers, the first major outbreak came in the cramped conditions of Willows camp where troops were gathering for the Siberian Expedition.

## The Siberian Expedition

In early August 1918, tucked away in the middle of the local paper, Victorians got their first hint that allied troops would be sent to Siberia. Just ten days later, it became clear that up to 4,000 Canadian troops would form part of that force.<sup>171</sup> Almost immediately, local authorities began to lobby for Victoria and Willows Camp or McCauley Plains to be a major concentration point. As early as August 17<sup>th</sup>, the lead editorial in the *Daily Colonist* demanded that “Victoria Should Act”.<sup>172</sup> After all Victoria was the closest major port and besides, troops were good for business. By late September, the BC infantry company that would form part of the force was training at Willows Camp. They had even composed a marching song.

**While we’re marching through Siberia**  
 Hurrah! Hurrah! We’re western to the core  
 Hurrah! Hurrah! We’re at home on any shore.  
 We’ll whip the Bolsheviks  
 And then we’ll ask for more.  
 While we’re marching through Siberia.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> *Daily Colonist*. Victoria, Aug 13, 1918, 8.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.* Aug 17, 1918, 4.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.* Oct 2, 1918, 17.

By mid October, the forces concentrated at Willows included two infantry battalions. The 260<sup>th</sup> Battalion was drawn largely from western Canada but including one company from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and PEI. About half were conscripts. The 259<sup>th</sup> battalion drew its troops largely from Ontario and Quebec. C and D Companies were drawn largely from Quebec City and Montreal, the hotbed of earlier anti conscription violence. Medical and dental units and a brigade headquarters fleshed out the troops.<sup>174</sup>

TABLE 16 - INFLUENZA DEATHS OCT 1918

	cases.	cases.	Dths.	Dths.
Hastings Park..	241	..	..	..
Coquitlam .....	396	83	31	8
Fairmont .....	195	29	5	2.6
Van Gen. Mil.				
Annex .....	17	2	..	..
Willows .....	278	..	..	..
Stadacona V.A.D.				
Hospital .....	45	14	8	17.7
Irving House ..	51	17	3	5.8
Work Point ....	61	8	3	4.9
Esquimalt .....	9	1	..	..
Resthaven .....	7	..	..	..
Qualicum .....	3	2	1	..
Total.				
Van. Island ..	454	42	15	3.3
Mainland .....	845	114	36	4.2
Grand total ...	1,299	156	51	3.9

In late September, a rather unwelcome presence appeared at Willows – influenza! The disease had initially made its presence felt in the east and it seems clear that the troops coming to establish the Siberian force brought the disease with them. By late October, the epidemic among soldiers was in full force with

454 cases on Vancouver Island and fifteen deaths. Nevertheless, the prompt response of military authorities and rapid identification and isolation of influenza cases established a pattern of response that would have significant impact on the somewhat later spread of the disease to the wider community.<sup>175</sup>

With the end of the war in Europe, there is little doubt that most of the troops assigned to the Siberian Force expected that they too would soon be able to return home. Although newspapers in Victoria had been supportive of the commitment to Siberia and provided thorough coverage of events, they also reported unfounded rumours of imminent disbandment of the force in late November.<sup>176</sup>

<sup>174</sup> Ibid. Oct 13, 1918, 5.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid. Nov 1, 1918, 10.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid. 26 Nov 1918, 5.

## SIBERIANS RECEIVE ROUSING "SEND-OFF"

Willows Camp Is Now Practically Deserted Following Departure Yesterday of 2,200 C.E.F. for Vladivostok.

The best send-off that has been given to any outgoing military unit since the departure for France in 1915 of some of the complete battalions formed here, was that given yesterday to the departing C.E.F. (Siberia). Colonel Swift and the major part of the 259th Battalion left last Saturday for Vladivostok, and the remainder of the brigade (some 2,200 strong) that has been stationed for the last three months at the Willows camp, embarked on the Blue Funnel liner *Proteus* yesterday for the same destination, ushered to the boat by the bands of the Foundation Company, H.M.S. Lancaster, and that of the Siberian force itself. The vessel sailed at 6:30 p.m.

When the 259<sup>th</sup> Battalion was mustered to depart on Saturday December 21<sup>st</sup> there was at least some active resistance, largely concentrated among conscripted troops from Quebec. There is little evidence to support the suggestion that this was primarily motivated by socialist sentiments. More likely it was simply a bunch of young men who, not unreasonably, felt that the war against Germany was over, the Siberian adventures were "not justified and useless for our country" and they should be allowed to go home.<sup>177</sup> Although much has been made of this event by historians of the left<sup>178</sup>, the newspapers of the day did not even comment. Of course, this may simply be a response to self imposed censorship as suggested by historian Ben Isitt or more likely that the event was not quite as dramatic as he has suggested. The following week when the balance of the

brigade departed, the *Colonist* reported a rousing send-off with troops singing Marching to Siberia to the cheers of crowds lining the street.<sup>179</sup>

The force would return to Canada in late spring 1919, without having engaged in any active combat operations. Most casualties incurred were due to illness and accident. On May 6<sup>th</sup>, the liner

<sup>177</sup> Benjamin Isitt. *From Victoria to Vladivostok: Canada's Siberian Expedition, 1917-19*. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), Appendix E, a letter of protest dated Dec 18, 1918 on behalf of 300 French Canadian soldiers of the 16<sup>th</sup> Brigade.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.* Chapter 5 Departure day.

<sup>179</sup> *Daily Colonist*, Victoria, Dec 27, 1918, 2.

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Monteagle stopped at the quarantine station to disembark 165 sick soldiers, about 15% of the 1073 aboard. Troops complained that they had been confined below decks to give the few civilian passengers free use of the promenade deck<sup>180</sup>. The balance of the Force would return some weeks later with little comment. The focus in Victoria had shifted to care for troops returning to Victoria from Europe and the challenges of resettlement.

## Influenza

Underlying all these events lay the threat of influenza. In many respects, Victoria would emerge as one of the most successful communities in the battle with the disease. In part, of course, this is due to the position of Victoria, both on an island, and very remote from the initial point of entry in eastern North America. Local health officials led by public health officer, Dr Arthur G. Price had ample opportunity to learn from the experience of others. By most accounts, the earliest outbreaks in Canada were in Quebec in early September 1918. By September 26<sup>th</sup>, Dr Price was advising Victorians of the appropriate precautions citing guidance from the Surgeon General of the United States. The newspaper article added some dramatic flair by suggesting that the epidemic might have been deliberately started by men landed from a German submarine.<sup>181</sup> By early October that guidance had been transformed by an order in council mandating severe restrictions on public gatherings that would remain in place until November 20<sup>th</sup>.<sup>182</sup> It is no surprise that the earliest major outbreaks took place among troops gathering for the Siberian force at Willows Camp. Fortuitously, the success of the military in dealing with this major outbreak gave Dr. Price and local medical facilities a good idea of how to handle the more widespread outbreak that was to follow. The October 10<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Colonist* that headlined “Victorious Allies Advancing”, also reported that the people of Victoria were complying with the order

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid. May 6, 1919, 5.

<sup>181</sup> *Daily Colonist*. Victoria, Sep 26, 1918, 4.

<sup>182</sup> For more fulsome coverage visit <http://spanishfluvictoriabc.com/>

against public gatherings without grumbling.<sup>183</sup> That grudging acceptance led to the closure of all public meeting places including churches, schools, theatres and arenas. Dr. Price was ever vigilant, chastising a local fund-raising event featuring “the human fly” for gathering a crowd even out-of-doors. He suggested that those in attendance were even more foolhardy than the performer for putting their lives at risk and encouraged stricter compliance with these stirring words:

Wake up! Realize that there is a war on, a war in our very midst, an epidemic of influenza. Do not sneer at the enemy. Do not belittle it by calling ‘Flu’. Give it its full name, be serious and realize that the undertakers are busy.<sup>184</sup>

Sporting events and even public funerals were banned. Casualty figures and stories of those who had fallen in that war became a regular feature in the newspaper. Despite those dire warnings not all were supportive. With the approaching armistice, local churches began to protest the ban on religious services. Led by Anglican Bishop Scholfield, a coalition of Victoria clergy formally protested the ban stating: “I believe that the inherent right within the British Empire to worship Almighty God corporately to be one which no legislature can take away wholly even for a time.”<sup>185</sup> The Bishop then proceeded to organize an outdoor inter-denomination Thanksgiving Service on Cathedral Hill to mark the armistice. He was joined by the Rev Dr. Clay of St Andrew’s Presbyterian Church at that event. Religious folk were not the only ones who ignored that ban. Even the rumour of Armistice on November 7<sup>th</sup> brought crowds into the streets and November 11 saw a full parade. Nevertheless, by this time most were cautious. Those who showed signs of illness kept to their beds, most avoided any indoor meetings. Signs were often posted on doors of homes of the sick. Even posters in Chinese were distributed in Victoria’s Chinatown. By November 20<sup>th</sup>, the worst was over. Dr. Price lifted the ban on public meetings while encouraging people to remain vigilant, noting the he would not hesitate to reimpose restrictions should the disease reappear. His note of caution was well taken. It would be New Years Eve

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<sup>183</sup> *Daily Colonist*. Victoria, Oct 10, 1918, 7.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid*. Nov 1, 1918, 7.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid*, Nov 10, 1918, 7.

before packed public gatherings once again became common. Perhaps it was that intimacy that led to a second outbreak. Restrictions were reapplied in January 1919 and again when a third wave of the disease struck in February 1920. Despite all this, Victoria, with a death rate of about 2.3 per thousand, weathered the storm remarkably well compared to other cities in North America.<sup>186</sup> Dr. Arthur Price is one of Victoria's greatest unsung heroes of the period of the Great War.

TABLE 17 INFLUENZA DEATHS IN MAJOR CITIES JAN 1919

*Influenza death rates of U.S. and Canadian cities from the beginning of the epidemic to January 31, 1919*

	DEATHS	DEATH RATE PER 1,000 POP /YR
Spokane	428	8.3
Seattle	1,328	11.1
Chicago	12,400	12.4
Portland	1,363	13.5
Toronto	2,284	14.3
New York City	27,362	14.4
Winnipeg	1,021	16.7
Los Angeles	2,969	17.0
Boston	5,771	19.1
Washington	2,892	20.8
Pittsburgh	4,972	22.9
San Francisco	3,616	23.1
Vancouver	795	23.3
Baltimore	4,358	23.6
Philadelphia	14,198	24.7

<sup>186</sup> Data extracted from a variety of sources <http://spanishfluvictoriabc.com/mortality-rates-of-other-cities/>

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## Conclusion

While most of Canada was focussed on the national election and conscription and the world focussed its attention on the final campaign of the hundred days and the end of the war, the people of Victoria were also concerned with local events. The war was never out of mind, rather it might be seen as an ever-present background to more pressing local events, particularly in 1918. Similarly, the issue of conscription and the 1917 election were closely followed. But in Victoria at least, these were not questions that gave rise to great debate. There was overwhelming support for both the Union government and the need for conscription. The few instances of resistance that were reported appear almost as curiosities – “Woman defends draft evaders – Exciting incident attends capture of slackers at head of Jervis Inlet – Bloodshed is narrowly averted.”<sup>187</sup>

The contrast is often striking. On November 12<sup>th</sup> newspapers reported “cheering thousands hear news that the war is at an end”. In the same edition Dr. Price “urges men to serve in fighting the flu”<sup>188</sup>. The following day there was news that the Princess Alice, dubbed “the ship of sorrows” had delivered the bodies of twenty-five victims of the Sophia sinking to a wharf side warehouse in Victoria<sup>189</sup>. In late December, the Board of Trade belatedly sent a congratulatory telegram to Sir Arthur Currie, prompted by the realization that many cities in eastern Canada had already done so. At the same meeting, the Board offered congratulations to Doctor Price for his handling of the influenza epidemic. Notes about returned soldiers and the on-going daily casualty lists, though decreasing in frequency, continued well into 1919.

Concerns about labour unrest sparked by the Ginger Goodwin affair likewise remained a constant theme. Unlike Toronto and Winnipeg however, labour unrest was viewed as something that

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<sup>187</sup> *Daily Colonist*, Victoria, Apr 2, 1918, 4.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid*, Nov 12, 1918, 5 and 8.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid*. Nov 13, 1919, 12.

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happened elsewhere. Although, in part this was due to a lack of solidarity in the union movement it also reflects a more generally conservative tone in the city.

Perhaps of greater importance is the potential for more detailed examinations that our expanded access to data suggests. For example, an examination of soldier medical records might allow historians of disease to track in some detail the prevalence of influenza among returning troops or the impact of other diseases like pneumonia. Indexed soldier data might also support a more fulsome examination of changing enlistment patterns by age, marital status or religion.

## Chapter 6 – The Settler Community

### A View from the Top

Having set the stage in the city at large, I will now focus more closely on the smaller more intimate lived communities that have the greatest influence on the decisions made by their members. I will start that closer examination by looking at the wealthy and powerful of the dominant settler community first through the eyes of the Victoria Golf Club. The club, established in 1893, is the oldest in Canada still on its original site and perhaps the oldest west of the Mississippi.<sup>190</sup> As early as 1906, a golfer's special streetcar connected the course to downtown Victoria. Sited on the waterfront in the heart of the rapidly developing and very exclusive Oak Bay, the club attracted a wealthy set of members from the outset. By 1903 members were able to purchase the land originally leased from the wealthy Pemberton family. With the outbreak of war and the club's proximity to the Willows Camp members would have been intimately aware of local military developments.



38. CAPT H. A. MCGREGOR

Although I only have detailed data on thirteen names on the Club Honour role, club annual reports provide a good overview of the response. As early as April 1915, thirty-seven members were on active service. Two of the first to die had also been prominent members of Victoria's prestigious Union Club. Herbert Bromley had been the club secretary. James Herrick McGregor, a long-time golf club member had also been serving as President of the Union Club at the outbreak of war. McGregor had been active in Currie's 50<sup>th</sup> Gordon Highlanders as honorary paymaster. When the call to the

<sup>190</sup> <https://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=18284&pid=0>

colours came, he enlisted to join the 16<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Canadian Scottish). Bromley would quickly follow, and both would die within days of each other at Ypres in April 1915.<sup>191</sup> In the report of his death, the *Daily Colonist* describes McGregor as a “widely esteemed “member of the community and prominent philanthropist. Clearly McGregor’s idea of a paymaster’s position was not in the rear trenches, but forward with his troops when the battle was joined. The parallels with the Union Club extend much further. Six of the twelve names on the Golf Club’s honour roll are also found among the twenty-three on the honour roll of the Union Club.<sup>192</sup> Most on both honour rolls served as officers but for junior officers that often increased rather than reduced the risks of death or injury.

