

Hidden Histories



SASKATOON'S GREAT WAR MEMORIALS

By Eric Story

A Collaborative Project between the City of Saskatoon and
the University of Saskatchewan Community Engaged-History
Collaboratorium

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Top of the Hugh Cairns Memorial

Photo by Eric Story

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever walked down the street and wondered, “What is that statue for?” or “Why is that there?”? This magazine, “Hidden Histories: Saskatoon’s Great War Memorials,” provides answers to a few of these questions.

“Hidden Histories” is a seven-essay compilation of Saskatoon’s memory of the First World War. Fought between 1914 and 1918, the Great War had a deep impact on the community of Saskatoon. Although it is unclear how many from Saska-

“Hidden Histories . . . speaks of Saskatoon’s story.”

toon enlisted, 5,602 men signed up in the city, many travelling from neighbouring communities to acquire a uniform and fight for king and country.

By the time the Armistice was declared on 11 November 1918, Saskatoon had undergone a profound transformation. The four-year long conflict brought about heated ethnic divides, prohibition, women’s suffrage, and, of course, death and mourning. Beginning in 1920, the community began to mark the war with public art in order to remember the war and commemorate the men who had fallen.

“Hidden Histories” tells the stories of these pieces of art, yet it also speaks to Saskatoon’s collective story. Although these memorials remain rooted in one specific place in the city, the stories behind these memorials are not. As the memorials grow older, new generations tell new stories about them, some based in fact, others in myth. Like tales passed from an aging grandfather to his grandson, they change as they are passed along, shaped by the generations who inherit these stories. And so here is my chance to tell our generation’s story about the memorials. I have tried to give voice to the individual, and less to the stones that commemorate them. I hope I have done them justice.



1



Each age has left memorials of what they thought worthy of honour and reverence. The pyramids of Egypt, the tem-



ples of Greece, the Cathedrals of the Middle Ages . . . reveal and reflect the highest and best of the thoughts of their time.

12



This age will be judged by the memorials which it has left of the services of its sons and daughters.

Walter Murray, 1928



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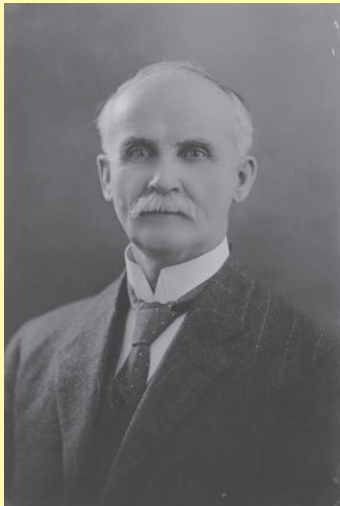
“This memorial is a living thing”

The University of Saskatchewan Memorial Gates

Building a campus memorial was not a foregone conclusion following the Great War. Delays immediately after the war, and financial difficulties left the university with a difficult decision. Were they able to erect a suitable memorial?

Nineteen eighteen was not easy for the University of Saskatchewan. President Walter Murray called it the university’s “most trying” year. Twenty-four U of S soldiers were killed on the battlefields. And in October, campus was quarantined as a result of the Spanish Influenza Epidemic, continuing to rattle the institution to its very foundations.

Despite the adversity the university faced, President Murray believed it imperative that the U of S boys who fell overseas were remembered for generations to come. And so, beginning in August 1918, he wrote to various companies, enquiring about the costs of a memorial plaque or tablet. But he was delayed. Between 1919 and 1920, the university entered a period of crisis, when Murray was accused of falsifying a financial report given to a M.L.A. Although the charges were proven untrue, Murray had



President Walter Murray,
c. 1935

a nervous breakdown, resulting in an extended leave from the university for five months. By 1921, Murray still had not made a decision about the form the memorial would take.

In May 1923, Murray began to correspond with the university’s original architect, David R. Brown, about a campus memorial. He had remained in communication with Brown since the university opened in 1909. Subsequently, in 1926, a Memorial Committee was appointed to “look into the matter of a suitable Memorial to be erected on University grounds, in

commemoration of those Professors and Students who served in the Great War.” They decided that the most suitable form of a memorial would take the shape of Memorial Gates. Brown would be the builder.

In order to pay for the construction of the Memorial Gates, the Memorial Committee began a fundraising campaign. A \$10,000 goal was set, and alumni were targeted. As historian Jonathon Vance points out, the construction of a memorial “stood as public affirmation of the people’s desire to keep the faith: the erection of a memorial was



General J.F.L. Embury

a tangible sign of the community’s determination to remember the fallen and, by extension, the values for which they died.” In the case of the U of S, this memorial project would be one undertaken by the entire campus community, whether one was a student, staff member or alumni. Past and present members of the U of S would all lend a hand in the construction of the Memorial Gates.

