

FIRST WORLD WAR FINDING AID

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Prepared by: Holly Peterson

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Edmonton and the First World War

The assassination of Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie by a Yugoslav nationalist on June 28th 1914 led to a war that forever changed the young nation of Canada. The First World War has been interpreted as causing as Canada's coming-of-age; its transition from a former colony to a nation in its own right. This came at the cost of more Canadian lives than any armed conflict before or since.

On August 4th 1914, in response to Germany's invasion of neutral Belgium, Great Britain declared war on the Central Powers. As Canada's foreign policy was determined by Britain, our nation was automatically pulled into war as well. This news was received with great enthusiasm in Edmonton, with parades being held through the streets, speeches read, patriotic songs sung, and, according to the Morning Albertan of August 5th, one German who denounced the British Empire being "badly beaten" by a mob.

At the start of the war, Edmonton had only one infantry and one volunteer cavalry unit – the 101st Fusiliers and the 19th Alberta Dragoons (which were merged in 1946). This number swelled hugely as Edmontonians jumped at the chance to volunteer for overseas service. The day after the announcement of war saw a tremendous turnout at the offices of the Journal, where all those willing to join the armed forces were invited to register. The first Edmontonians to leave for the war did so on August 12th, 13th and 14th as part of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. They were followed by around 900 men of the 101st Fusiliers the following week. Other battalions which were based or recruited mainly in Edmonton included the 31st (Alberta Battalion), the 49th, the 51st, the 63rd, the 66th (Edmonton Guards), the 138th, the 194th (Edmonton Highlanders), the 202nd (Sportsman's Battalion), the 218th (Irish Guards), and the 233rd (French-Canadians), all parts of the nation-wide Canadian Expeditionary Force. Many students and faculty at the University of Calgary joined up with the 196th Western Universities' Battalion or the Ambulance Corps. There is evidence that the Nova Scotia-based No. 2 Construction Battalion, the only predominantly black battalion in Canadian military history, attempted to recruit members in Edmonton. Furthermore, not only Edmontonian men contributed to the overseas war effort; many women also departed to serve as nurses or drivers in Europe. According to a 1946 Edmonton Journal article, recruiting was so popular that the city's population decreased by about 25,000 between 1913 and 1916.

Overseas, Edmontonian recruits participated in such important battles as Ypres, the Somme, Passchendaele, Vimy Ridge, and Amiens. Ypres was notable as the first time a former colonial force (Canada) defeated that of a European empire (Germany) on European soil. The Battle of Vimy Ridge, an allied Victory during which all divisions of the Canadian Expeditionary Force fought together for the first time, is seen by many as a pivotal moment in the making of Canada as a nation. Amiens marked a turning point in the war, beginning the Hundred Days Offensive in which the German army was forced out of France and finally defeated. Some Edmontonians also travelled to the Russian Far East with the Canadian Siberian Expeditionary Force in 1918-1919 to help support the White Russians against the Bolshevik revolutionaries.

Many Edmontonians played noteworthy roles in the war. Lt. Wilfred 'Wop' May, the famous bush pilot, was the last Allied aviator to be pursued by the Red Baron before the latter was shot down. May later received the Distinguished Flying Cross for his actions in the war. Reginald Henry, son of the Mayor of Edmonton, and a fellow former student of the University of Alberta flew a plane bearing the name of Edmonton in Cree – believed to be the first instance of a First

Nations language written on an aircraft – at Vimy; unfortunately the plane and its pilots were lost. Col. Peter Anderson, whose fonds are in the possession of the City of Edmonton Archives, escaped from a German Prisoner of War camp near the Austro-Hungarian border and managed to flee all the way to his native Denmark. Major-General William Antrobus Griesbach of the 49th Battalion, after whom the neighborhood and former army base are named, received the Distinguished Service Award twice, as well as other honors. Four soldiers from Edmonton or the surrounding area – Edmund de Wind, Cecil Kinross, George McKean and John Kerr – received the Victoria Cross, the highest military decoration the British Commonwealth can bestow.