TABLE 18 - VICTORIA GOLF CLUB MEMBERSHIP

	April 1915	April 1916	April 1918
Men	226	160	246
Ladies	181	124	174
Total	407	284	420
On Active Service	37	65	67

<sup>193</sup> Data extracted from Club Annual Reports – Oak Bay Archives

The other notable death in 1915, of course, was that of James Dunsmuir with the sinking of the *Lusitania*. By April 1916 the number of members who had enlisted reached sixty-five. Given this very early loss of members to active service, it is not surprising that as early as April 1916 the club approved the idea of establishing a prominent honour roll. Only two would enlist after April 1916 and one of those had been serving as a medical officer in the militia since the outbreak of war.

But there were other impacts as well. The finances of the club were of course dependent on members. Loss of members, and in particular, the decision to forgive payment of dues to those on

<sup>191</sup> Paul L. Bissley, *The Union Club of British Columbia: 100 years, 1879-1979*. (Vancouver, BC: Evergreen Press, 1979), 97.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid*, 106.

<sup>193</sup> Service Records for Lt. H. A. Bromley and Capt J.H. McGregor, Library and Archives Canada

active service had a telling effect. As a corrective, the club made the bold decision to admit women members in July 1917. One of the first to be admitted was Lily Philbrick, the widow of Captain B Philbrick who had been killed on the Somme in the fall of 1916. It was to prove a wise decision. Lily would serve as women's captain in 1919 and 1920 and win the club championship six times. By April 1918 the influx of women members had largely redressed the membership challenge. Unfortunately, at the same time prohibition ate into bar profits. One must wonder however if the same "secret stock" that bolstered the Union Club<sup>194</sup> may have found some fertile ground among golfers.



39. LILY PHILBRICK - SIX TIMES CLUB CHAMPION.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Paul L. Bissley, *The Union Club of British Columbia: 100 years, 1879-1979*. (Vancouver, BC: Evergreen Press, 1979), 97.

<sup>195</sup> Photo on display in the Victoria Golf Club

The club was also challenged to retain key members of staff during the war. In the summer of 1917, T.S. Gallop, the popular golf professional at the club resigned to join the Royal Flying Corps. Although they could not hold his position open, the club purchased all his stock and gave him every assurance that they would make best efforts to see him well placed at the end of his service.<sup>196</sup> Regrettably young Cadet Gallop would die from complications arising from measles later that year while still under training in Toronto.<sup>197</sup> It is interesting that Gallop's name does not appear on the club honour roll. One not only had to die on active service but also had to be "a member". Although in the case of young James Dunsmuir who had resigned his commission when he sailed on the ill-fated Lusitania, an exception seems to have been made. With the construction of the new club house after the war, the handsome bronze roll of honour was placed in a prominent position over the mantle of the fireplace in the main lounge.

The Club also reached out to the broader community to provide substantial financial support for the war effort. As but one example, in 1918, the Club hosted a Thanksgiving golf tournament in support of the Red Cross that raised over \$2,600. This would be the equivalent of more than six years pay for a private soldier at the front. Of this amount, over \$1,700 came directly from donations by the club and individual members. As was the case in most such fund-raising efforts, women played a leading role in organizing the event. It seems likely that revenue from "language fund fines" for use of inappropriate language arose from the fertile imagination of the lady members of the club.<sup>198</sup> During the war and in its immediate aftermath, the club also played host to an array of visiting military officers. Most notably, the club installed Lieutenant General Sir Arthur Currie as an honorary member when he visited Victoria in 1919.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> Golf Club Fonds copy of letter to Gallop letter dated 28 July 1917

<sup>197</sup> *Daily Colonist*. Jun 2, 1918, 22

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.* Oct 17, 1918, 9.

<sup>199</sup> *Committee Meeting Minutes*. Nov 18, 1919, Oak Bay Archives Golf Club fonds

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What is clear from this brief glimpse of life among the well-to-do members of the Victoria Golf club, is that they not only shared the city's general support for the war but were also prepared to lead by example. Financial contributions, the sixty-seven members who saw active service, and the twelve names emblazoned on the Club's Roll of Honour suggest that among the elites of Victoria the concept of "noblesse oblige" was alive and well during the Great War.

## Onward Christian Soldiers

Having glimpsed the city from the perspective of the social elites in the golf club our focus shifts to a richer pool of data to look at the dominant settler community through the eyes of two church communities in Victoria – a Presbyterian Church in the heart of downtown Victoria and to test our observations, a small Anglican Church on the rural fringes of the city.

### St Andrew's Presbyterian Church

On the north wall of St Andrew's Presbyterian Church in downtown Victoria hangs a framed document, now yellowed with age, inscribed with over two hundred names of those who served during the Great War. Centred on the same wall is a bronze plaque, unveiled in 1922 by Joseph Paul Cesaire Joffre, Marechal of France with the names of twenty-nine who died. St Andrew's was a church at the very centre of political and economic power in Victoria. It was the church of the wealthy Dunsmuirs who had donated the prominent rose window overlooking Douglas Street. John Robson, editor of the newspaper and later premier had chaired the building committee in 1890.

In the annual report of 1913, the congregation recorded 735 on the church roll. Ninety new members had joined in that year.<sup>200</sup> The church school had an average attendance of over one hundred fifty and the congregation was actively seeking a second minister. The Rev. Dr. Leslie Clay was nearing

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<sup>200</sup> Robert Burns McMicking, Clerk of Session. St Andrew's Presbyterian Church Victoria, *Annual Report-1913* .2.

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his twentieth year in the pulpit. The Presbyterian College at McGill University had recently recognized his contribution to the national church with the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity. Other members of the Church including the Premier, Sir Richard McBride, were prominent in the political, social and economic life of the community.

In churches governed by elected sessions and presbyteries, the documents of the annual General Assembly provide a useful background for consideration of local congregations. As one of the largest Presbyterian Churches in Western Canada, it is clear that St Andrew's played a significant role in church affairs. In the debates over church union that carried on throughout the war, Dr. Clay the minister at St Andrew's played a leading role. In 1925, after more than a decade of debate, two thirds of the congregations of the Presbyterian Church agreed to a union with the Methodist and Congregationalist Churches to form the United Church of Canada. Dr. Clay was elected Moderator of the General Assembly by the one third of the congregations that rejected church union.<sup>201</sup> He was also the clergy representative of the Victoria Presbytery at the 1916 General Assembly. It is reasonable to assume then that consensus opinions taken during meetings of the General Assembly would reflect the position of the minister and session of St Andrew's.

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church meets annually with sessions typically extending over a full week. In attendance were equal numbers of clergy and lay representatives from Presbyteries across the country. In the summer of 1915, the Assembly met in Kingston at Queen's University. On June 4<sup>th</sup>, the Assembly passed without dispute a resolution on the war that in part read: "We consider that the provocation of this conflict has been a crime against humanity and that the force which is arrayed against us in ruthless and savage warfare, threatens the progress of Christianity and the very existence of civilization." Lest there be any doubt about the responsibility of the church, and its

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<sup>201</sup> The Kirk That Faith Built. 68.

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members, the resolution added: "We urgently appeal to the members of the church and to all our fellow citizens to count no service too difficult nor any sacrifice too great that may be necessary to secure final victory to our arms"<sup>202</sup> Today it seems tragic that similar resolutions of divinely inspired support were made by other reformed churches in support of the German cause all in the name of "the prince of peace". Later the Assembly approved loyal addresses to the King and the Governor General that reaffirmed "our absolute conviction of the righteousness of the cause for which Your Majesty's forces and their allies are so valiantly and self-sacrificingly contending."

These resolutions of the national church were not made in the first heady days of the war when some may have believed the troops would be home by Christmas but rather in the full knowledge of the impact on church members. Encouraged by their church and strong links to the Empire, twenty eight percent of the First Canadian Contingent were Presbyterians<sup>203</sup>, almost double their representation in the population as a whole. This national pattern of fulsome support for the war continued to be reflected in church reports. In their report to the General Assembly in the summer of 1916, Presbyterian College in Montreal noted that fourteen students had enlisted during the 1914-1915 academic year and a further 10 out of a class of 43 had "joined the colours" since October 1915.<sup>204</sup> Even in the reports of missionary work, there is evidence of the impact of the war with a note that seven sons of missionaries "all who were old enough" had enlisted for overseas service.<sup>205</sup>

Within the church, the support for the war was not merely nationalism in clerical garb but rather part of a broader social evangelism movement. In the 1916 report under the heading "The Great Social

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<sup>202</sup> *Acts and Proceedings of the Presbyterian Church in Canada 1915*, 56.

<sup>203</sup> Colonel A. Fortesque Duguid. *Official History of the Canadian Forces in the Great War 1914-1919*, General Series Volume 2. (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1918), Appendix 86.

<sup>204</sup> *Acts and Proceedings of the Presbyterian Church in Canada 1916*, 167.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid*, 150.

Awakening” along with support for women’s suffrage, workers’ compensation and support for labour unions these stirring words appear:

The highest good for the greatest number is the supreme consideration in testing social institutions, social movements, and social legislation. ...Wealth, liberty and life itself must be surrendered and are being freely surrendered for the general good in the Great War. ...Christian charity brought Britain into the war in defence of bruised, burning, bleeding Belgium. We are fighting for the rights of others who are unable to fight for themselves against a powerful foe.<sup>206</sup>

By the summer of 1917, the concern has shifted to care for returning soldiers and the question of conscription. Support for the Great War Veterans Association and the appeal for pension and employment benefits were at the centre of church plans. Other proposals like the appeal to secure for our soldiers “relief from the fierce temptations of alcohol and prostitution” might not have received a ringing endorsement from many at the front<sup>207</sup>. The resolution on conscription demonstrated unwavering support for the policy of the Borden government. At the height of the debate, the church spoke with conviction:

“The Assembly desires to express its approval of every legitimate effort to rouse the laggards among the youth of Canada to a consciousness of their duty, and to enroll those who are available as soldiers in a great crusade for the world’s freedom. The Assembly endorses the policy of selective conscription as applied to the battlefield and of the universal conscription of the talent, wealth, and energy of the Canadian people.”<sup>208</sup>

Although this picture from the highest court of the church provides a useful background, to understand the impact on the church in Victoria require a closer look. This examination must start with the names on the wall of the church supported by two excellent archival sources. As church records note the date of death, I was able to construct a full data set for the twenty-nine names on the prominent bronze plaque by using the virtual war memorial database maintained by Veterans Affairs<sup>209</sup>.

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<sup>206</sup> Acts and Proceedings 1916, 13.

<sup>207</sup> Acts and Proceedings 1917, 34.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid, 36.

<sup>209</sup> <http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/collections/virtualmem>

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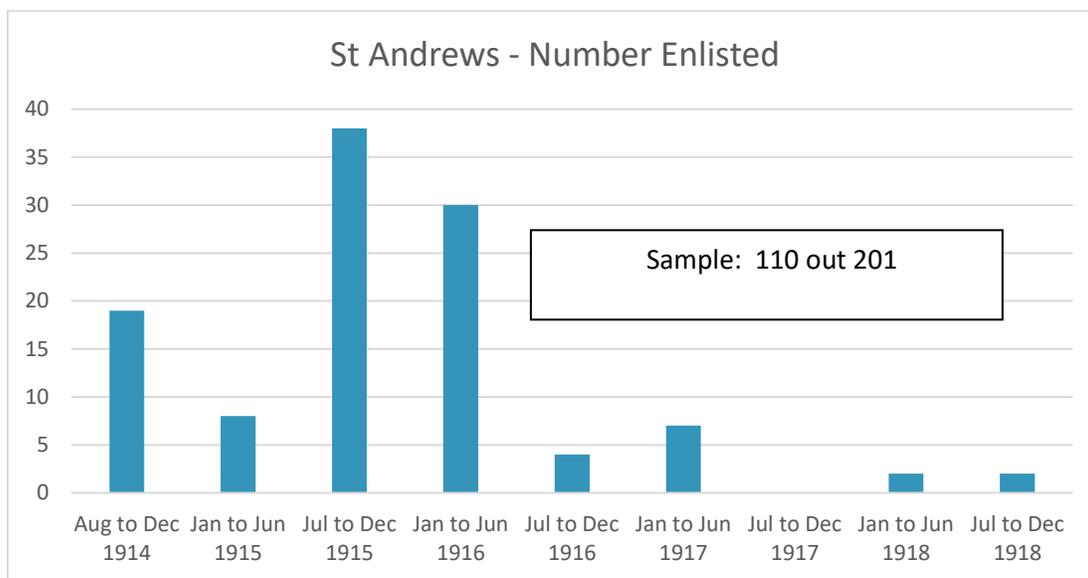
This data set provides rank and unit at the time of death plus a service number that provides a reliable link to attestation papers and other records.

Library and Archives Canada provides a reasonably complete record of all those who served during the Great War. Typically, the on-line records now provide both the attestation papers recorded at the time of enlistment and the entire service file including pay, medical and disciplinary records. These documents usually include date of birth and enlistment, trade, previous service, place of birth and often, place of residence and next-of-kin details. For many names, the task is simple, but for those with common names, it can be time consuming and for others certainty is impossible. For example, there are over 2300 entries under the name "Campbell" and 274 under "D Campbell". For this search, a second initial allows the identification of Gunner Douglas Norman Campbell. He was a young surveyor from the church and member of the local militia artillery regiment who enlisted in September 1914.

The ideal, of course, would a complete data set for all those from Victoria who saw active service. Despite the practical challenges noted, our data set includes over half of the two hundred identified on the St Andrew's Honour Roll and all those who were killed. With this substantial, albeit not random sample, some early patterns are obvious. Most are young with an average age of twenty-five. The youngest, 18-year-old Harold Pearce, enlisted in April 1917 and would be killed in action during the intense fighting of the last hundred days of the war. One of the oldest at age 45 was James McIntyre. He was a married miner who enlisted in 1915 and survived after serving two years in France as a private soldier in the 47<sup>th</sup> Battalion. Although it is impossible to know the circumstances that led any of these men to enlist, it is not difficult to imagine that the pressure in the Kirk was growing following the pronouncements of the General Assembly. Helen McIntosh, a graduate nurse and the only woman in the data set, enlisted in the Army Medical Corps in early 1917. What is equally striking is that following the initial rush to join, the peak enlistment period was after the news of the heavy casualties at Ypres in

the spring of 1915. For the congregation of St Andrew's, the reports of death also included three of their own. This follows the general pattern that was seen for the city as a whole.