But a memorial was still premature. In September 1924, Murray corresponded once more with his architect, Brown. In a rather casual letter, he reads more matter of fact than concerned: “The gates must wait until times are better,” he wrote. The U of S had run into some financial difficulties. The construction of the gates would have to be postponed.

In 1927, fundraising had also reached a standstill. By February, current students had donated \$1,000 to the Memorial Fund, but still, only \$5,000 total had been received by the Memorial Committee. The Committee Chair and past mayor of Saskatoon, Howard McConnell, found this unacceptable. In a circular sent to all alumni, he asked, “Do you want the Members of Convocation and the Alumni to fail in the first important project they have undertaken? I don’t think you do. Do your part then in seeing that the Alumni make good their commitments. Is that too much to ask?” McConnell was playing on the guilty consciences of the recipients of his circular in words that echoed those of war-time Canada. He was appealing to their patriotism and duty to the university—which was to remember those who had fallen for a greater cause than themselves. If alumni refused to contribute, they were to be considered post-war shirkers who had failed their institution. The Great War may have passed, but the attitudes of the era had not.

Financial difficulties eventually passed, and on 3 May 1928, the Memorial Gates were unveiled to the public. At 2:30 PM, Brigadier General J.F.L. Embury of the 28th Battalion gave his speech. For him, the Memorial Gates had



John Ross Macpherson, c. 1914

Photo from Canada and the Great World War

two different, yet inextricably tied meanings. The first applied to the present generation. It represented the sadness of the families whose loved ones had been lost in the Great War, yet also the “glorious triumph they [the soldiers] achieved and that should make them glad.” John Ross Macpherson’s father, Douglas, agreed.

Immediately afterward, he wrote President Murray, saying:

“I have just written father and mother [John’s grandparents] a detailed account of the service and of the Banquet in the evening, and have endeavoured to convey to them something of the tremendous pride I felt in hearing from yourself and from so many others such sincere words of affection and admiration for Ross.”

As for future generations, Embury said,

“. . . the gates will serve as a reminder of the greatest war in history and of the triumph to which it ended. It will keep alive their love of their native land and will probably arouse in their hearts the same desire to fight and die for their country that was responsible for the sacrifice of those whose names are on the tablets.”

Embury saw this memorial as a tool of recruitment and a representation of Canadian nationalism. He continued, “This memorial, therefore, is to us a living thing. It should not only remind us of the losses we suffered but it should cause us to look forward with gratitude to the years of peace that lie ahead as a result of those sacrifices.”

The memorial is a “living thing,” in part, because it regenerated the memory of those who had fallen in the war. It gave those in attendance



Photo by Eric Storey

A poppy in front of the Memorial Gates

of the unveiling a sense of closure. Yet that closure

did not mean the end. On the contrary, the Memorial Gates were to be used, once the construction of the university was complete, as the main entrance to campus. It would be both a “utilitarian and an aesthetic memorial.” In doing so, the Memorial Gates would live up to the name Saskatoon newspaper columnists gave it: “The Memorial Gateway.” ~



The Memorial Ribbons, 2015

University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, A332

A “Desire for unity, goodwill and real endeavour”

The Story of the Saskatoon Cenotaph

The year was 1928. Unknown to the public at the time, the Stock Market Crash of 1929 was just around the corner. And Saskatoon did not yet have a memorial to the dead of the Great War. Veterans, politicians and citizens banded together for a remarkably fast twenty-month campaign to erect Saskatoon’s Cenotaph. But it was not easy. And it was not without controversy.



The Clock Tower of the Saskatoon Cenotaph

"TO PERPETUATE THE MEMORY AND DEEDS OF THOSE WHO HAVE FALLEN OR WHO DIE IN THE FUTURE; TO PROMOTE AND CARE FOR MEMORIALS TO THEIR VALOUR AND SACRIFICE."



I recognize your difficulties," thundered Field-Marshal Earl

Haig. The former Commander-in-Chief of the British Armies (which included the Canadian Corps) was addressing a rally of 3,000 Canadian ex-servicemen in Ottawa in June 1925. "We ourselves (in Britain) were faced with them, but, given the desire for unity, goodwill and real endeavor, they can be overcome."



Field-Marshal Earl Haig, 1921

Haig was hoping to amalgamate all Canadian veteran groups into one single organization. Between 1917 and 1925, as many as fifteen national veterans' organizations were founded. Each group pushed its own agenda, leading to confusion as to what exactly these ex-servicemen wanted and ultimately needed. Yet Haig's call for cohesion struck a chord amongst Canadian veterans. By November, an umbrella organization was founded. It would be called the Canadian Legion of the British Empire Service League. Little did the City of Saskatoon realize that Haig's speech

would set in motion events that would eventually culminate in the unveiling of the city's very own cenotaph in 1929.