Those who remained on the home front were no less eager to answer the call to war. The Legion of Frontiersmen were equipped with weapons and served as the town guard. Women's organizations worked hard to donate money, clothing, and other necessary goods to soldiers, their dependents at home, and civilian victims of war. City Council frequently received and granted requests to support such charities. Due to labor shortages, many women became breadwinners and took up jobs formerly monopolized by men. This increasing role of women in the public sphere was a factor in Alberta granting suffrage to (white) females in 1916.

Many of the city's facilities, including McKay Avenue and King Edward Schools, the Edmonton Exhibition Grounds, the South Side Athletic Grounds, the Victoria Golf Links, and sections of streets were offered as training areas or barracks for troops. In addition, the Prince of Wales Armory, at which the City of Edmonton Archives is now located, was constructed from 1914-1915 to serve as a drill hall. The cost of light, heat, and water to these buildings, as well as that of troop transportation on public streetcars, was often covered by the City.

Canada's strong support of Great Britain and its allies had a darker side. Many Ukrainian-Canadians and other supposed 'enemy aliens' living in and around Edmonton were imprisoned throughout the war in Alberta's four internment camps, simply because they or their ancestors hailed from countries then at war with Canada. The prisoners endured forced labor, harsh conditions, and widespread disease; those who survived often returned home to find that all their property had been sold.

March 22nd, 1919, when the 49th Battalion returned home, was declared a civic holiday by the Mayor. Over half of Edmonton's population lined the streets to watch the soldiers arrive. The postwar celebration was dampened, however, by the Spanish influenza pandemic, which was spread by soldiers returning from Europe and ultimately killed almost as many Canadians as the war had. Furthermore, the economy of Edmonton, which had experienced a boom in the early years of the twentieth century, had gone sharply downhill just before the war and was worsened by the population decline. The city would suffer through the Great Depression and a Second World War before the discovery of oil in the late 1940s brought back the pre-war prosperity.

According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, 2,280 enlisted Edmontonians died in the First World War. Edmonton also lost a number of its civilians; for example, twelve Edmontonian citizens perished when the British liner *Lusitania* was torpedoed by a German U-Boat in 1915, sparking a public outcry against unrestricted submarine warfare. A Memorial Hall commemorating the dead was built in 1920 by the Great War Veterans' Association. The Edmonton Cenotaph, a monument serving as a symbolic tomb for all the City's war victims, was unveiled in 1936. It was rededicated after the Second World War to memorialize that war's casualties as well.

Government Records

The City of Edmonton Council Minute books from 1914, 1915, 1916, 1917/18, and 1919/20 provide a wealth of information on the municipal government's response to wartime issues such as the recruitment and training of men, the use of city facilities by the armed forces, and the financial wellbeing of soldiers' families. Indexes at the front of each volume provide alphabetical lists of the topics covered within, but for ease of access, a quick reference guide for pages dealing with the First World War has been assembled here. For each subject, the book number is provided first, followed by the page numbers in brackets.

Specific battalions:

- 49th Battalion – 1915 (179, 209, 457), 1917/18 (1, 51, 71, 78, 490, 491), 1919/1920 (4, 53, 58, 77, 94)
- 51st Battalion – 1915 (179, 209, 457)
- 101st Regiment/Edmonton Fusiliers – 1914 (433, 483)
- Alberta Dragoons – 1914 (407), 1915 (147)
- Legion of Frontiersmen – 1915 (115, 154, 155, 166, 278, 279, 292, 295, 301), 1916 (156, 163, 182, 208, 296, 297)
- Others (Edmonton Battalion Reserve Militia, 151st Battalion, 202nd Battalion, 194th Battalion, No. 2 Construction Battalion) – 1916 (42, 95, 113, 130, 302), 1917/18 (43)

Department of Militia – 1914 (380, 459), 1915 (431, 432, 457) 1916 (19, 55, 67, 95), 1917/18 (76, 88, 157, 502)

City employees on/returning from military service – 1914 (359, 367, 368, 377, 388, 394, 402, 419, 420, 426, 448, 464, 465, 466, 495, 544), 1915 (11, 21, 22, 34, 42, 127, 158, 259), 1917/18 (402, 516)