**TABLE 19 - ST ANDREW'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ENLISTMENTS**



The list of occupations provides some hints that the economic downturn in the building and real estate business may have influenced early recruitment. Among those who enlisted in 1914, there is a contractor, plumber, joiner, shipping clerk and surveyor. All may well have felt the impact of economic hard times. Examining the list as-a-whole however, there is nothing to suggest that economic factors were a primary reason for enlistment. Occupations include everything from lawyers to musicians, tradesmen farmers, clerks, bookkeepers and labourers.

Where the data differs from the more general Canadian pattern is in the enlistment of those born in Canada. In the First Canadian Contingent as a whole, only 30 % were born in Canada<sup>210</sup> while for

<sup>210</sup> Duguid, Official History of the Canadian Forces in the Great War 1914-1919, Vol 1, Appendix 86

the St Andrew's sample 42% of those who enlisted in 1914 were Canadian born<sup>211</sup>. For the war as a whole, almost half from St Andrew's were born in Canada and half of those were born in Victoria. Even for those born in Britain, many of the younger men had parents living in Canada suggesting that they arrived as children. Again, it seems unlikely that the initial flood of recruits in Victoria represented a primarily British response.

Most striking of all is the total number from St Andrew's who enlisted. Using the 1911 census data and assuming a population of Victoria of 32,000 on the outbreak of war, it is possible to derive the size of the potential pool of recruits. In 1911 there was significant gender imbalance in BC with only 65 women per hundred men in urban centres. In the target age group (20-29) almost 30% were married. In the 30-39 cohort, the percentage jumps to 70%. 57% of the male population in 1911 were between age 15 and 40. Applying these ratios to St Andrew's, it is estimated that there might be a maximum of 270 males between 15 and 40. Of these 24% would be married leaving a pool of single males of 205. Given that some would not have met minimum medical standards, it seems evident that almost every available unmarried male in the congregation enlisted. Two thirds of our sample enlisted before the end of 1915. By the end of the second year of the war, enlistment from the church had likely fallen to one or two a month. Of the 1917 cohort, most were in their early twenties. Thus, the decline in numbers enlisting in 1917 and 1918 cannot be viewed as flagging support for the war but rather the exhaustion of the available pool of recruits.

The pattern of deaths on the honour roll brings no surprises. The first from St Andrew's to die was 24 year-old Private James Henderson who fell at Ypres on April 24<sup>th</sup> 1915. Although born in Scotland, Henderson had come to Canada as a child and had attended school in Vancouver where his

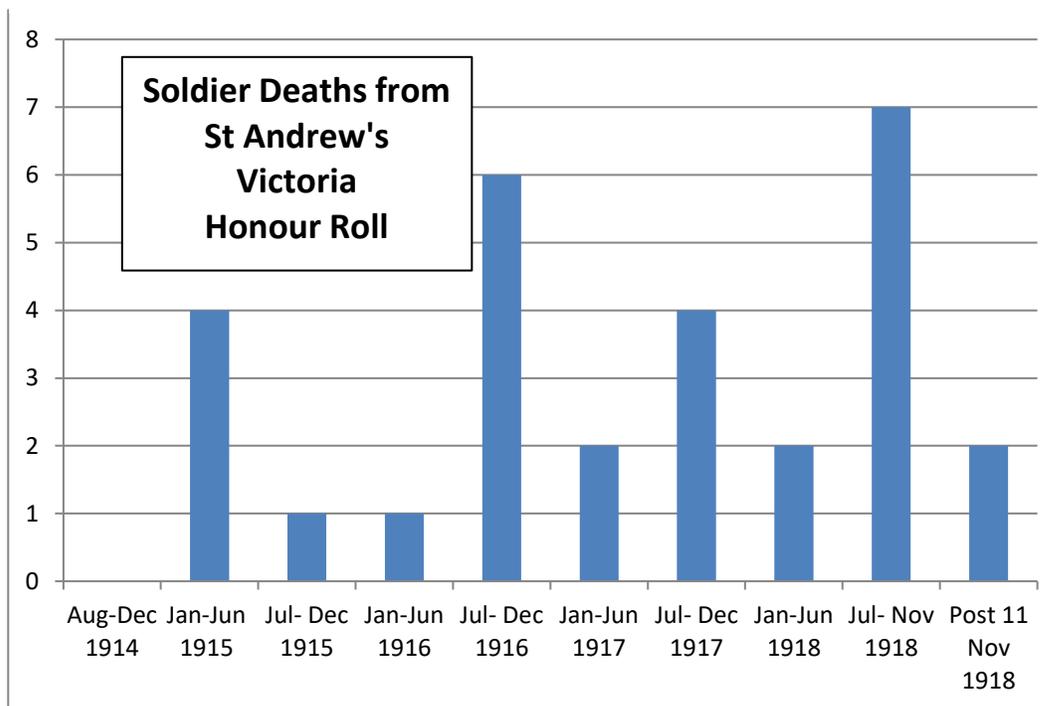
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<sup>211</sup> *Canada Year Book 1914* page 65 using 1911 census data reports 10.8% of the general populace as born in Britain and 77.9% born in Canada. For BC, 27% were born in Britain and 43% were Canadian born

parents still lived. His father, 45 year-old Peter Henderson, would also enlist before the end of the year.

He too would be killed in action. <sup>212</sup>

TABLE 20 - SOLDIER DEATHS FROM ST ANDREW'S



On April 29<sup>th</sup>, headlines in the *Daily Colonist* reported “Sixteenth Battalion Suffers Severely in Holding Back German Forces”. The following day casualty lists with photographs of many of the dead appeared on the front page. Although the language of these reports is clearly heroic with words like “there was no sign of fear” the awful reality that “Friday night 300 out of 1200 answered their names” could not be disguised. Three members of the Kirk serving with the 16<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Canadian Scottish) would die before the end of May at Ypres. This peak in the first half of 1915 with the battles at Ypres was repeated in the fall of 1916 with the Somme and again with Vimy in the spring of 1917. In the newspaper coverage of major battles, I find support for Vance’s thesis that at least some components of

<sup>212</sup> Service Records for James and Peter Henderson, Library and Archives Canada

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the Canadian myth were post-war constructs. In April 1917, press reports give no indication that Vimy Ridge would emerge as most remembered battle of the war. On April 11<sup>th</sup>, under the banner headline “Famous Hindenburg Line Turned by British Army” there is but a small sub heading that notes “Vimy Ridge Cleared”.<sup>213</sup> For St Andrew’s at least, the impact of Vimy was muted. None of the 29 died in the main assault.

What is most striking is the concentration of deaths in the waning months of the war. Seven of the twenty-nine on the plaque died in the last Hundred Days as the Canadian Corps spearheaded the advance to Mons. From early August when the final advance commenced until the armistice on November 11<sup>th</sup>, the Canadian Corps suffered over 45,000 casualties.<sup>214</sup> Often depicted as a great triumph of arms, the bloody toll of the Hundred Days was felt in full measure by the Kirk of St Andrew’s in downtown Victoria.

The press coverage of the war remained supportive but did little to disguise the reality of war. Casualty lists were a regular feature as were maps of the front. By the spring of 1915, a regular feature titled “The Great European War” appeared. The three-page section covered a wide range of topics of both local and national interest. The April 25<sup>th</sup> edition included comments on the economic impact of the war, the war at sea, the Russian Campaign and war in the air. There are also articles of local interest like “Miss Dunsmuir has hard day’s work”, reporting on her relief work overseas. This review of press coverage supports Miller’s argument that people were generally well informed about the war.

A review of Session minutes gives added evidence of on-going support throughout the war. Women took the lead in fund-raising throughout the war both in the church and in the community. A variety of fund-raising events were held in the church. In July 1915, the women of the church hosted a

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<sup>213</sup> *Daily Colonist*. Victoria, April 11, 1917.

<sup>214</sup> Tim Cook. *Shock Troops*, 579.

social garden party as a fund-raising project to provide comforts for the troops. In October, a rehearsal for a presentation of the Messiah in aid of the Patriotic Fund was approved. In September 1916 Dr. A Proctor, late of Salonika spoke on behalf of the Fund. By April 1917, fund-raising moved to centre stage in the church with Miss Ward speaking during Sunday service and again on Monday evening on the subject of her visits to the men in the trenches. Funds raised went to the Red Cross for field comforts for the soldiers. The pattern was repeated the following year, with Miss Lillian Dillingham singing a solo during Sunday service and then making a presentation on her work in France the following day.<sup>215</sup> The local newspapers are replete with similar examples

To maintain contact with the troops, the church maintained a bulletin board at Willows Camp and sent outreach letters to soldiers overseas. By 1916, the updated honour roll became a standing part of the quarterly report of the Board of Managers and the first memorial plaque was unveiled on Patriotic Sunday June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1916.<sup>216</sup>

The work of the church was part of the much broader fund-raising effort in the community. In the early months of the war, the Provincial Chapter of the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire (IODE) took up the challenge. A new chapter to support the 50<sup>th</sup> Gordon Highlanders was formed on September 9<sup>th</sup>, 1914. By the end of October, the IODE had recruited six hundred new members. The newspaper trumpeted the call; "Your King and your country need you was not only a call for men to fight but to the women of the Empire"<sup>217</sup> Fund-raising varied from raffles to concerts, sporting events and fall fairs. Victory Bond drives added to the demand on the parishioner's purse. In 1917, Victorian's

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<sup>215</sup>Session Fonds - St Andrew's Presbyterian Church Archives 1900-1920

<sup>216</sup> Board of Management Fonds, St Andrew's Presbyterian Church Archives

<sup>217</sup> *Daily Colonist*. Victoria, Oct 27, 1914.

purchased over two and a half million dollars in bonds. The following year the campaign topped three million.<sup>218</sup>

Although the support of the church was unstinting, there is no evidence that it was linked to the more fundamentalist elements of the social evangelism movement evident at national level. On two occasions during the war, the Session specifically rejected invitations to support campaigns by American Evangelist Billy Sunday and Dr. F.E. Oliver. Although Sunday's vocal support of the war might have been welcome, his theatrical style clearly did not resonate with the conservative congregation of St Andrew's.<sup>219</sup>

Other factors would also play a role in enlistment patterns. Perhaps most notable is the behavior of others in the immediate community. For the Kirk of St Andrew's, two examples might serve to illustrate the point. One of the earliest to enlist was young Blaney Scott<sup>220</sup>. By any measure, Blaney



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<sup>218</sup> Ibid, Nov 12, 1918.

<sup>219</sup> *Session Fonds – St Andrews Presbyterian Church Archives*, July 11, 1917

<sup>220</sup> <http://acitygoestowar.ca/the-archive/documents-by-topic/people/the-scott-family/>

was a rather heroic figure. At just shy of six feet tall, he was a striking figure. A cub reporter with the local newspaper, he was also a notable athlete who excelled in rowing, boxing and rugby. In addition, he was active with youth groups, leading camping expeditions down the Gorge waterway which, at the time was largely undeveloped beyond the Point Ellice Bridge. Blaney's enlistment in November 1914 and subsequent service was closely watched by both the newspaper and his friends in the church. He would later earn both a Military Cross and Distinguished Flying Cross. His influence of course would extend far beyond the Kirk. In this photo taken on the front porch of the Scott home young Aubrey Harding is seated on the left. He was a Roman Catholic, who at age 14, who joined the 2<sup>nd</sup> CMR with Blaney. At the time of his enlistment he was noted as being only 5 ft 3 in tall with a 29 in chest at full expansion and was enlisted as a bugler for the regiment. As he was well-known and the son of a retired British Army officer, the attesting officer boldly declared that his "apparent age" was 18. He served several years with his regiment in France before the imperial forces began to remove such under-age soldiers from the line late in the war. It is not until June 1918 that we find a note on his file - "Not available for overseas until Mar 2, 1919", his 19<sup>th</sup> birthday. Others in the Scott family circle were also actively engaged in supporting the war effort. Blaney's sisters were members of the Victoria Sugar Plums a group of young women who produced sweets to send to troops at the front.<sup>221</sup>

Our second example might be titled "the Campbells are Coming", after that familiar pipe tune of clan Campbell. In this case, the senior Campbell was the Rev. Captain John Campbell. After serving twenty years as the minister of First Presbyterian Church, John retired, and in the custom in Presbyterian Churches left his parish to join the Kirk of St Andrew's with his four sons. "Retirement" meant joining the newly formed Gordon Highlanders as chaplain. He was an active participant in all their activities from route marches to ceremonial parades. Two sons enlisted in 1914 and two more followed in early

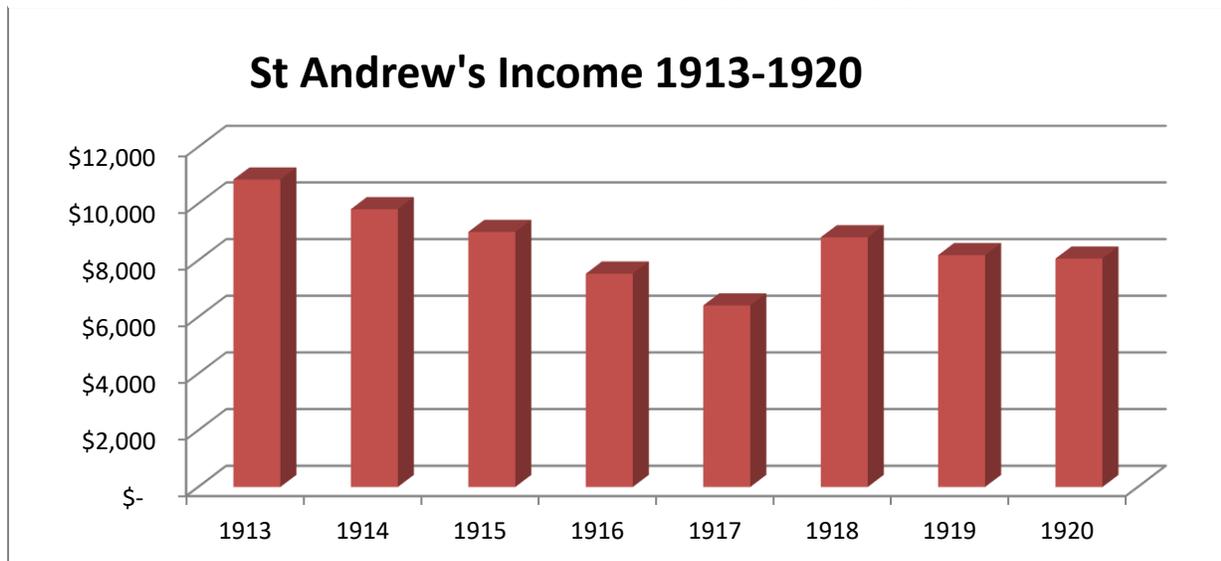
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<sup>221</sup> *Daily Colonist*, Victoria, Nov 29, 1917, 6.