Following its founding, the Canadian Legion would draw up a Constitution outlining its goals and aims. Of the nineteen, only one addressed fallen soldiers:

"To perpetuate the memory and deeds of those who have fallen or who die in the future;

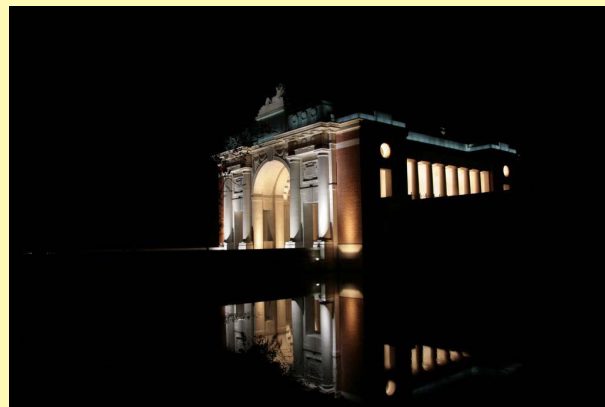
to promote and care for memorials to their valour and sacrifice; to provide suitable burial, and to keep an annual memorial day."

Following the principles of this aim, by 1928, Saskatchewan Command, Saskatoon Branch of the Canadian

Legion entered into discussions with City Council about a potential municipal war memorial. City Council appeared eager.

On 12 March 1928, planning for a war memorial in Saskatoon commenced when a formal resolution was passed in City Council. The projected cost of the memorial was \$15,000, jointly funded by the city and the Legion. By the end of April, City Council had appointed a Cenotaph Committee that would work in coordination with the Legion's own committee. And it was during this April meeting that the first suggestion for the form of Saskatoon's war memorial was made: memorial gates.

Interestingly, the University of Saskatchewan was only days away from unveiling its own memorial—which it seems



The Menin Gate at Ypres, Belgium

Photo Courtesy of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

by no coincidence were also memorial gates. Saskatoon's memorial gates, it was proposed, were to be placed at the entrance of Next-Of-Kin Memorial Avenue. Only five years earlier, in 1923, 265 trees were planted along this avenue in memory of each individual soldier who died in the Great War. It would be a fitting cap to this memorial if gates were



The top half of the Saskatoon Cenotaph, 2015



toon's tradition of war memorials. Belgium had also just unveiled its famous Menin Gate in 1927 commemorating nearly 55,000 dead Commonwealth soldiers whose graves were unknown.

Despite a tendency to construct similar memorials, the idea for a gateway in Saskatoon was soon cast aside.

A week after the unveiling of the university's Memorial Gates on 4 May, City Council decided the location of the memorial would be better suited near the center of the city. Memorial gates would simply be too large for the business district of Saskatoon. But before proceeding any further, the Cenotaph Committee announced a contest. A \$250 prize would be offered for the best cenotaph design. City Council asked that the cenotaph have a chiming clock because "it would serve a more useful and practical purpose than merely a memorial of stone or other materials with a plaque." The utilitarian aspect of the memorial would remain. A memorial to the past that spoke to the present and future remained of utmost importance.

The Saskatoon Cenotaph's base plaque. It reads, "In glorious memory of those from this city and district who at the call of King and Country adventured forth and gave their fall for the cause of right and freedom. See to it that their names be not forgotten."

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"I recognize your difficulties. But, given the desire for unity, goodwill and real endeavor, they can be overcome."

— Field-Marshal Earl Haig,
June 1925

"Keep green the memory of the sacrifice of those who died as the result of war services."

— M.A. Macpherson,
Cenotaph Unveiling, 11
November 1929



erected on the shady street. And this idea undoubtedly would have resonated among the Saskatoon population. Dually aesthetic and utilitarian memorials had been erected around Saskatoon since the early 1920s. The Star-Phoenix Clock in 1920, the University of Saskatchewan's

SASKATOON'S WAR MEMORIAL
WITH CLOCK AND CHIMES

TO THE MEMORY OF THOSE WHO DIED IN
THE GREAT WAR, 1914-1918

—
MANY HAVE NO KNOWN GRAVE
THEY DIED IN THE CAUSE OF LIBERTY
—

We appeal to you to give generously to this cause. Our objective is a minimum of \$5,000.00. Contributions should be mailed to Saskatoon Star or Phoenix. Please cut out and send on the attached coupon, marking envelope "Memorial Fund," Auspices Canadian Legion, B.E.S.L. Saskatoon Branch.

To Saskatoon War Memorial Fund,
Care of Saskatoon Daily Star or Phoenix,
City.

Enclosed please find Cheque for \$.....
Money Order for \$.....

my contribution towards the creation of a cenotaph in Saskatoon to commemorate the memory of those who died in the Great War, 1914-18.