Recruitment/training of soldiers – 1914 (366), 1915 (257, 325, 457), 1916 (130, 131, 207, 317)

Use of city facilities by soldiers and families:

- Free transport – 1914 (489, 498, 529), 1915 (24, 35, 154, 155, 166, 278, 279, 292, 447), 1916 (117, 214, 316, 327), 1917/18 (44, 66, 67, 115, 138, 500)
- Use of specific buildings, streets, parks, etc. – 1914 (407, 433, 493, 550), 1915 (295, 457), 1916 (42, 64, 66, 95, 113, 130, 156, 296, 297, 321)
- Water, electricity, light, heat, phone service, etc. – 1914 (367, 407, 448, 493, 550), 1915 (147, 295, 457), 1916 (55)

Hospitals and medical care – 1916 (321), 1917/18 (9, 33, 67, 399, 409, 429, 499)

Fundraisers, charities, war bonds, etc.:

- British Sailors' Relief Fund – 1916 (324, 325)

- Canadian War Hospital Fund – 1917/18 (399, 409, 499)
- Military Hospital Commission – 1916 (321), 1917/18 (9, 67)
- Patriotic Fund – 1914 (445, 446, 465, 466), 1915 (21), 1916 (322, 326), 1917/18 (43, 44, 55, 314, 331)
- Relief for civilians (Belgium, Poland, Serbia, Romania) – 1915 (240), 1916 (155), 1917/18 (93, 471, 495)
- Remission of taxes to soldiers' widows – 1917/18 (229, 248, 271, 285)
- Soldiers' Entertainment Fund – 1915 (473), 1916 (5, 24)
- St. John's Ambulance sock campaign – 1917/18 (85, 86)
- War loans/bonds (Dominion of Canada War Loan, Victory Loan Bonds) – 1915 (423), 1917/18 (244, 492, 494)

Returned soldiers:

- Care of – 1916 (298, 323, 324)
- Canadian Association of Returned Soldiers – 1917/18 (5, 10, 93)
- Christmas dinner for – 1917/18 (1)
- Employees returning from active service – 1917/18 (402, 516)
- Employment/vocational training of – 1915 (208, 234), 1916 (219)
- Great War Next of Kin Association – 1917/18 (439)
- Great War Veterans Association – 1917/18 (150, 164, 229, 235, 236, 243, 246, 248, 269, 274, 284, 317, 346, 364, 375, 376, 381, 390, 391, 400, 404, 428, 483, 496), 1919/20 (51, 113, 151, 328, 416, 462, 467, 519)
- Invalided Soldiers Commission – 1917/18 (429)
- Medals, etc. for returned soldiers – 1917/18 (160, 393)
- Returned Soldiers Bureau – 1915 (451), 1916 (4, 57, 66, 141, 174, 184, 307, 319, 328), 1917/18 (1, 2, 10)
- Soldiers' tax arrears – 1919/20 (202)
- Soldiers – provision for voting – 1915 (463, 479)
- Veterans' bonus – 1919/20 (242)

Specific bills, laws, and other legal actions:

- Military Service Act – 1917/18 (459, 460, 486, 489, 517)

- Moratorium Act – 1916 (315)
- Pension bill (soldiers) – 1916 (239)

Medals, certificates, etc. – 1917/18 (82, 83, 100, 160, 393, 406)

War trophies – 1917/18 (1, 490, 491), 1919/20 (13, 196, 465, 467)

Roll of Honor – 1915 (376), 1916 (65), 1917/18 (150)

The dead:

- Condolences – 1916 (291), 1917/18 (12)
- J. A. Peugeot monument – 1916 (259, 293)
- Soldiers' Burial Plot – 1917/18 (502, 517)

Peace celebration – 1919/20 (200)

Manuscript Fonds

Manuscript material relating to the First World War can be found in many of the City of Edmonton Archives' collections. More in-depth information on the following fonds can be found in the Archives' online catalogue.