1915. In July of that year, a lengthy article in the *Daily Colonist* described the Rev. Capt. John Campbell as “a true patriot with four sons wearing the King’s uniform. It is difficult to imagine a more compelling example for the congregation.”<sup>222</sup>

But what of the impact of the demands of the war on the other activities of the church? The financial reports<sup>223</sup> reflect both the loss of contributing members and the diversion of contributions to

TABLE 21 - ST ANDREW'S INCOME 1913-1920



41. DATA EXTRACTED FROM ANNUAL REPORTS OF ST ANDREW'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH VICTORIA.

other war relief efforts. By the low point at the end of 1917, income had fallen to less than 60% of the pre-war high. The minister’s annual stipend had been reduced from \$3500 to \$3000. There was an overdraft at the bank and local improvement taxes had been unpaid for two years. The church was not simply asking others to sacrifice to support the war effort, it too was sharing the burden of the war.

While St Andrew’s was facing financial difficulty, others in the community were not. The difficult economic conditions of 1914 had been largely eliminated by the war. The local newspapers show almost every imaginable business linking its product to the war effort. As early as October 1914, the press reported that a local firm would provide blankets, shirts, socks and other wearing apparel for

<sup>222</sup> *Daily Colonist*, Victoria, Jul 4, 1915, 14.

<sup>223</sup> Data extracted from Annual Reports in St. Andrew’s Archives

troops.<sup>224</sup> Local firms urged their customers to be both profitable and patriotic by purchasing Canadian and British goods. In 1915 “Very Smart Military Suits for Ladies” were touted as the latest style<sup>225</sup>. In 1917 an advertisement that boldly declares “Bovril Gives Strength to Win”.<sup>226</sup> Local suppliers benefited from the construction of ranges at Cattle Point and the military camps at Willows fairground.

The end of the war brought not relief but further agony as the influenza epidemic struck in full force. The Church was closed both for Sunday worship and other meetings in mid-October 1918 and again in January. The Board of Managers cancelled all meetings in December. In early 1919, the church directed its attention to memorials and support for returned soldiers. There was some recovery in church finances as the war ended, but it would be some years before the debts of the church would be cleared. By 1920, the congregation was finally able to afford an assistant for Dr. Clay. The records show that they hired a theology student who was “a returned man who was working with our soldiers in France”. In 1922, with the unveiling of the bronze plaque that opened this scene, the era of the Great War drew to a close for St Andrew’s.

### St Luke’s Anglican Church

In order to test the hypothesis that people in agricultural communities were somewhat less likely to enlist for active service, I will shift our focus from the large downtown church of St Andrew’s to the rural fringe of the city and one of the smaller parishes in the Anglican Diocese of British Columbia with an honour roll of ninety-four names. Like the Presbyterian Church, the Anglican Church at the national level expressed strong support for the war and contributed a disproportionate number of

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<sup>224</sup> *Daily Colonist*. Victoria, Oct 18, 1914.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid*, Apr 20, 1915.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid*, Apr 8, 1917.

chaplains. Melissa Davidson writing about the Anglican Church in the Great War quotes Archdeacon Cody's stirring words from the spring of 1916:

A world is in arms; civilization is being threatened; our Empire and all the ideals for which it stands is in the balance... As certainly as Christ arose... so from the toil and struggle of time shall goodness, truth, purity, love come forth victorious by the same power by which Christ rose from the dead...<sup>227</sup>

The parish of St Luke's, however, was about as far removed from the downtown core of the city as possible. Perched on the dominant Cedar Hill overlooking the rich farmland of the surrounding plains, St. Luke's traced its roots to a small mission church established in 1862. The core of the church building that still stands today dates to 1887 and by 1891 a full-time parish priest was in place.<sup>228</sup> A small cross is inscribed against only eight of those 92 names on the Parrish roll of honour indicating that "He gave his life for his country"<sup>229</sup>. Of these, I have identified the files of fifty-two, including all those who died. I have also added one notable exception who is not included on the roll of honour posted on the wall of St Luke's. The Rev. J.D. MacKenzie-Naughton arrived as the parish priest in 1916 but by 1918 he had requested leave to "engage in war service in Europe". His records indicate that he and his wife were living in the rectory at the time and that despite expectations of service in Europe, he would be despatched with the Siberian Expeditionary Force in November 1918 to serve as the Sergeant Clerk for the Chaplains attached to the force. On his return to Canada the following year, he resettled in Hamilton. In the inter-war period, he would be promoted Honorary Captain and serve as the Chaplain of the Prince of Wales Own Regiment in Kingston. Perhaps he is not recorded at St Luke's because he never served in Europe or because of some dissatisfaction over the circumstances of his departure so soon after being appointed.

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<sup>227</sup> Melissa Davidson, "The Anglican Church in the Great War" chapter 6 in Gordon Heath (ed), *Canadian Churches and the First World War*. 120.

<sup>228</sup> History of St Luke's Anglican Church, 13-14.

<sup>229</sup> Honour Roll displayed on the wall of St. Luke's Anglican Church.

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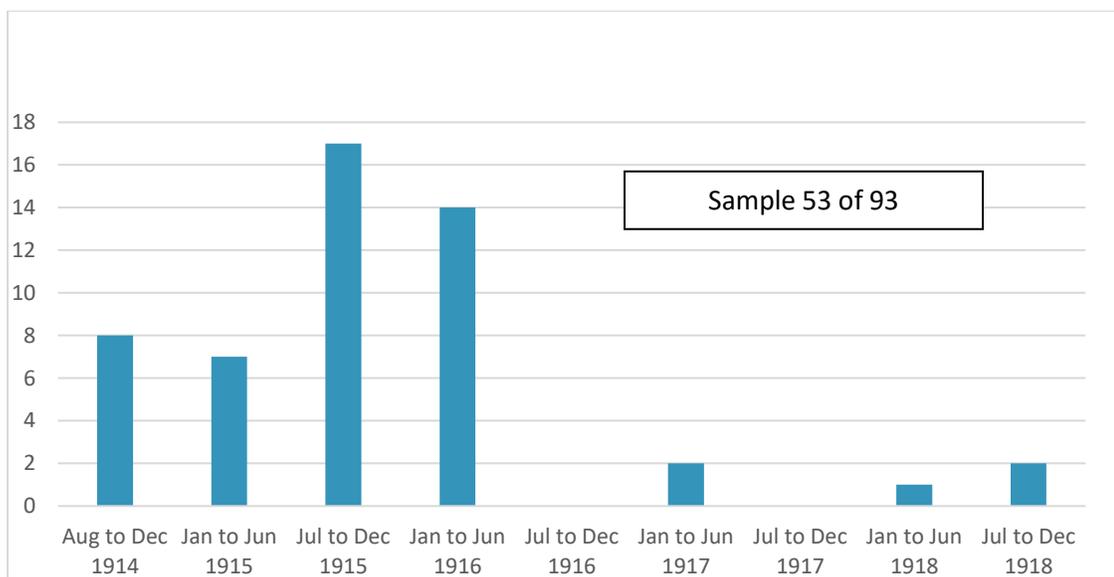
Although there are no remaining financial records, it is evident that the small parish on Cedar Hill also suffered the same sort of financial challenges experienced by the larger downtown church. The ladies of the parish established a Women's Auxiliary in the spring of 1915. There were regular donations to the General Pledge fund to support the war and regular donations of clothing articles. The church hall was also the site of fund-raising events. Just after Christmas in 1914, the Rev Henry Collison the rector of St Luke's welcomed a packed house to the parish hall for a patriotic concert to raise funds for dependents of soldiers. Later the hall provided space for the Mt Tolmie Branch of the Red Cross. Like St Andrew's, the added demand for charitable giving combined with the loss of regular contributors absent on military service had a significant impact of parish finances. By the end of the war St Luke's was in arrears in paying both municipal taxes and on their contribution to Synod<sup>230</sup>

The pattern of enlistment from St Luke's appears to be very similar to that of St Andrew's and the general pattern for the city. Although there is no accurate census of the numbers in the congregation the parish history notes that the 120 seats in the pews were not meeting the needs of the congregation before the war. Given the pattern of multiple services in Anglican churches, it is not unreasonable to assume a congregation of 250 to 300 with virtually every eligible male in uniform.

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<sup>230</sup> *History of St Luke's Anglican Church*, 22.

TABLE 22 - ENLISTMENTS FROM ST LUKE'S



Like St Andrew's, almost all were volunteers, the sole exception being 22-year-old Fred Varney. As a gas engineer and mechanic, it is likely that most would have viewed his work as essential on the home front during the early years of the war. He was enrolled as a conscript in January 1918 and released one year later having spent much of his time on what is described in his file as "conditional leave" without further explanation. That it was his good fortune to never serve overseas simply adds to the puzzle over why his name was included on the roll of honour and that of the Rev. MacKenzie-Naughton omitted.

As in St Andrew's, there are also patterns of family influence. There are three Frampton brothers and three other sets of two brothers. Basil Frampton, at just 19, was the first to enlist on the outbreak of war in September 1914. His younger brother Eric followed in January 1915 although he was still underage. Like others in Victoria, Eric reported his correct date of birth and was noted by the medical examiner as having an apparent age of 16 years two months. Perhaps it was his six-years-service with the school cadet corps that convinced the Commanding Officer of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Mounted Rifles to accept him. Finally, the oldest brother Maurice enlisted in October 1915. He had served with the artillery militia since the outset of the war. With the move to reduce the size of the

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home guard in 1915, he was called to be part of a draft of 50 men to relieve British troops in the rather idyllic post with garrison artillery in St Lucia in the British West Indies.<sup>231</sup>

Again, there is a clear pattern of support for the war from the clergy. Herbert and Arthur Collison, sons of Archdeacon William Collison of Naas River and nephews of the Rev. Henry Collison, rector of St Luke's, were among the first to enlist in November 1914. Both had been members of the 88<sup>th</sup> Victoria Fusiliers before the war. Herbert, the older brother aged 26, was a medical student. Although he was first enrolled as a private in the 16<sup>th</sup> Battalion, he was soon transferred to the Medical Corps and later commissioned in the Royal Navy. Arthur, two years younger, also started with the 16<sup>th</sup> Battalion. By the fall of 1916, he too had been commissioned from the ranks and posted to the newly formed Canadian Machine Gun Corps.<sup>232</sup>

Only two features appear unusual in our data set. Despite the rural location of the small church, the 16% of our parish sample who reported agriculture as their occupation is virtually the same as our picture of the city as-a-whole in 1914. As noted earlier, agricultural workers were over-represented in the city-wide picture when compared to the 1911 census. Thus, it seems likely that for St. Luke's Parish the numbers represent a reasonable proportion from a rural area. Both sets of data then suggest that for Victoria, farmers were more than ready to bear their full share of the load.

The second unusual feature is the relatively low number of deaths; only 8.4% compared to 14.4% from St Andrew's. Although there are two cases (Maurice Frampton and Fred Varney) that had little risk, neither the units the others served in nor the time of enlistment appear to explain the difference.

## Conclusions

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<sup>231</sup> Daily Colonist, 3 Nov 1915, 5 and Service Records for 90472 Cpl Maurice Frampton, Library and Archives Canada

<sup>232</sup> Service Records for Herbert and Arthur Collison, Library and Archives Canada

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In summary, there are no substantive differences between a congregation drawn from a rural area and that of a major downtown church. The more general Canadian picture that rural areas were less supportive of the war than urban centres is not supported by data from Victoria. Equally, the negative financial impact on churches of the fund-raising efforts responding to the war merits further examination. While much work has been done on the highly visible work of agencies like the Patriotic Fund and Red Cross, the parallel impact of diverting funds from other purposes has received scant attention.

Our examination of these two disparate churches also confirms the usefulness of both local and national church archives in developing a community perspective. Although some caution must be exercised in assuming that national policies or positions will be reflected in all local churches, the two congregations I have examined certainly gave their fulsome support.

Most importantly, this closer examination indicates that there may be substantial differences between Victoria and other areas in Canada. The pattern of enlistment does not support the assumption that either economic condition or place of birth were significant determinants of the likelihood to enlist. Instead, the very high numbers from both St Andrew's and St Luke's who enlisted suggest that local associations and pressures may have been the major determinant of enlistment.

Finally, the dearth of current secondary sources and the major gaps in local historical accounts of the period of the Great War give some credence to Jonathan Vance's hypothesis that post-war mythology allowed Canadians to heal and put aside local wartime trauma in favour of a simpler more heroic national myth.

The approach of this study to rely heavily on indexed soldier records has application to a broad range of studies. Those interested in regimental histories or community groups can now access a wealth of data to give meaning to the thousands of memorial plaques on walls across the country. The

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opportunities to give meaning to the words “We will remember them” is now supported by a vast and highly accessible data set.

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## Chapter 7 – Other Perspectives

Having taken a closer look at the dominant European settler community, I will now focus on two communities in Victoria who had a markedly different response to the war – the First Nations and Chinese communities in the Victoria area. The challenge here is to construct a story where the voices of those we seek to understand is not easily available. Coverage in local newspapers is muted at best and most other documentary evidence is presented through observations or records of those who are not members of these communities. In both cases, the broader Canadian story has been covered by secondary sources, but the data on the communities in the Victoria area is largely absent from those accounts.

### First Nations Respond

In order to understand the local indigenous communities, I will initially widen the scope to consider the population pattern at the national and provincial level. The national stories of indigenous soldiers in the Great War has focussed almost exclusively on evidence from Ontario and the prairies with a bit of seasoning using individual cases from other areas. The core message was originally articulated in the 1919 annual report of the Department of Indian Affairs:

In this year of peace, the Indians of Canada may look with just pride upon the part played by them in the Great War both at home and on the field of battle. They have well and nobly upheld the loyal traditions of their gallant ancestors who rendered invaluable service to the British cause in 1776 and in 1812 and have added thereto a heritage of deathless honour which is an example and an inspiration for their descendants. According to the official records of the department more than four thousand Indians enlisted for active service with the Canadian Expeditionary forces. This number represents approximately thirty-five per cent of the Indian male population of military age in the nine provinces.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> *Department of Indian Affairs Annual Report 1919*. 13

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More recent government publications echo that theme. Typical of such works is this quote, from Great War veteran Mike Mountain Horse, that opens the Department of Veteran's Affairs book *Native Soldier's Foreign Battlefields*.<sup>234</sup>

The war proved that the fighting spirit of my tribe was not squelched through reservation life. When duty called, we were there, and when we were called forth to fight for the cause of civilization, our people showed all the bravery of our warriors of old.