SIGNATURE
ADDRESS

Advertisement in
The Saskatoon Phoenix,
2 June 1928

Memorial Gates in May 1928 and the soon-to-be completed Nutana Collegiate Memorial Art Gallery were not just static relics dedicated to past generations, but useful for the present and future. They spoke of the past, but also pointed to the future. Another memorial gateway would fall in line with Saska-

At the same time as democratizing the process of creating a municipal cenotaph, however, City Council did not allow everyone to participate. One of the conditions of the competition was that it was "open to any British Citizen, residing in Canada." This requirement served to further one of the myths of Canada's Great War: that it had brought about a "melting pot, in which all inhabitants would be rendered" British-Canadian. In reality, this "melting pot" idea only fed pre-existing institutions such as assimilation. Unfortunately, the Cenotaph's contest is an excellent

example of exactly that.

After the contest had been announced, the fundraising campaign began, as well as the recommendations for the location. By June 1928, the Legion had raised \$3,810, with help from *The Saskatoon Phoenix's* daily advertising. But the location of the cenotaph remained undecided. Council thought it best to decide on the location after the contest's conclusion.

On 8 August, City Council announced the winner of the cenotaph contest. F.H. Portnall, a Regina architect and Great War veteran, was selected as the victor out of fourteen applicants. It was a simple design. Almost twenty-eight feet high, the cenotaph would feature a four-faced clock at the top. Engraved around each clock would be a Union Jack, and above each engraving would be a crown, signifying the "participation of the Empire in the Great War." The top of the cenotaph would be finished with a pyramidal cap. It was a fitting memorial to a city that honoured its British heritage. Thus, it was of no coincidence that it resembled Edwin Lutyens' Cenotaph at Whitehall. It too unique, however. It was Saskatoon's Cenotaph.

But the location remained undetermined. Shortly after the contest's conclusion, City Council expressed its interest in the intersection of Twenty-Third Street and Third Avenue as a possible location for the cenotaph. But this decision was met with controversy. City Engineer G.D. Archibald wrote a letter to Council on 28 September, reminding them of the manhole located at that intersection. Chief Constable G.M. Donald

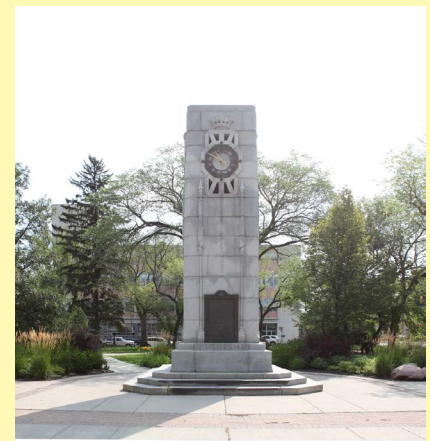
voiced his own concerns—chiefly traffic flow. He also pointed out the location of the Fire Department, and the potential inaccessibility of their vehicles if the cenotaph was placed there. If there was any controversy over the cenotaph campaign, location was it.

It was not until 5 November 1928 that City Council returned to the debate about the location of the cenotaph. An interesting decision was made. Regardless of the controversy, Council believed the purpose of the cenotaph was more important than the location, and thus should be built at the original proposed location at Twenty-Third and Third. Ten years after the war, fallen soldiers remained engrained in the minds of Saskatoon's citizens. Council was so adamant about the importance of the cenotaph that traffic flow and basic services were of lesser concern. And although Council eventually backed down, and changed the location of the Cenotaph to Twenty-First Street and Second Avenue, their stubbornness demonstrated how the importance of the Great War remained in Saskatoon.

On 11 November 1929, Saskatoon's Cenotaph was unveiled to the public. Three thousand stood in attendance. One of the speakers was the Attorney General of Saskatchewan, Major M.A. MacPherson. He saw the cenotaph as having two meanings: ". . . the first to keep green the memory of the sacrifice of those who died as the result of war services, the second to remind the citizens that there are peacetime duties which they owed their countries." But perhaps the cenotaph had a third meaning. It demonstrated that in the hearts of Saskatonians, the fallen men of the Great War were

still there. Through their donations to the Legion, participation in the cenotaph contest, and the public debates about the location, the citizens of Saskatoon showed they cared and found important the construction of their very own cenotaph.

Years passed, and the city grew. By 1957, the Cenotaph had become a traffic hazard. City Hall had been moved the previous year, and it was decided the Cenotaph would move with it onto its grounds. During the night of 15 August 1957, the Cenotaph was dismantled on Twenty-First, and moved to its new home just southeast of the entrance to City Hall, where it rests today. It is only meters away from where the city councilors of 1928 and 1929 initially hoped it would be located. ~



The Saskatoon Cenotaph,
2015

Photo by Eric Schry

\$ By the Numbers \$

The Costs of Saskatoon's Great War Memorials



• The University of Saskatchewan Memorial Gates	\$31,792.51
• The Saskatoon Cenotaph	\$18,769.93
• The University of Saskatchewan Memorial Ribbons	???
• The Nutana Collegiate Memorial Art Gallery	\$7,498.36
• The 46th Battalion Stone	???
• The Hugh Cairns Memorial	???
• The Star-Phoenix Clock	???
	<hr/>
	\$56,268.29+



Who designed these
memorials?