- MS-3 – Lewis Davis Pollard fonds – includes a copy of the Military Service act and news clippings related to the First World War.
- MS-30 – Mary Hamilton fonds – includes a Great War Veterans' Memorial Hall share certificate, a Great War Veterans' Association of Canada poppy day campaign leaflet, an Amputations Association of the Great War jubilee program, and a Red Cross pin.
- MS-41 – Lyman Delmar Parney fonds – includes a scrapbook of news clippings related to WWI and other subjects.
- MS-62 – Frederick Charles Jamieson fonds – includes correspondence, notes, and other documents relating to Jamieson's military service, particularly the administration of the canteen and officer's mess of the 260th Battalion.
- MS-86 – Citizens' Cenotaph Committee fonds – includes bank book and deposit slips documenting fundraising for the Edmonton Cenotaph and copies of the programs for the unveiling and rededication of this monument.
- MS-101 – Gault and Mary MacAllister fonds – includes programs for banquets held by the 49th and 66th Battalions, a Christmas/New Year's card from the First Canadian Infantry Brigade, and a constitution and bylaws relating to the Great War Next-of-Kin Association of Edmonton.
- MS-107 – Hazel Rutherford McCuaig fonds – includes a 1919 Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire calendar with photographs of Canadian woman war workers, including Mrs. F.W.F. Field, Mrs. John A. McDougall, and Red Cross Workers at Mrs. H.M.E. Evans' home.
- MS-131 – Christina (McQueen) McKnight fonds – includes Canadian Patriotic Fund instructions, c. 1914-1918, an Edmonton Patriotic and Relief Funds Committee ribbon, a 1925 program for inauguration of memorial organ at the U of A, and an Order of Service for the rededication of the Edmonton Cenotaph.
- MS-218 – Peter Anderson fonds – includes a menu card celebrating the birthday of Major B. J. Saunders, a manuscript of Anderson's escape from a German Prisoner of War camp, a letter written from Anderson to his son while at the camp, humorous regimental orders with a list of officers, an emblem and a military uniform button.
- MS-745 – 51st Battalion Association fonds – includes the 1916 nominal roll of officers, non-commissioned officers, and men of the 51st Battalion. Original is fragile; use access copy.
- MS-754 – Frank William Wiggins fonds – includes a poster board proclamation marking the end of WWI.

Photographs

The City of Edmonton Archives has many photographs related to the First World War. Access copies of many of these are found in the card catalogues in the reference room. They can be located using the reference cards labelled 'World War One,' which give the identification numbers of pictures relevant to this subject. Although there are too many to list here, several photographs of particular interest include:

- EA-10-2957, EA-157-313, and EA-254-7, showing soldiers departing for war.
- EA-29-4, showing the Edmonton Cenotaph at its original location in 1936.
- EA-29-38 and EA-29-88, showing the Edmonton Fusiliers officially receiving their colors outside of the First Presbyterian Church.
- EA-45-1113, showing soldiers practicing trench warfare at the Exhibition grounds.
- EA-63-5 and EA-255-14 to EA-255-17, showing the homecoming of the 49th Battalion.
- EA-63-115, showing a soldier wearing a gas mask outside of Alberta College South.
- EA-64-15, showing the opening ceremony of the Memorial Hall in 1920.
- The series EA-254-2 to EA-254-9, containing photographs of the 51st Battalion.
- The series between EA-443-2 and EA-443-21, containing many photographs of the Royal Flying Corps during the First World War (among other subjects.)
- The series between EB-23-78 and EB-23-109, containing many circa-1915 photographs of Edmonton officers and battalions (among other subjects.)

Several of these photographs are shown in Appendix I at the end of this finding aid.

Some, though not all, of these pictures can be found in the Archives' online database. Not all of these have physical copies in the reference room.

Library

Several books relating to the experiences of specific Edmontonians or groups of Edmontonians in the First World War can be found in the City of Edmonton Archives' library.