There were three members of the Mountain Horse family who served in the Great War. That his name does not appear in the data set of soldiers I will be using for further analysis suggests some degree of caution. Indeed, the absence of any records from either the Blood First Nation or the area of McLeod AB suggests that entire communities may simply have chosen not to participate in the process of data collection or been neglected in that search. A search of the soldier database of Library and Archives Canada was completed using the six most common local indigenous family names from the 1911 census without finding any who had enlisted. Data from the annual report of the Department of Indian Affairs 1911-1912 and the annual reports of the department for the war years was also examined. For soldier data, a web site database developed in cooperation with the Canadian Indigenous Veterans Association has been used. The site is linked to the Library and Archives database but also includes data on band, First Nation, agency and indigenous heritage not found elsewhere. That site includes data on 2400 indigenous soldiers who served in the Great War. While this is less than the four thousand figure used in many conventional histories,<sup>235</sup> it is the only available record to note indigenous heritage. Attestation papers did not indicate ethnic origin although in the physical description of "complexion" for indigenous

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<sup>234</sup> The quotation is an excerpt from Mike Mountain Horse *My People: The Bloods*, 144.

<sup>235</sup> Timothy Winegard, *For King and Kanata – Canadian Indians and the First World War*. (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2012), 170.

soldiers would typically read “dark”, “swarthy” or “sallow” with dark hair and brown eyes. The table below sorts these files by province and compares enlistment with population.

**TABLE 23 INDIGENOUS ENLISTMENT IN THE GREAT WAR 1914-1918**

Prov.	Enlisted	Aboriginal Population	% Population enlisted	% Available Enlisted
BC	96	24,781	0.4%	1.9%
AB	74	8,113	0.9%	4.6%
MB	402	5,919	6.8%	34.0%
SK	424	9,545	4.4%	22.2%
ON	1,198	23,156	5.2%	25.9%
PQ	96	11,571	0.8%	4.1%
NB	29	1,903	1.5%	7.6%
NS	54	1,969	2.7%	13.7%
PEI	13	300	4.3%	21.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,384</b>	<b>87,257</b>	<b>2.7%</b>	<b>13.7%</b>

**42 DATA EXTRACTED FROM THE ABORIGINAL VETERANS TRIBUTE LIST**

This chart assumes 20% of the population would have been fit males between 18 and 45 using only the data on enlistments available.<sup>236</sup> This breakdown by province of course ignores the reality of many first nations that cross provincial boundaries. The response to war of the Mi'kmaq of the maritime provinces, the Mohawk of Ontario and Quebec and the Cree of the prairies are shaped by their unique history. The Coast Salish of the west coast are as different from those nations as the Irish are from the Polish.

<sup>236</sup> <http://www.vcn.bc.ca/~jeffrey1/tribute.htm>

It is striking that the number from BC who enlisted is less than half the number who enlisted from any other province. Despite having an indigenous population larger than that of Ontario, the enlistments in BC were just 8% of those from Ontario. There are also striking regional differences when in the distribution of enlistments within BC. On the 96 in the data set, twelve are Tsimshian from the area of Port Simpson or Metlakatla. Twenty-nine are Secwepemc from the Kamloops and Chase area, and a further six are Okanagan from the Vernon/Douglas Lake area. There are only six names from the entire Cowichan Agency stretching from Sooke to Comox. The four Peterson brothers from Gabriola Island were Coast Salish. All had served in the local company of the 104<sup>th</sup> Westminster Fusiliers of Canada before the war. To further complicate identification, in both the 1911 and 1921 census they were recorded as being of European heritage. Nevertheless, physical descriptions from the attestation papers note dark complexion, brown eyes and black hair. It seems likely that their father Henry was of Dutch heritage as reported and the mother Coast Salish although the census form reads “Irish”. Given the widespread racism of the day it may be that the family had decided to downplay their indigenous heritage or equally, the census taker simply mistook the term “Salish” for “Irish”. There is a parallel situation with the Benyon brothers from Victoria. The Canadian Indigenous Veterans database records them as Tsimshian.<sup>237</sup> In this case, the 1911 census shows their father as Welsh but against the mother’s name there is simply “x”. Again, the physical description (in one case a “sallow” complexion and “dark” in the others – all with brown eyes and black hair) supports the mixed heritage of the brothers. Like the Nanaimo example, Richard Beynon served in the militia before the war with the 50<sup>th</sup> Gordon Highlanders. Both their home at 1929 Chambers Street just a short distance from Victoria Highschool and their occupations (painter, telegraph operator) suggest they were fully integrated in the settler community. Both George and John Beynon enlisted in Jan 1915. George had not yet reached his seventeenth birthday and George was just eighteen. In addition to ignoring the general prohibition

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<sup>237</sup> <http://www.vcn.bc.ca/~jeffrey1/tribute.htm>

against enlisting underage boys, local recruiters also conveniently overlooked their indigenous heritage. At the time they joined up, the government had been actively discouraging the enlistment of indigenous peoples on the grounds that the Germans could not be trusted to “extend to them the privileges of civilized warfare”.<sup>238</sup>

That was to change with the increasing demands for manpower and the active encouragement by imperial authorities to follow the practices of other parts of the Empire. Timothy Winegard provides excellent coverage for the changing political atmosphere among the indigenous peoples of Ontario and the prairies. To understand the local impact however it is useful to examine in more detail how those policies were administered in British Columbia. With the move to an active program of recruiting indigenous peoples, responsibility within Military District 11 (British Columbia) rested primarily with the Department of Indian Affairs. As this extract from the annual report for 1916 notes the department made little headway in BC.

In all about 1,200 Indians have enlisted. They are distributed by provinces as follows: Ontario, 862; Quebec, 101; Manitoba, 89; Saskatchewan, 57; Prince Edward Island, 24; British Columbia, 17; Nova Scotia, 14; New Brunswick, 12; Alberta, 9; Yukon, 2; total, 1,187. *Department of Indian Affairs Annual Report 1916*

The 1917 report suggested a total of 2000 enlistments but in the more detailed numbers there is no mention of British Columbia. By the end of the war, the Department had begun to explain its failure in British Columbia by claiming that:

The British Columbia Indians are somewhat less warlike in character than those of the plains and in the eastern provinces and are by nature adverse to leaving their homes upon any unfamiliar venture. *Department of Indian Affairs Annual Report 1919* page 20.

In contrast the text for Ontario and the Prairies reads like a romantic novel filled with stories of scouts and snipers reflecting both their heroic past and the supposed success of government programs.

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<sup>238</sup> Timothy Winegard quoting Sam Hughes in. *For King and Kanata*. 45.

For Ontario we read that “They are the descendants of the warriors who fought so valiantly in the war of 1812 under their great leader Tecumseh”.<sup>239</sup> For those in Saskatchewan, we read that the men of the artificially created File Hills Agricultural Community established early in the century from ex-pupils of Indian Schools “fully appreciate the advantages that have been brought to them by civilization and were ready at the critical time to defend them against the menace of a foreign enemy”.<sup>240</sup> Without in any way diminishing the contribution of those who did serve, it seems blindingly obvious to the reader of today that this type of account was primarily intended to make departmental officials look good rather than provide a full and fair account of that contribution. In a department that reported detailed population counts annually, it is inconceivable that accurate numbers could not be reported for enlistments. Post-war treatment of indigenous veterans simply reinforces a healthy skepticism in reading such reports.

To get to a more realistic assessment, it is necessary to dig still further into the correspondence of the department. By 1916, the Department was becoming more concerned about the failure to attract recruits from the indigenous communities of British Columbia. In 1916, Andrew Tyson, the Inspector of Indian Agencies for the mainland was given overall responsibility for recruiting in British Columbia. He began with an aggressive campaign that met with limited success<sup>241</sup> and at the cost of alienating First Nations leaders. A report from a January 1916 at a meeting of over 100 young men at Alert Bay reads:

The agent gave an address showing them their duty toward the Empire and particularly towards Canada, but was met with the response that as the Indians were not voters and as they had not been consulted either with regard to the taking away of their original heritage, or in the formation of any of our laws, they did not feel called upon to take up arms for the flag.<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> *DIA Annual Report 1919*, 14.

<sup>240</sup> *DIA Annual Report 1919*, 19.

<sup>241</sup> *Okanagan Agency letter dated 28 Feb 1919* reported 12 men who had enlisted of who 10 served overseas. None served in the Railway or Forestry Units raised in 1917-1918.

<sup>242</sup> Letter from the Indian Agent’s Office, Kwawkwalth Agency, Alert Bay January 17, 1916

In addition to this well reasoned objection there was also severe criticism of Tyson's recruiting methods. In October 1916 a meeting of Chiefs and others in the Nicola Valley met to state their objections and in particular, the recruitment of young William Frank. Frank was only fifteen at the time and illiterate. He had signed both his enlistment and discharge papers with an "X"<sup>243</sup> and had been recruited without the knowledge of either his parents or the Chief. To his credit, the Indian Agent John Smith in forwarding this complaint also recommended that Recruiting Officers "consult with the Chiefs and parents of Indian lads before enlisting them for service"<sup>244</sup>. Although the Army protested its innocence claiming that Frank declared his age as 23 it seems highly improbable that a reasonable person could have mistaken a 15-year-old who was only 5 ft. 5 in. tall for a man of 23. He was not released until January 1919 due to medical unfitness without any acknowledgement of error. Nevertheless, as a direct result of this incident, Military District 11 issued an order "directing that no Indians are to be enlisted without first obtaining the consent of the Chiefs of the tribes to which the Indians belong". In the case of minors, the consent of the parents was also required. While this may appear to be a simple matter of administrative convenience, the implications are significant. The British declaration of war in 1914 by extension included Canada. While the government of Canada determined the nature of the Canadian response, the call to arms was a call from the crown. The significance of the order of the 11<sup>th</sup> Military District is that it acknowledges the right of First Nations governments to determine whether any of their people would respond to that call. The fact that Britain was at war did not mean that the Coast Salish peoples were at war.

The result of this sort of resistance was a significant change in recruiting strategy. First, Tyson sought to reinforce his position by wearing a military uniform. Despite a total lack of military experience and being over age Tyson was duly enlisted in April 1917 and given the honorary rank of Captain.

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<sup>243</sup> Service Record for 1048363 Pte William Frank, Library and Archives Canada

<sup>244</sup> Letter from Kamloops Indian Agent's Office dated October 11<sup>th</sup> 1916.

While this might have added a bit of gravitas when dealing with local chiefs, it is hard to imagine that it would have been welcomed by those in the Headquarters of the 11<sup>th</sup> Military District 11 (BC). The second change was to shift the focus from an appeal to patriotism to a simple economic argument. Instead of trying to recruit for infantry units, Tyson changed his focus to recruiting for railway and forestry units. To deal with the racist objections of some in the settler community, Tyson also agreed that these reinforcement drafts would be entirely made up of Indians.<sup>245</sup> Tyson's circular letter of January 1917 notes that "The Indians and half breeds will not have to go into the firing line." In addition to a normal soldier's pay, he also promised the maximum amount payable to soldiers from the Patriotic Fund for family support up to \$42.50 per month. He also promised that they would receive "the same benefits and consideration after the war as White men who enlist".<sup>246</sup> Within two weeks, the Patriotic Fund in Victoria objected to the letter noting that the particular circumstances of Indians made it unlikely that the maximum rates offered by Tyson would be approved and that those in rural areas usually received lower rates than those offered by Tyson.<sup>247</sup>

As this stage Tyson's efforts were being increasingly frustrated. Perhaps the final straw was a wire from the BC Salmon Cannery Association complaining that Tyson's recruiting efforts were a direct assault on their business as they were largely dependent on Indian labour for both fishing and canning operations. The Minister was asked to order Tyson to delay any recruiting campaign until after September 1<sup>st</sup>.<sup>248</sup>

What is missing of course from our examination is any direct evidence from the indigenous peoples of southern Vancouver Island. There is little doubt that few if any enlisted. It seems evident

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<sup>245</sup> Undated telegram Tyson to Duncan Scott

<sup>246</sup> Tyson circular letter to Indian Agents dated January 26, 1917

<sup>247</sup> Philip Morris, Assistant Secretary to the Patriotic Fund letter to Duncan Scott dated 15 Feb 1917

<sup>248</sup> Night lettergram from W D Burdis, Secy BC Salmon Canner's Assn to Minister of the Interior and Indian Affairs dated 7 June 1917

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that the sympathies expressed by the gathering in Alert Bay would have been echoed in Victoria and that the Chief's permission required for enlistment had been withheld. What is remarkable about this story is that it has remained untold for more than a century. Successive governments, in their official publications have simply ignored this tale of steadfast resistance and the exercise of First Nations rights in response to the oppression of their peoples that is unique to British Columbia. It is equally surprising that local First Nations have either chosen to acquiesce in this suppression or held this story of resistance as one to be remembered only within their community.

## The Response from Chinese Canadians

Any examination of the Chinese community in Victoria must be viewed against the pervasive anti-Asian racism of the day. The idea of the yellow peril was reflected in popular media like the Dr. Fu Manchu novels of Sax Rohmer. An evil genius plotting, on behalf of an evil empire bent on world conquest, was the centre piece of a blatantly racist but highly entertaining series of novels first launched in 1913<sup>249</sup>. In later film versions, it is remarkable that directors could not find a Chinese actor who looked evil enough for the part. Most notable among those who played the insidious Dr. Fu Manchu was Boris Karloff. Ultimately the Doctor was banished, but not until the 1980's when the world began to see the blatant racism behind such caricatures. In Victoria the racism was so pervasive that it generated little public comment and virtually no criticism from the European settler community. In the newspapers of the period employment want ads often specify race. Real Estate advertisements routinely noted a "chinaman's Room" as an added feature with some rural properties even offering a "chinaman's house".<sup>250</sup> Accounts of crime and court proceedings regularly identified individuals as a "chinaman". To be sure, there were complaints about use of low-cost Chinese labour by some but these

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<sup>249</sup> Sax Rohmer. *The Insidious Dr. Fu Manchu*. Kindle Edition 2018. Rohmer published two more novels before the end of the war and 13 before his death in 1959.

<sup>250</sup> *Daily Colonist*, Victoria, Feb 3 1914, 12.

were routinely dismissed as sour grapes as long as the employment was in what were seen as acceptable jobs like gardening, cooking or laundry. Although it might have been expected that the departure of so many men would have created job opportunities for Victoria's Chinese community, such was not the case. Indeed, in late 1915, local papers reported a general exodus of men returning to China in response to an order in council that extended return rights until six months after the end of the war. By way of explanation, the article noted that "Since the outbreak of war, the lot of the average Chinaman in Canada has been none too rosy, and in these dull times they are finding it hard to secure employment"<sup>251</sup>. It may be that the fund raising demands of the war also diverted resources from other purposes such as domestic help

Daily Colonist, Victoria,  
Nov 19, 1915, 10



and gardening.