??

Check the answers
on page 11!

!!

The University of Saskatchewan Memorial Ribbons

Men were dying at their highest rate

The U of S felt it had to somehow remember its soldiers

And so in March 1916

Each soldier was given a scroll in the old College Building.

Their names would not be forgotten

The Memorial Ribbons, 2015



Photo by Eric Snow

By 1914, the individual soldier was celebrated throughout the Western world. The revolutions of the 1880s in Europe and America spawned the beginnings of military voluntarism, which, in turn, created the “citizen-soldier.” The citizen-soldier was patriotic—someone who put his life on hold for his country. At the University of Saskatchewan, it was no different. The citizen-soldier was held in high regard. Many of the university’s soldiers were professors and staff, students and recent graduates who had bright futures ahead of them. It is no surprise, then, the University of Saskatchewan created its own honour roll to commemorate its citizen-soldiers. In the College Building (now named the Peter MacKinnon Building), 350 names decorate its hallways on the first and second floors.



Example of a memorial ribbon

Photo by Eric Story

The idea to create a university honour roll originated at a meeting of the Board of Governors in March 1916. The Board elected to “have the names of all students, and others connected with the University who have enlisted painted on the ‘ribbons’ in the corridors.” By May, painting was well underway. What prompted this decision was the high rate of enlistment in 1916. Sixty-three of the 116 enlistees of that year joined between 21 February and 6 April. Enlistment was at its peak rate. The university had to find a way to honour those who were serving. They found it in the Memorial Ribbons.

Who is on this honour roll? Reginald Bateman, the first

Professor of English at the U of S, is just one. An Irishman of birth, he immigrated to Saskatoon in 1909 to take up the professorship of English. U of S President Walter Murray and University of Toronto President Robert Falconer recruited Bateman from his home in Ireland, yet he was quite pleased at what awaited him in Saskatoon. After receiving a pamphlet about the city, he wrote to Murray in August 1909: “[The pamphlet] makes it

out to be an Earthly Paradise on a small scale, so I am quite looking forward to sharing in its delight.” These pamphlets were small promotional pieces advertising the “all-pervading spirit of Prosperity” Saskatoon possessed. The authors of these pamphlets were obviously careful to avoid speaking of Saskatchewan’s weather conditions between November and March.

Improvement was Bateman’s life philosophy. In a lecture he gave an Education class, he



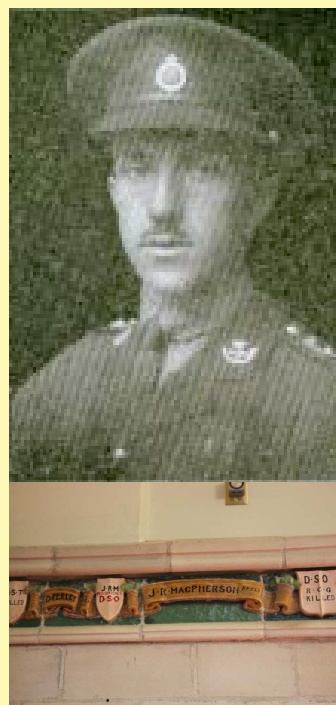
Reginald Bateman, c. 1914, above; His memorial ribbon, 2015, below



spoke of teaching as a “long and weary road, which must be travelled before I reach anything approaching my ideal.” This ideal, however, could never be reached, nor should it ever be expected.

For “As long as a man struggles, he is advancing; when he ceases to struggle, he has ceased to advance; and when he ceases to advance, it is almost certain that he has commenced to go backward,” he declared. On 3 September 1918, a shell exploded at his feet in the trenches of France. His body was never recovered.

One of Bateman’s earliest detractors was young John Ross Macpherson, another name on the university’s honour roll. Macpherson was an early editor and news correspondent for the student-run university newspaper, *The Sheaf*. When Bateman enlisted in September 1914, Macpherson was one of the first to vilify the Irishman’s decision. After a recruitment speech Bateman gave on the eve of his departure in October, Macpherson, in *The*



John Ross Macpherson, c. 1914, above; his memorial ribbon, 2015, below

University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, A3137

Photo by Eric Story

Photo from *Gravels and the Great War*

Photo by Eric Story

Sheaf's editorial of the November edition, accused the professor of having a “Viking-like thirst for glory.” Worst of all, he had abandoned his students mid-semester.

Macpherson himself would eventually enlist in March 1915. After arriving at Montreal for training, he wrote to President Murray about the “general excellence of health” among the university boys. He was proud to be serving his country. Only a year and a bit later, his attitude had changed drastically. Writing again to Murray, Macpherson gave a report of the First University Company from Saskatoon.