- 356.113 STE – A City Goes to War: History of the Loyal Edmonton Regiment, G. R. Stevens – details the history of the Loyal Edmonton Regiment, including their service in the First World War.
- 940.3 MCC – The Next of Kin: Those Who Wait and Wonder, Nellie McClung – accounts of Canadian men and women during the First World War, their contributions to the war effort, and their reactions to the conflict.
- 940.47 PUR – Unsung Heroes of War: Our Catholic Chaplains, Edward F. Purcell – the stories of Edmontonian chaplains involved in the World Wars.
- 940.481 BRA and 940.481 BRA REV – The Path of Duty: the Wartime Letters of Alwyn Bramley Moore 1914-1916, Alwyn Bramley Moore, edited Kenneth W. Tingley – the personal correspondence of Moore, a Canadian soldier killed in the First World War. 940.481 BRA REV is a revised edition.

Clippings Files

The Archives' clipping files collection contains newspaper articles on a wide variety of subjects. Each of the following files contains at least one clipping related to the First World War.

General:

- Prince of Wales Armouries 1
- World War I 1
- World War I 2
- World War I Battles

Biographies:

- Acton, Alfred Lloyd – obituary
- Anderson, Pete (Colonel)
- Edmiston, Kenneth
- Younger, Lewis Col. – obituary

Appendix I: Photographs

The following are sample photographs of the First World War from the City of Edmonton Archives' collections.



Crowds gather on Jasper Avenue to hear news of the conflict brewing in Europe. The photo is dated August 3rd 1914, one day before Britain declared war on Germany.



The Edmonton Fusiliers officially receive their colors outside the First Presbyterian Church, c. 1914.



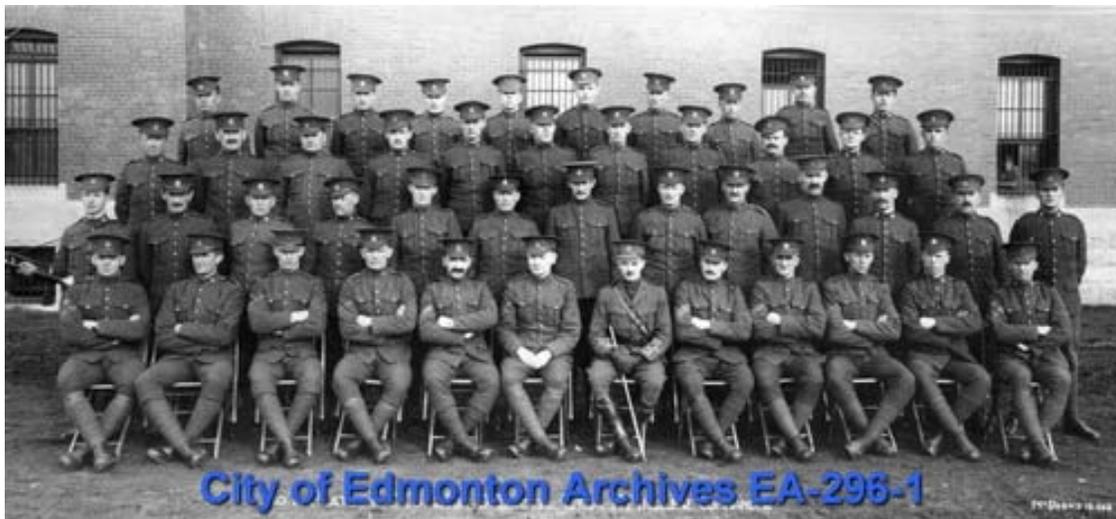
The 51st Battalion sets sail for Europe in 1915.



Edmontonians attend a thrift stamp drive on Jasper Avenue to raise money for the war effort, 1915.



A soldier wearing a gas mask stands outside Alberta College South, then used as a Veteran's hospital, c. 1917



Group photograph showing the No 2. Platoon of the 51st Battalion c. 1916



Allied troops on the front lines in France, October 19th 1915.



Edmontonians fill the streets to welcome home the 49th Battalion in 1919.



The opening ceremonies for Memorial Hall in 1920.



The Edmonton Cenotaph in 1936, newly-dedicated to the city's war dead.