While the European settler population was focussed on events in Europe, the Chinese community in Victoria was looking to the west to the turmoil in China. Drawn largely from the Cantonese speaking area of China in Guangdong province, the people of Victoria's Chinatown had

<sup>251</sup> *Daily Colonist*, Victoria, Nov 19, 1915, 10.

arrived in the new colony with the gold rush and later in response to the demand for labour in building the railways and working in mines. As early as 1858 Chinese merchants had purchased seven lots on Esquimalt's waterfront and a further thirteen lots in Victoria. The new residents were not simply labourers passing through but also businessmen and merchants who facilitated the supply of labour. The Kwong Lee Company headquartered in San Francisco established branches in Victoria, Yale, Lilloet and Barkerville.<sup>252</sup>

In the immediate pre-war period, there were about 3000 residents of Victoria identified as Chinese. Most were male due to significant barriers to immigration of women<sup>253</sup>. Chinese exclusion laws and the notorious head tax had slowed, but not stopped Chinese immigration. Unlike the experience of blacks in the Maritimes or Japanese in Vancouver, there is little evidence that the young men of Victoria's Chinese community had any interest in enlisting for a war in Europe that was of little relevance to them. The political interests of the community were much more focussed on events in China. Sun Yat Sen had visited Victoria twice before the war and had received generous support from local Chinese businesses. In the spring of 1911, local supporters were watching the revolution unfold in China.<sup>254</sup> In January of the following year they read of Dr. Sun taking office as the new president of the Republic of China.<sup>255</sup> Local newspapers continued to provide regular coverage of events in China throughout the period of the war.

Although historian Marjorie Wong identifies a small number of Chinese Canadians who did manage to enlist, all are from the interior of British Columbia. After testing the most common family

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<sup>252</sup> David Chuenyan Lai. *China Towns: Towns within cities in Canada*. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1988), 184-188.

<sup>253</sup> Dunae et al. "Making the Inscrutable Scrutable" in *BC Studies* suggests that as late as 1891 up to 95% were male.

<sup>254</sup> *Daily Colonist*. Victoria, May 5, 1911, 3.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.* Jan 3, 1912, page 1.

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names<sup>256</sup> against the database of soldier files, I found no evidence of any enlistments from the Chinese community in Victoria. Of the three files examined from the Kamloops area, two identified as Presbyterians and the other as Anglican. While there were several well-established Christian Churches in Victoria's Chinese community, their members formed a relatively small part of the population. In the 1911 census more than 3600 were identified as "Confucian". It seems unlikely that the Christian Churches exerted any pressure on their Chinese members to enlist.

Wealthy merchants in Chinatown were known for providing support to those in need. They had contributed over \$13,000 for flood relief in China in the years before the war and \$4000 for assistance to victims of the San Francisco Earthquake in 1904.<sup>257</sup> In a similar manner they supported community appeals from the Patriotic Fund in Victoria. Among the early supporters of the Patriotic Fund was Lim Bang a wealthy merchant and owner of the Prince George Hotel located across the street from City Hall.<sup>258</sup> Along with other merchant families, he was also noted on the 100% contributors list in the Victory Bonds campaign.

## Conclusion

What seems evident in Victoria is in part two communities that simply did not see the war in Europe as of direct concern. In the Chinese community, there was also a broadly-based recognition that any of their own foolish enough to consider enlistment would likely be rejected as a result of racist views prevalent in the city. The pattern of head taxes, segregated schools and denial of the franchise in local, provincial and federal elections was well established during this period. In parallel, for First Nations, potlatch laws, forced moves to reservations, a refusal to enter into meaningful treaty negotiations and again, rampant racism may all have played a role. In sharp contrast, however, there

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<sup>256</sup> David Chuenyan Lai. *Chinese Community Leadership*. 120, Table 7

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.* 132.

<sup>258</sup> *Daily Colonist*, Victoria, Nov 11, 1914, 7.

was an active and vigorous recruitment campaign directed at the aboriginal peoples living in British Columbia. It seems evident that the non-involvement by local First Nations was an act of resistance on the part of those communities. That these two narratives have been largely excluded from both national and local histories of the war is regrettable. Perhaps in some small way, this paper can begin to open those long-closed doors.

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## Chapter 8 – Commemoration

Much has been written about the wave of remembrance and commemoration that followed the Great War<sup>259</sup>. Locally, with the centennial of the Great War, there have also been a number of well researched works both in print and on-line that in themselves are illustrations of memorialization.<sup>260</sup> The intent here is neither to replicate nor challenge that more global research but rather focus on how such actions played out in Victoria in the immediate post-war period culminating in the establishment of the Provincial memorial on the grounds of the Legislative Buildings in 1925.

As noted in the discussion of pre-war Victoria, remembrance of war was a well-established pattern in Victoria dating back to the South African War. Veterans Associations had been formed, monuments erected, and annual Paardeburg Day events had become a well-established part of the annual calendar. What appears with the Great War, however, is an explosion of such activities. Today in Victoria there are hundreds of memorials ranging from rolls of honour in churches, schools and clubs to more prominent municipal and provincial memorials to those that commemorate a single soldier or event like the naming of streets or buildings. This study is intended to provide a sampling of these exercises of making memory and to reflect on how those early activities have shaped the current understanding of the Great War in Victoria. While considering that which is sculpted in bronze, carved in stone or entrenched in on-going ceremony, it is equally important to consider elements that have now faded from the constructed public memory of the war. To this end, this chapter will focus on four memorials and the impact of the immediate post-war visits of prominent war time figures.

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<sup>259</sup> Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997 is perhaps the best Canadian study.

<sup>260</sup> For example, Barry Gough. *From Classroom to Battlefield*. (Victoria: Heritage House Publishing, 2014).

Memorialization took many forms in Victoria. By far the most common was the Roll of Honour. Typically, organizations started the process of compiling and even posting such rolls by the time most had enlisted. For example, in April 1915 the Victoria Golf Club minute book records 37 members who had enlisted. At that time the committee endorsed a resolution “exempting all members of the club who have joined their regiments on active service for payment of subscriptions until their return.”<sup>261</sup> A year later when it became clear that many would never return there is a more ominous resolution to post a Roll of Honour in the clubhouse of members on active service. By this time, the local printing firm, The Clarke Wilson Co was offering “artistically designed” rolls for “every Church, Lodge,

43 - DAILY COLONIST  
APR 1, 1917, 18

PATRIAE SERVIRE - SERVARE PATRIAM

AN ARTISTICALLY DESIGNED

**Roll of Service**

of your Members who have  
responded to the call of  
their King & Country.

Every Church, Lodge, Educational Institution, Workshop,  
Business House, or Public Office throughout the Province  
is proud to number among its members many who are doing  
service "Somewhere in France, or elsewhere.

What more appropriate or lasting tribute to their valor  
could be conceived than a suitably designed and  
illuminated ROLL OF SERVICE?

Being a Professional Designer and Illuminator of wide  
experience, our Artist can produce this class of work with  
efficiency and to your particular requirements.

FOR FURTHER PARTICULARS, CALL OR PHONE

**The Clarke-Wilson Co.**  
321 PEMBERTON BLDG, VICTORIA.....PHONE 1470

<sup>261</sup> Victoria Golf Club Minute Book. April 1915.

Educational Institute, Workshop, Business House or Public Office throughout the Province who is proud to number among its members those who are doing service ‘Somewhere in France’ or elsewhere”.

Typically, names would be inscribed when the roll was first established and later a small cross or other mark added to indicate those who died. Later, the original paper framed document might be replaced by a more elaborate marker in wood, stone or bronze, but this would typically occur after the war.

For individual monuments there is a somewhat similar pattern. Most of the dead, of course are buried near where they fell in France or Belgium or at least have their name inscribed on a memorial of some sort.<sup>262</sup> Nevertheless, in Victoria there are 132 war graves in Ross Bay Cemetery and a further 22 in the Esquimalt Naval and Military Cemetery for soldiers who died in Victoria<sup>263</sup>. Others are scattered in smaller plots around the city. By far the greatest number succumbed to disease, prominently



pneumonia, influenza and tuberculosis. Many records simply note “died of disease”. These grave registries also reinforce the story that boy “soldiers” from Victoria were not confined to the army. Two of the graves in Esquimalt are boy sailors from HMCS Rainbow - Frederick Kirkpatrick age 16 and James Aird age 17. Nor are these all graves of returned soldiers. Indeed, some like Richard Beynon died without ever leaving BC while others like Blaney Scott died after a full four years at the front having won both a Military Cross and a Distinguished Flying Cross. To be classified as “war dead” and be entitled to an official marker, death must simply have occurred on or before August 31<sup>st</sup>, 1921. Thus, Roland Bourke VC, DSO, whose ashes lie in the Royal Oak

44 George Beynon Marker in Ross Bay Cemetery

<sup>262</sup> The Menin Gate in Ypres Belgium for example has almost 7,000 names of Canadians who died in the Ypres salient and have no known grave.

<sup>263</sup> *The War Graves of the British Empire – America*. London: The Imperial War Graves Commission, 1930-32.

Cemetery, had no official marker simply because he lived until 1958. It was not until 2013 an official marker was erected. Some families, of course, chose to memorialize their fallen on family markers rather than official War Graves markers even if they did not die in Victoria. The most prominent is “Boy” Dunsmuir who died in the sinking of the *Lusitania* and is remembered on the family marker in Ross Bay. Another is Pte George Beynon, one of Victoria’s few aboriginal soldiers who died of wounds after the battle of Vimy Ridge.<sup>264</sup> His brother Richard who died of TB after having enlisted in the 103<sup>rd</sup> Battalion lies nearby with his grave marked by an official military headstone. Only John, the youngest of the three brothers, who enlisted at age sixteen, survived the war.

In the end, the decision on who and where a memorial would be placed was up to the group or family responsible. Questions like “Who is a member?” and “What constitutes service?” were interpreted differently in different locations. For example, there is the curious omission of the name of the parish priest from St Luke’s who enlisted in 1918 and deployed as part of the Siberian Expedition after the European armistice. Was it simply because the members of the congregation did not view Siberia as war service or perhaps it was he did not return to the parish when he came home in 1919? For the Victoria Golf Club, on the elaborate bronze plaque installed in 1927, it is interesting to note that James Dunsmuir, a prominent member who died in the Sinking of the *Lusitania* is included but the golf pro, Gallop, who died during training with the Royal Flying Corps is omitted.

## Visits

On the larger community scale, installation of monuments often coincided with the visit of some suitable dignitary to add gravitas to the occasion. The first post-war unveiling of significance came with the visit of the Prince of Wales in the fall on 1919.<sup>265</sup> While other visits across the country had involved

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<sup>264</sup> Photo courtesy of Yvonne Van Ruskenveld

<sup>265</sup> *Daily Colonist*. Victoria, Sep 21, 1919, page 33.

the dedication of memorials, in a strange quirk of fate, his role in Victoria would be the laying of the cornerstone for the memorial to Queen Victoria on the lawn of the legislature. The statue had been commissioned before the war but had been retained in Britain because of fears that it might be lost in the savage submarine campaign in the North Atlantic. In retrospect such concern over a bronze figure seems out of place when thousands of living bodies were at similar risk. Nevertheless, the unveiling took place in style with enthusiastic crowds and ample provision for veterans. The Prince covered the other, arguably more important functions of recognizing the sacrifices of Victoria's soldiers by visits to the Military Hospital at Esquimalt and the Soldiers Civil Re-establishment Program at Craigdarroch Hospital. On the same day, the *Colonist* regaled readers with a full four pages describing "Working Class Misery in Petrograd Under the Reign of Terror".<sup>266</sup> It is also interesting to note that in many communities across Canada, the Prince also took part in ceremonies honouring First Nations. In Victoria, though, he received a gift of woven baskets, that had been selected by an eminent non-indigenous authority and were presented by the daughter of the Lieutenant Governor.

Close on the heels of the Prince came the homecoming of Victoria's favorite son, Arthur Currie in early

**Home-Coming Reception  
and Dinner**

TO

**General  
Sir Arthur  
Currie**

G.C.M.G., K.C.B., Etc.,  
Hon. President British Cam-  
paigners' Association

**MONDAY, OCT. 6  
7:30 P. M.**

**AT THE ARMOURY  
BAY STREET**

**TICKETS (for Lady or Gentleman) \$2.50 EACH**

All Service Organizations and Patriotic Societies are requested to forward ticket and table reservations to the Ticket Committee not later than Friday evening.  
Tickets may be obtained from all Service or Patriotic Associations or from the Committee, Room 3, Belmont Building, Humboldt Street.  
Dress: Service or Informal. Telephone 2520.



<sup>266</sup> Ibid page 24

October. As described by the *Colonist*, he was “Canada’s wonder soldier, who became leader of an army of super-fighters that brought new and undying lustre to the Empire’s battle annals”.<sup>267</sup> At the time, Currie had been appointed Inspector General of the Armed Forces and promoted to full General. Increasingly frustrated by post-war budget cuts, Currie focussed his attention during his visit to Victoria on encouraging the various veteran’s groups that had emerged. The largest reception at the new armories on Bay Street, the British Campaigners were joined by the Great War Veterans Association, the Aerial League, the IODE and other such groups. In total over a thousand attended to hear a rousing speech asking all to build a lasting memorial to those 50,000 who died by making Canada a “better, nobler, sweeter place in which to live.” The Monday of the visit was declared an official holiday and schools were closed so that all could greet Victoria’s returning hero. Later there would be banquets by Rotarians and the Canadian Club at the Empress Hotel. Again, Currie’s call was for remembrance and support for his returned soldiers as a lasting monument. Currie’s legacy, of course, is not without controversy. It is not our intention to rehash material that is well covered elsewhere.<sup>268</sup> Given the nature of that enthusiastic welcome it seems strange that a century later there is still no substantial memorial to Sir Arthur Currie in his home town of Victoria. True, there is Currie Lane in Victoria West where Currie used to live and a Currie Road in Oak Bay but neither are prominently marked. Although the museums of the local militia regiments both have substantial collections of Currie memorabilia neither are well attended. Across the country, other communities with much less connection have more substantial memorials. Calgary has Currie barracks. Kingston has both Currie Hall and the Currie Building at the Royal Military College. Richmond has a Currie School and Banff a mountain. Several cities

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<sup>267</sup> *Daily Colonist*. Victoria Oct 5, 1919, 5.