Twenty-nine of the fifty-four he mentioned had been either wounded or killed. A general sense of weariness bled through the pages written to Murray:

“It has been a long year, this in France,” Macpherson wrote, “and our time of training in Canada seems an experience of some life lived long ago. War is not quite what we used to picture. It is a grim business.” In only sixteen months, Macpherson had been transformed into a hardened warrior. He enjoyed the short pauses from the crack of guns, but he missed home. Sadly, he too would die. During the Hundred Days Offensive, he was killed on 26 August 1918.

Countless other names line the hallways of the Peter MacKinnon Building. One of these names

is Robert Gloag, a forty three-year-old painter. He enlisted in March 1916, and survived the war. He would return to Saskatoon, continuing his work as a painter on university grounds. Claire Rees stands the lone woman in the company of 349 men on the honour roll. She enlisted as a Voluntary Aid Detachment Nurse, and was sent to Manchester. While overseas, she married the head of the U of S’s School of Engineering, Lieutenant Chalmers Jack Mackenzie. Both her and her husband returned home after the war. Mackenzie eventually became the Dean of the College of Engineering.

By the time the honour roll was painted, eighteen names had been missed. This oversight was not corrected for nearly a hundred years. On 7 August

2014, the U of S Great War Commemoration Committee (RememberUS)—with help from Professor Emeritus Michael Hayden—unveiled an eighteen-name plaque in the Peter MacKinnon Building. One of the additions, as Hayden points out, is long overdue. Louis

Brehaut was the Professor of Philosophy and Greek before he enlisted in 1914. In August 1915, while stationed in England, he was diagnosed with shell shock. He

returned home and taught until 1918, but felt his condition did not allow him to carry out his duties to the fullest. He retired and

Photo by Eric Story



Robert Gloag’s memorial ribbon

Photo by Eric Story



Claire Rees’ memorial ribbon

Photo by Eric Story



Photo by Eric Story

RememberUS’s additions to the Memorial Ribbons

moved to the east coast. He would eventually die at the young age of fifty-one. Hayden argues that he was too well-known a figure on campus for the omission to be an oversight. Attitudes towards mental illness during the Great War likely played a role in this unfortunate decision.

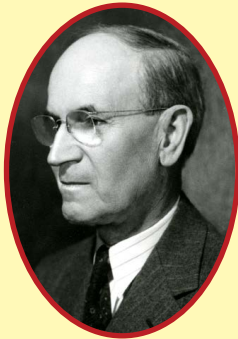
The phenomenon of the citizen-soldier heavily influenced the creation of a university Honour Roll. The initial list commemorated those from the U of S who served such as Reginald Bateman and Claire Rees, but eighteen were forgotten. RememberUS corrected this oversight in 2014. And now, in 2015, ninety-nine years after the first black stroke was painted on those yellow ribbons in the College Building, the Honour Roll is complete. Or is it? RememberUS added eighteen more names, but apprehension still lingers in those old halls that someone remains missing. Much research still has to be done about the U of S and the Great War. Perhaps the years leading up to 2018 will see new scholars shedding light into those darkened corners of history. Only then will we will feel comfortable and confident that all of the university’s citizen-soldiers have been honoured for their sacrifice. ~



WHO'S

WHO?

Some innovators, architects and designers of Saskatoon's Great War memorials



University of Saskatchewan Archives and Special Collections, A.3207

A.J. Pyke

A.J. Pyke was hired as the second principal of the Saskatoon Collegiate Institute (later to be named the Nutana Collegiate) in 1915. He remained in this position until 1923, when he resigned his principalship to become a professor of mathematics at the University of Saskatchewan.

In 1921, Pyke wrote to an artist, saying that "our students decided to establish an Art Gallery as a memorial to the students and ex-students of the Saskatoon Collegiate Institute, who lost their lives in the Great War."

His successor and vice-principal, A.W. Cameron, disagreed. He claimed that Pyke was responsible for the establishment of the Art Gallery.

After his death, an ex-student of Pyke's spoke of him being "intensely loyal, unselfish beyond belief, excessively modest, [and] the same of honesty." Perhaps his modesty did not allow him to take credit for the founding of the gallery. Or perhaps he was telling the truth. We may never know.



Photocourtesy of The Windsor Star

W.F. Herman

W.F. Herman came to Saskatoon with his family in 1906. A farmer's life did not agree with him, however, and he soon found himself working in the local newspaper office.

Sadly, in October 1915, one of Herman's close friends and colleagues Talmage Lawson died fighting overseas. Herman was devastated. Five years later, in order to keep the memory of his partner and friend alive, he purchased and dedicated a clock that would stand outside of his office. It would become known as the Star-Phoenix Clock.

Soon after the war, Herman left Saskatoon, perhaps because of the intensity of the loss he felt or because of business opportunities in eastern Canada. Whatever his motivations, he purchased another newspaper, this time in Windsor, which would later become known as *The Windsor Star*.