<sup>268</sup> Tim Cook. *The Madman and the Butcher: The sensational wars of Sam Hughes and General Arthur Currie*. Toronto: Penguin Books, 2010. and Craig Brown and Desmond Morton. “*The Embarrassing Apotheosis of a Great Canadian: Sir Arthur Currie’s Personal Crisis in 1917*” in *The Canadian Historical Review*, LX, 1, University of Toronto Press, 1979. P 41-63 provide fulsome coverage.

including Ottawa have statues. Perhaps it is time to consider how Victoria might better mark its connection to the man who is widely regarded as Canada's greatest military commander.

## Armistice Day and Remembrance

The community response to November 11<sup>th</sup> in the first few years after the war was not at all like we know it today. As early as 1919, the federal government had considered giving formal recognition to the day. Initially the proposal was to combine both Thanksgiving Day and what was then called Armistice Day on November 11<sup>th</sup>. In committee, the bill was changed to make the combined day the second Monday in November to commemorate "the blessings of peace as well as being a day of thankfulness for the gifts of Providence". After much debate, the bill died on the floor of the House of Commons. Meanwhile, in Victoria, November 11<sup>th</sup> would be celebrated not as a day of solemn remembrance but rather as a celebration of victory. The schedule for the day in 1919 included a parade, presentations at the Dug-Out at the corner of Fort and Government in the heart of downtown Victoria and a torchlight procession and dance on Yates Street.<sup>269</sup> In Sidney a masquerade dance was described as "not only a celebration of Armistice Day, but also somewhat of a birthday party"<sup>270</sup>. The idea of "celebrating" Armistice Day in many ways reflected the local response to the South African War where Paardeberg Day had been a time to celebrate a Canadian military victory with gatherings of veterans and thanksgiving like dinners. By 1920 not much had changed. While the federal government called on the people of Canada to "suitably observe and commemorate the anniversary of the cessation of hostilities" there was to be no public holiday to mark the event.<sup>271</sup> In Victoria there was no official recognition by either municipal or provincial governments. The *Daily Colonist* reported that only a few observed Armistice Day and the proposed two-minute silence at the eleventh hour was largely ignored.

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<sup>269</sup> *Daily Colonist*. Victoria, Nov 11, 1919, 6.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.* Nov 12, 1919, 8.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.* Oct 30, 1920, 2.

Even the military took no steps to mark the day.<sup>272</sup> Perhaps the highly critical editorial comment and the reaction of veteran's groups led to a significant change by 1921. That year, the Armistice Day programme was marked with a public service in Parliament Square with a company of troops on parade and the Lieutenant Governor, Premier, cabinet ministers, mayor and aldermen all in attendance. Poppies were being sold by the Great War Veterans Association. Nevertheless, the transformation from celebration to commemoration was not yet complete. Evening events included an Armistice Carnival in the Menzies Street Drill Hall and a smoking concert by the Army and Navy Veterans Association. It was not until 1922 that the newspapers reported that "Armistice Day, for the first time since November 11, 1918, was adequately remembered locally in observance of the most outstanding event in human history". For the first time, the city came to a halt at the eleventh hour and thousands attended the memorial service at Parliament Square.<sup>273</sup> While the 1922 event might be viewed as the first Remembrance Day, the term did not come into common use until 1931 when the name was officially changed. What was still missing was a permanent memorial, suitable as a focal point for these annual events.

## A Permanent Memorial

With the last of the troops having returned home by the end of 1919, the question of a more permanent memorial began to emerge in the public discourse. The first major project to capture the attention of the community was that of a memorial avenue lined by trees to mark all soldiers from BC who had fallen. The idea was initially introduced to the Chamber of Commerce in February 1921. After all, Victoria was the provincial capital and it was fitting that a provincial memorial should be located here. Some even suggested that each tree could bear a metal plate with the name of the fallen

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<sup>272</sup> Ibid, Nov 12, 1920, 13.

<sup>273</sup> *Daily Colonist*. Victoria, Nov 12, 1922, 1.

soldier.<sup>274</sup> Perhaps a granite statue of a soldier at one end, a sailor at the other and a peace arch at the mid-point of a four mile stretch of road would not be unreasonable suggested another writer.<sup>275</sup> By May 1921, the first concrete steps had been taken, albeit with a much more conservative and less expensive plan. The Saanich Parks Committee approved initial work on a half mile of Shelbourne Street starting at the foot of Mount Douglas to be lined with London planetrees. It was hoped that from time to time visiting dignitaries would support the project by planting a tree. The cost for the first section was not to exceed \$500. (More than a full year's pay for a private soldier at the front!) On the first Sunday of October 1921, Lt.-Gov. Walter Nichol planted the first tree in a ceremony at the Mount Douglas end of Shelbourne. The following spring, three distinguished military men would add to the planting.

The visit of Marechal Joseph Joffre was fortuitous. He was in the Pacific Northwest principally as a spokesman for the international peace movement and, more formally to unveil the Peace Arch on the US-Canadian Border. Nevertheless, his few days in Victoria were busy. As was usual, he visited military hospitals, reviewed troops and was greeted by enthusiastic crowds. An evening dinner at the Empress Hotel was hosted by the Canadian Club. The following day the Marechal dutifully took up the



45 MEMORIAL TREE MARKER ERECTED IN 1976

spade and planted a tree on Shelbourne Street.<sup>276</sup> The only other memorial activity he engaged in was the unveiling of a bronze roll of honour at St Andrew's Presbyterian Church in downtown Victoria.<sup>277</sup> Why a

<sup>274</sup> Ibid. Mar 6, 1921, 27.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid. Aug 13, 1922, 5.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid. Mar 28, 1922, 1.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid. Mar 30, 1922, 1.

Presbyterian Church and not the Anglican or Roman Catholic Cathedral? It is, perhaps a commentary on the political skills of the minister, the Rev Dr. Leslie Clay that St Andrew's was the church selected. It may not be entirely coincidental that at the time, Dr. Clay was also the newly elected President of the Canadian Club that had hosted the dinner the previous night.

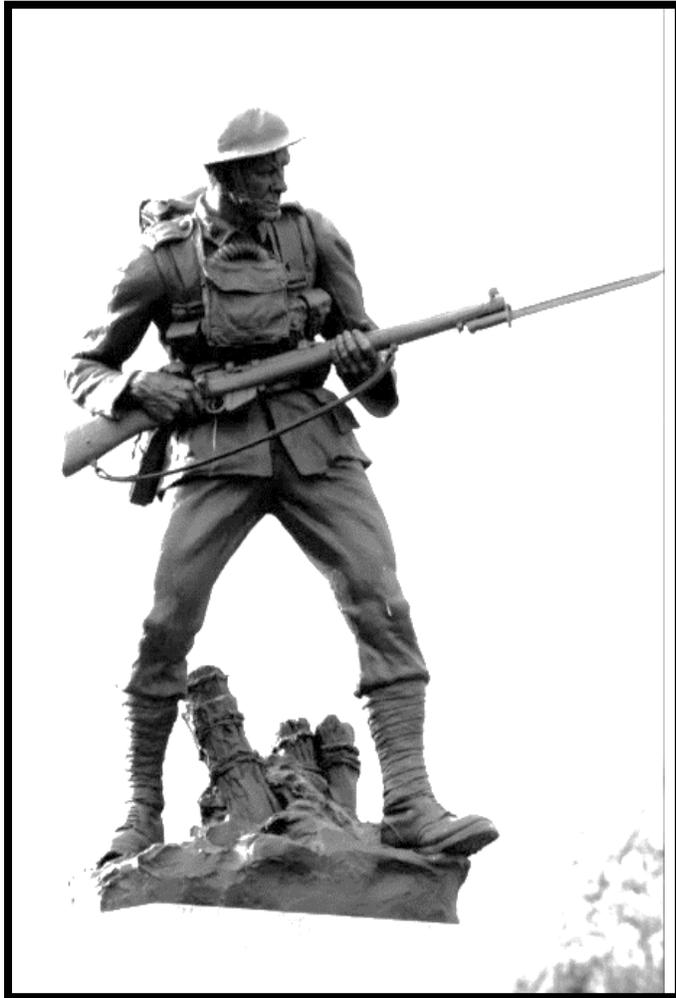
In due course, Joffre was followed by Viscount Byng. The Governor General who had commanded the Canadian Corp at Vimy took up the spade in August. Finally, in September 1922, General Sir Arthur Currie completed the trio.

The final page in our story of memorialization concerns the monument on the grounds of the legislature building and the emergence of Remembrance Day as an annual commemorative event. The efforts to establish a suitable monument to commemorate the fallen of the Great War in a more central location began to build public support. The movement was initiated by Frederick Pemberton, a prominent Victoria real estate businessman and his close friend and lawyer Lindley Crease. Although neither had served in the war, it seems likely that they were motivated by the service of family members. Frederick's cousin Chartres Cecil Pemberton had worked with him in the family real estate business. Still single at age 54 and a year older than his cousin Frederick, he enlisted as a private in the 11<sup>th</sup> Canadian Mounted Rifles in 1916. It is no surprise that the physical demands of life in the CMR soon became too much for him. Before reaching France, he was transferred to the Forestry Corps. Poor health continued to plague him with chronic asthma attacks and what his records describe as "general debility". Eventually in 1918 after a year in France, he was declared medically unfit and returned to Canada arriving in Victoria in very poor health on November 12<sup>th</sup> 1918<sup>278</sup>. With the Crease family, the link was to Captain Arthur Crease, Lindley's brother and law partner. Despite being married with three

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<sup>278</sup> Service Record for Private Pemberton, Chartres Cecil, Library and Archives Canada

children and also age 54, Arthur enlisted in the 88<sup>th</sup> battalion in 1916. He survived the war in good health and returned to Victoria in the spring of 1919. Both the Crease and Pemberton family names remain prominent in the Real Estate and Legal business of Victoria a century later.



46. A FACE ONLY A MOTHER COULD LOVE.

Fundraising began in earnest in September 1924 with Crease leading the campaign as Chair of the Monument Committee. Walter Nichol, who had been the long-time editor of the Vancouver Province newspaper before his appointment as lieutenant-governor in 1920, was both a strong supporter and the single largest donor. He kicked off the campaign with a donation of \$5,000 at a time when one could buy a decent house in the city for half that amount. The committee engaged well-known sculptor Sydney March to produce a unique statue of a Canadian soldier to top the monument. Unlike most such figures, this is not a handsome youthful figure but rather “a worn, weather beaten,

ancient-looking infantryman” with a face “only a mother could love”.<sup>279</sup> It seems likely that the sculptors choice was influenced by the advanced age of Private Chartres Cecil Pemberton and Captain Arthur Crease, the family members of the two principal organizers of the campaign. The monument was finally unveiled on July 12<sup>th</sup>, 1925 in a front of a crowd of thousands in a ceremony in front of the Legislature.<sup>280</sup> It is worth noting that the event was pushed off the front page by news of the visit of Field Marshal Earl Haig.

Haig is a controversial figure in the history of the Great War. Vilified by a series of British historians as a bull headed and not very bright leader who needlessly wasted the lives of his men in futile attacks. Perhaps the low point of the genre came in the 1960's with Alan Clarke's *Lions led by Donkeys* that cast Haig in the role of chief donkey. It is interesting then to note that during his visits to Canada in the immediate post-war period, Haig was welcomed with rousing cheers by those who had served under him. In a mass meeting of returned soldiers at Victoria's Royal Theatre, Colonel Cy Peck, VC introducing Haig “assured him that he stood first in the memory and hearts of the returned men of Canada.”<sup>281</sup> The crowd responded with enthusiastic cheers. Haig's mission during his tour was to support the movement to unify the diverse veterans' organizations that had emerged into a united organization that could speak with a much stronger voice on their behalf before government. In Victoria, headlines proclaimed that the meeting unanimously passed a resolution “Recommending Unity Action on Part of Organizations.” Today's Royal Canadian Legion traces its roots in no small part to that tour. Thankfully, the dismal tone of British history of the Great War has taken a more balanced approach in recent years. Gary Sheffield's *Forgotten Victory* published in 2002 is perhaps the best antidote to Clarke.

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<sup>279</sup> Alan L. MacLeod. *Remembered in Bronze and Stone*. (China: Heritage House Publishing, 2016), 93.

<sup>280</sup> *Daily Colonist*. Victoria, July 14, 1925, 2..

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

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It is evident that the gradual transition of November 11<sup>th</sup> from a day to celebrate victory with parties and concerts to a day of solemn remembrance evolved over a prolonged period. The idea of celebration of victory, however, has not entirely disappeared. Instead of broadly-based community events, the celebration of victory has been taken up almost exclusively by the military. Most regiments today will mark some significant battle of the Great War with events that are similar in character to those of the immediate post-war period. Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry that occupied Work Point Barracks after the war marks Frezenberg Day on May 8<sup>th</sup> to celebrate the 1915 battle in the Ypres salient where the regiment held the line at a critical point to repulse a German attack. The day is still marked today in the Regiment with parades, sporting events, a "better 'ole" beer tent and celebratory dinners. The Canadian Scottish Regiment celebrates the Battle of Kitchener's Wood and still bears an oak leaf on their uniforms to mark the event.

What seems evident from the experience of Victoria is that commemoration practices evolve over many years with a combination of local and national influences. The character and placement of memorials for both families and communities emerged almost without exception from the local level. In a similar way the enacted memory in the early years after the war was shaped by local needs. The celebrations of 1918, repressed by the Influenza epidemic, emerged in 1919 and later. These were clearly celebrations of victory and a welcome home for returned soldiers rather than the somber ceremonies that mark modern Remembrance Day events. The omnipresent red poppy of today and the idea of two minutes silence were adopted in later years from national movements. The major gap in Victoria is the absence of any significant recognition of Sir Arthur Currie. Although feted locally in the years immediately after the war, today his name is found on only two minor local streets. There is currently a move, supported by both the artillery and infantry units that Currie once commanded to rename the old armory at the corner of Bay and Douglas street in his memory.

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## Chapter 9 – Conclusions

It is perhaps useful in any work like this, where the focus has been narrowed to a particular city and its component communities, to step back and consider how local observations might usefully contribute to our understanding of the broader history of Canada in the Great War. Here one can safely ignore minor local curiosities like the aged face of the soldier on Victoria's memorial or how Joffre came to unveil a plaque in a Presbyterian Church. Instead I seek to identify ways in which this study might contribute to a broader understanding of Canada in the period of the Great War.

Today, the emphasis on individual research with publication tightly controlled by relatively low circulation academic journals is being challenged by on-line publishing. Today for a relatively modest investment anyone can publish almost anything on the internet. A professionally moderated university web site can provide both ample opportunity for publication of research by student teams and the quality assurance so important for the credibility of on-line research. Not only could students gain much needed exposure but they would also benefit from the experience of working in a self-managed project team and acquiring valuable web site development skills.

Until fairly recently, access to large data sets about Canadian soldiers in the Great War has not been easily available to historians. Through the admirable work of Library and Archives Canada, the full set of soldier service files is now available for examination but with minimum indexing. For those seeking information about individuals or families, it is possible to construct a modest data set by examining the content of each soldier's file. The process quickly becomes a significant barrier to larger scale analysis. For example, a researcher who wanted to know the occupations of soldiers to test the hypothesis that farmers were less likely to enlist than city dwellers would face a massive task. Perhaps the most important contribution of this study is uncovering new tools to examine this vast and largely

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untapped data base. Today, for example, the regimental search function of LAC finds only 11 records linked to PPCLI of the more than 4000 who served and only 44 for the Royal Canadian Regiment.<sup>282</sup>

Over a decade ago, in parallel to the ground breaking work of LAC, a loose coalition of Great War historians lead by Marc Leroux established the Canadian Great War Project web site. This crowd sourced web site began the laborious process of adding material to individual records and vastly expanding the search function. That database has been an invaluable resource to much of my work and the work of many others, but it too had some significant limitations. Although it had a very much improved search function and much more data on many soldiers, it held only 180,000 records. Where researchers had a particular interest, the data was extensive but large gaps remained. For example, the records of the PPCLI were largely complete as a result of a regimental project while those of many other units were rather sparse. Equally challenging was a lack of normalized data. Place names, occupations, religion and even ranks were not always entered in a consistent manner. In addition to the personnel records data, the project web site also included a substantial number of transcribed war diaries largely completed by regimental historians and a variety of other documents and images that dozens of volunteer researchers had contributed.

In 2016, Marc Leroux and the University of Victoria Library agreed to a long-term plan to ensure the preservation and enhancement of this valuable data set. Over the past two years, the humanities computing section of the library has made extensive improvements to the search function and expanded the data set to include all LAC records. Although all are not yet fully indexed with normalized data, there have been dramatic improvement. Today a search for Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry returns 4441 records along with links to underlying archives. A search for Presbyterians returns almost 20,000 records and a search for Labourers over 7,000 with attestation declarations mapped to

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<sup>282</sup> Library and Archives Canada Personnel Records of the First World War accessed Apr 10, 2019.

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underlying HISCO codes<sup>283</sup>. There are currently sixteen search criteria ranging from dates to place names, and even POW camp and location buried. In the planning stage is a similar program to index and transcribe digitized unit and formation war diaries. At present an enhanced display function for war diaries allows quick access by unit and date.

Ensuring data integrity is also critically important. The crowd sourcing model adopted by Marc Leroux has much to commend it. Although hundreds contributed to data entry, Marc established a small group of trusted members to review all new material submitted. In this case there was always some risk that data entry formats would vary. With the transition to site management by the University of Victoria, several technical changes will further limit this risk by imposing a review process before the posting of any new material and ensuring regular back up of the site. Ultimately the best check against error is a site that is both actively used and provides an easy and effective method for users to query any material that is posted. Although Wikipedia is often criticized by academic historians, many of the processes on their moderated sites provide an example of best practices. For example, the source and history of all changes are recorded, and users are provided the opportunity to challenge or comment on material. While university web sites have typically been tightly controlled, when faced with the masses of archival material associated with the Great War, crowd sourcing while ensuring data integrity is an approach that academic historians need to embrace.

This study has merely scratched the surface of the potential use of these data sets. In the years to come, labour historians will be able to examine the nature of the civilian trades of those who enlisted. Historians of religion will be able to map participation rate by religion and to compare responses in cities across the country within minutes. Once a target data set is assembled more extensive analysis

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<sup>283</sup> HISCO, the Historical International Classification of Occupations is widely used by social historians seeking to standardize references to historic occupations from the 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<https://collab.iisg.nl/web/hisco/>

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becomes relatively straight forward. In a similar way, a researcher might examine religion, age, marital status or if extended to the War Graves Commission data, even cause of death. Consider for example a study that looked at death by type of disease. Most accounts focus on the impact of influenza late in the war but many of the thousands buried in Canada also died of pneumonia and tuberculosis (phthisis). I trust that my efforts in this paper are but a modest first step in tapping into the data about soldiers of the Great War that is perhaps unequalled by any other nation. The efforts to normalize unit identifiers, ranks and locations that have been initiated should provide a fruitful data set well into the future.

In addition to this use of large data sets, the accompanying on line document and image archive can provide a very powerful tool for shared research. The team-based research approach used on the City Goes to War web site has not only added useful analysis but also given that material significant public exposure. In greater Victoria, local archives and news media already make extensive use of the site. Members of local historical societies and even people doing family history research have both used the site and added materials to the site. By raising the profile of Great War research at the University of Victoria, a number of major donations of archival material have been acquired both by the provincial archives and the university.<sup>284</sup>

While site content is of great importance, writing for the internet also challenges the traditional approach of academic historians. The emphasis has been on individual work and development of a carefully constructed thesis where the reader is expected to start at the beginning and follow the argument through to its conclusion. The author of a web site must understand that users may enter the site at any point. For example, the most common point of entry for my regimental history web site was a rather narrow technical discussion about the differences between the Ross Rifle and the Lee Enfield

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<sup>284</sup> In 2018, I was the initial point of contact for two families seeking advice on how they might preserve major collections.

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rather than the home page. Fundamentally there is a power shift from author to user, with the user empowered to navigate through the site in a way that best meets their needs. This does not mean that a complex case cannot be argued but rather that the author must actively seek to entice the user to further exploration. Clear navigational tools, a good search function and ease of access to supporting material is vital.

But methodology alone is not sufficient. It is also important to identify how this project might make a substantive contribution to broader historical discourse. Clearly there are many similarities across the range of city studies I have considered. Initial fulsome support for the war with troops marching off to the cheers of hometown crowds is a common theme. The renewed commitment in response to heavy casualties early in the war and the support of religious leaders that assure their parishioners that theirs is a holy mission against a godless enemy are also common themes. The Kaiserhof incident marking a rising tide of resentment against any who might be even loosely associated with the enemy can find echoes from Frieberg to Toronto.

There are also striking differences. Victoria, perhaps more than any of the other cities considered remained steadfast to the end. Even in the final months dissent was muted. There is little evidence of the fractures that began to appear in Toronto or Winnipeg. Even the response to the Winnipeg General strike of 1919 was muted in Victoria. Although local historian Benjamin Isitt describes it as the “Victoria General strike” it was simply a rather quiet four-day work stoppage that was largely limited to dockyard workers<sup>285</sup>. These differences are not simply a response to more effective propaganda. There is little doubt that both the British and Canadian propaganda campaigns for the war were well run. Nevertheless, I must side with Miller rather than Keshen in concluding that for the most

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<sup>285</sup> Benjamin Isitt, “Searching for Solidarity: The One Big Union and the Victoria General Strike of 1919” *Labour/Le Travail* 60, Fall 2007, 9-42

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part, the people of Victoria had a wealth of information from multiple sources about the terrible cost of the war. The daily casualty lists, stories from returned soldiers and those who had been to the front regularly appeared in the press. Through 1917, easy access to the unrestricted US press provided ample opportunity for remarkably balanced reporting. The Victoria newspapers of the day did a thorough job of reporting the war. The overwhelming vote in favour of the Union government and conscription provides ample evidence of Victoria's solid support at least within the dominant settler community. Quite simply, Victorians accepted the appeal of John McCrae to "take up our quarrel with the foe".

Perhaps it should not be a great surprise that the major unique findings of this study all relate to the darker side of warfare rather than the heroic images that communities are more likely to preserve. The First Nations and Chinese communities of Victoria responded to the entrenched racism of pre-war Victoria in remarkably different ways. In both cases, they suggest broader untold stories of national significance.

The internment of Japanese Canadians in World War 2 has caused some historians to look back at their involvement as combat troops in the Great War. In contrast, the response of the larger Chinese community has been largely ignored. There was little reason for the Chinese community to find common cause with the Japanese in either conflict. The rising threat of Japanese Imperial ambitions evident during the Great War was of significant concern to Chinese Canadians focussed on events in China. The appearance of a Japanese warship in Victoria would not have been a welcome sight in Victoria's Chinatown. A generation later, the rape of Nanjing gave bloody reality to those concerns. China, of course did not formally enter the conflict until later in the war, and then primarily as a source of labour units. Even this move did nothing to alter the fundamental position of the community in Victoria. Chinese recruits were not considered as a source of potential military manpower even late in the war when the pressure on "slackers" in the dominant settler community reached its peak. In turn,

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the Chinese community was focussed on events in China and had little interest in the war in Europe. Prominent business leaders nevertheless felt it their civic duty to support community appeals like the Patriotic Fund to support returning soldiers. A broader national study might well consider whether this pattern was reflected in other areas.

There are significant challenges in pursuing this topic as race is not easily identified in military records. For example, the surname “Lee” although common among Chinese Canadians of the period, was also the surname of 824 largely non-Asian soldiers in the LAC database. Finding brief accounts of soldiers of Japanese origin is somewhat simpler largely based on the decision to concentrate them in a few units of the Canadian Corps like the 52<sup>nd</sup> Battalion<sup>286</sup>. These narratives however are usually provided as little more than background to the ill treatment of Japanese Canadians during World War 2.

Despite these difficulties, our study of Victoria suggests a possible approach. Where there are substantial racialized ethnic minorities, it should be possible to identify potential soldiers through either the 1911 or 1921 census. The newspapers of the day will typically provide ample evidence of prejudices within the dominant community. What is more difficult is finding evidence from within the impacted racialized community. Even here, however, a researcher with suitable linguistic skills should be able to access records of the impacted community. In cities like Victoria and Vancouver, there are several Chinese organizations that date back to well before the Great War. Perhaps this type of research would reveal interesting differences. For example, it seems likely that the Chinese community would have well founded doubts about the intentions of Japan during the war. Japan, on the other hand was an early and active ally largely responsible for naval defence in the Pacific. How then did relations between

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<sup>286</sup> Service Record for 228400 Pte Nabura Murakami, Library and Archives Canada - After serving about a month with PPCLI in the fall of 1916, he was transferred to the 52<sup>nd</sup> Bn before the Vimy Battle.

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these two communities play out and how different were the attitudes of the euro-Canadians toward the two groups?

For First Nations, the story of racism plays out in quite a different manner. National accounts of the role of aboriginal peoples often fail to recognize that the Coast Salish peoples are at least as different from the Mohawk as the Irish are from the Polish. Such attempts at homogenization simply fail to recognize the diversity and very different histories that shaped the response of First Nations. The different patterns of enlistment and resistance uncovered in this study suggest a very real need to reconsider the sanitized versions of First Nations experience of the war presented by our national institutions.

Even though Robert Talbot takes the words of a Salish Chief “It would be best to leave us alone” for the title of his article on First Nations resistance, there is little in his study that gives the reader a sense of the magnitude of that resistance in British Columbia.<sup>287</sup> The major barrier to research in this area has been a combination of deliberate obfuscation by the government of Canada and lack of records or even oral history from the communities that were the centres of that resistance. What has changed in recent years is the remarkable effort by First Nations communities to identify those who did enlist. While not yet complete, this relatively new set of data could form the basis of a new and much more diverse story of First Nations in the Great War. If linked to the Canadian Great War project the resulting analysis should prove interesting. The most critical element in any such broader venture is, of course, the engagement of First Nations in uncovering this long-obscured record of the exercise of their sovereign power to decide when to go to war.

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<sup>287</sup> Robert J. Talbot. “It would be best to leave us alone: First Nations Responses to the Canadian War Effort, 1914-1918” in *Journal of Canadian Studies*. Vol 45 No 1, (Winter 2011), 90-120, University of Toronto Press.

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The sad reality is that the time available for such research is short. The generation with any direct contact with those from the period of the Great War is rapidly shrinking. Those who may recall first hand accounts told by their elders are now in their seventies or eighties. Written records that may still exist such as diaries or letters are at risk of being permanently lost simply because their significance may not be understood. The records uncovered in this brief foray into the experience of those in and around Victoria will, I trust, provide some incentive for a more thorough examination of those silent communities.

The final element from the dark side of Victoria's history is the recruitment of boy soldiers. While this study has worked from a very small data set, the implications of a national pattern of similar magnitude are profound. In an era where such activity is clearly identified as a war crime, if the pattern found in Victoria is not just a local anomaly, we might find up to 8,000 underage soldiers. Even if there are half that number, it reflects a profound shift in social attitudes toward childhood and war that deserves to be explored. Was the practice of knowingly enlisting underage boys in both the army and navy merely an aberration that occurred in Victoria or was it much more commonplace? Was there any complaint about the practice and if so, how did government respond? At the very least, it may now be appropriate for the Government of Canada to finally admit culpability in this matter instead of perpetuating the idea that those underage boys were somehow at fault because they lied.

The web site, developed as part of this project<sup>288</sup>, has been a crucial element in the research process. In the spring of 2019, the additional material gathered for this paper will be added to the already substantial on-line archive available on that site. The reality of the digital age is that any history paper, whatever the merits, is likely to remain largely inaccessible unless published in an academic journal or posted on line. In addition, providing much of the supporting archival material in a searchable

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<sup>288</sup> <http://acitygoestowar.ca/>

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online database means the countless hours of digging by those who have collaborated on this project is not wasted. Digital access also dramatically improves the capacity of historians to share their research material and collaborate with others. This work has been immeasurably supported by the research efforts of numerous students associated with the City Goes to War web site and the work of other digital historians like Marc Leroux, the creator of the Canadian Great War Project. More importantly, by engaging the University of Victoria Library those efforts will now remain accessible to others interested in the same field.

Finally, I trust this study has demonstrated that any city, town or community group, whether church, school or clubhouse can now give meaning to those words that are so often mouthed at ceremonies on Remembrance Day:

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning  
We will remember them.<sup>289</sup>

Given the on-line tools now available, the names on that plaque on the wall of the school, church or clubhouse need not be just a list of people that few remember. With easy access to data, those stories can once again come to life. To that end, the City Goes to War web site has included a section aimed at secondary school teachers and students to encourage an interest in use of archival material. In the greater Victoria area at least, the efforts of local historians in marking the centennial of the Great War has for a time at recovered much of what was once forgotten. The improved Canadian Great War Project web site can also serve as a hub and on-line archive for other communities seeking to explore their own history of that pivotal period in Canadian history.

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<sup>289</sup> Robert Laurence Binyon. "For the Fallen" first published in *The London Times* 21 Sep 1914.

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