His obituary read in 1938: "He never sought personal glory and he disliked ostentation. His tastes were simple and his manner of living plain. He wanted to be a good citizen and good newspaperman. He was both."



School Spirit

Nutana Collegiate has an art gallery. It is worth \$10 million. It all started with the First World War.

One of Saskatoon's hidden treasures is the Nutana Collegiate Memorial Art Gallery. Established in 1919, the Memorial Art Gallery grew to twenty-nine paintings by 1926, and today, houses over ninety. The collection is currently appraised at about \$10 million. The original twenty-nine, however, had a very specific and arguably sacred place in the hearts of those who walked the halls of the old collegiate many years ago. Twenty-nine soldiers from Nutana Collegiate perished in the Great War. Each name shines on a bronze plaque located at the bottom of the frame of each of the twenty-nine paintings.

In March 1919, students of the Saskatoon Collegiate had an idea. It was decided an art gallery would be established as a memorial to the collegiate's students and ex-students who had fallen during the Great War. Yet there was an important second component to this memorial. In a letter to one of the gallery's artists, Principal Alfred Pyke said,

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

As historian Jonathan Vance argues, the Nutana Memorial Art Gallery looked backward as well as forward. It remembered the fallen men, but also helped foster an appreciation of Canadian art. It linked the past with the future growth of not only the collegiate,

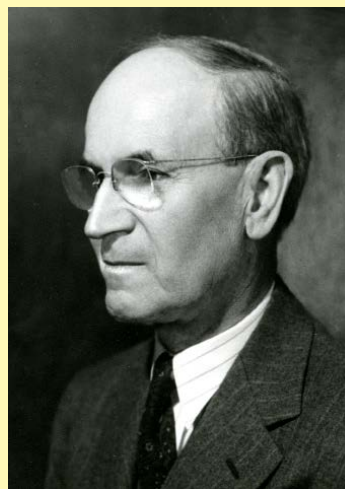
but also Saskatoon and the great nation of Canada.

The next step was finding art appropriate for the gallery. Pyke decided to leave this task to his friend and amateur artist, David Wilkie. This decision demonstrates that beyond purchasing Canadian art, the Saskatoon Collegiate had no direction for the composition of their memorial art gallery. Nonetheless, by June 1919, Wilkie had purchased six paintings for the collegiate. Herbert Palmer's *Hunting Scene* and William St. Thomas-Smith's *Fishing Village* present ominous scenes of the coming autumn and a storm at sea. These scenes are direct reflections of the war. On the other hand, Alex M. Fleming's *Credit River* invokes a scene of "rugged beauty" and peacefulness, signifying the end of the war. Wilkie's choices were indeed "very traditional landscapes, quaint glimpses of Cadiana, and Edwardian character studies," but they also reflected a mythical view of the Great War in Canada.

The paintings were used to metaphorically represent war and post-war peace, but did not directly address the conflict itself.

After Wilkie's untimely death in January 1920, Pyke took on the role of contacting artists and purchasing their paintings

himself. Yet the standardized letter he sent to various artists reveals a general lack of knowledge in the field of art. Between 1920 and 1923, Pyke would ask those he contacted to "submit one of your best paintings," often naming one



A.J. Pyke, c. 1923

University of Saskatchewan Archives and Special Collections, A.207



Thomas W. Mitchell, c.
1921

or two he had seen in the Catalogue of the Annual Exhibition of the Ontario Society of Artists. The adjudication process was not entirely up to Pyke and the artist, however. A purchasing committee was appointed—consisting solely of students—who had the final say in which painting was chosen.

Student involvement was a key component of the gallery. When the idea to acquire paintings for an art gallery was proposed, a joint stock company was created, which the collegiate's student Literary Society executive directed. Shares were sold at fifty cents



The Pauline Club, 1919

each. In creating a stock company, students who purchased a share could claim to partially own the Memorial Art Gallery. It was a student-owned, student-driven enterprise.

Even with some financial backing from the Saskatoon Collegiate's Board of Governors, costs were not entirely covered for the purchase of the paintings. Once again, the students—particularly female—fundraised the money. For example, the Pauline Club and the N.N.S. Club helped raise the necessary \$450 for Marion Long's *Pauline* in 1924. They were able to do so, in part, through the Pauline Club's operetta put on that past year.

The Memorial Art Gallery took a sudden and abrupt turn in 1923. The process of asking for the “best works” of various artists around Canada was wearing dull. And so, in one of his final acts as the collegiate's principal, Pyke wrote to artist E. Wyly Grier about an “excellent” and “unusually interesting” project. Pyke asked Grier if he would be willing to paint a picture of “The Spirit of Youth,” which would be a portrait of a “typical young Westerner.” The subject would be Jack Cairns, who had tragically drowned at Pike Lake in 1917 at the young age of only fifteen. The decision to use a deceased young boy—and a civilian at that—as the subject demonstrates the collegiate's continuing commitment to remembering the war in a mythical manner. Instead of focusing on the boy's death, the painting portrays the boy's joyous youth, again avoiding the realities of the Great War.

Using a Saskatoonian as the painting's subject also gave the gallery a local flavour. When Gri-



E. Wyly Grier, 1931

er's painting arrived in June 1923, it was unveiled first to Jack's father, James, and the following day, to the entire student body of Nutana Collegiate. The new principal of Nutana, A.W. Cameron, wrote to Grier: “It has captivated the hearts of the students here, not only because of its art but because of its strong personal appeal.” With Cameron now steering the enterprise, the Memorial Art Gallery began to move in a new direction. In taking a more proactive role in acquiring art, Nutana could truly say the gallery was theirs.

By March 1924, Nutana had begun to pursue a companion piece to Grier's *The Spirit of Youth*. When the purchasing committee was formed in 1924, it was decided that paintings done only by women would be purchased that year. And although that decision was not honoured, Marion Long of Toronto was commissioned to paint the companion piece. Immediately upon receiving confirmation that Long would accept the commission, Cameron sent her a picture of poplar trees and the riverbank of Saskatoon, and another one of the school-girls' uniforms, in the hopes that



A.Y. Jackson, 1938

**“As a memorial to men who fought and died
you have a collection with no fight in them.”**

A.Y. Jackson, 1926

she would replicate the “personal appeal” of the Grier piece. On 17 October 1924, *Pauline* was unveiled to the public.

Yet it is important to question why the collegiate decided to have a painting of a girl when the Memorial Art Gallery was dedicated to the memory of fallen boys. Some may argue women were also involved in the war effort, and thus should have been commemorated in this gallery. Cameron’s hopes of Long’s painting, however, seem to point to something entirely different. In a letter he wrote her in May 1924, he said,

“... there are three important phases of our school activities, there is of course, first, the academic side, which includes the work of the class room and there

is the athletic side which is very highly developed with us and which you will see is very strongly typified by Grier’s picture of the boy with his baseball bat and glove, and there is another and very important phase of our school which might be typified in the girls’ picture; it is not very easily defined but it includes the aesthetic, the ethereal, the social and all their love of beauty and purity.”

It seems that Long’s painting—alongside Grier’s—captured the spirit of Nutana Collegiate. And so, once again, the gallery gained a new meaning. Not only did it represent the memory of their fallen boys, but it now was a physical embodiment of Nutana’s school identity.

Year after year, the gallery

continued to grow. After Long’s, the collegiate acquired one more painting in 1924, and five more in 1925. By the end of the year, they had twenty-seven paintings. And as this collection grew, so did Principal Cameron’s knowledge of Canadian art. He became acquainted with the works of the Group of Seven, whom art historian Laura Brandon calls “the best-known and most influential group of Canadian artists to have worked in Canada in the twentieth century.” As early as summer 1924, Cameron had contacted the director of the National Art Gallery in Ottawa about a close affiliate of the Group of Seven’s, Tom Thomson. Although he was never able to acquire any of Thomson’s works, Cameron had entered into the field of purchasing high art in Canada. It would, once more, change the direction of the Nutana Collegiate Memorial Art Gallery.

In late 1926, Cameron wrote to the Group of Seven’s “natural leader,” A.Y. Jackson, asking for some suggestions about the gallery. In a scathing response, Jackson called the collection “uniformly dull” and outdated. He went on to speak about what Nutana could have done, instead of what it did, and concluded his letter by saying that “as a memorial to men who fought and died you have a collection of pictures with no fight in them.” To Cameron’s credit, he followed up Jackson’s letter with great patience and a calm demeanour, explaining Nutana’s limited resources and the remote nature of living in a western prairie city. He also admitted the original fundraising scheme had been scrapped. No longer were fifty-cent shares being offered. Because student investment

was no longer a component of the Memorial Art Gallery, the idea of acquiring more art began to fade away.

Cameron was undeterred. In 1925, he had created the Saskatoon Art Club, of which he was president. And in February 1927, he confided to A.Y. Jackson about his plans to establish a “Gallery of Modern Art” in Saskatoon. He would do so not through the use of schools funds, but by “private subscription.” Yet the collegiate still had a duty to complete the memorial aspect of the gallery. And so Frederick S. Challener’s *Off to Flanders’ Fields* was chosen as the final painting. It was the only painting that came close to directly addressing the war. It was of passenger ships carrying its green Canadian troops over to England for training in 1914.

On 11 November 1927, University of Saskatchewan President Walter Murray gave the Memorial Address on Armistice Day at Nutana Collegiate at the unveiling of Challener’s painting to complete the Memorial Art Gallery. He said, “Better far to observe in tense silence this day and speak not of the horror and the suffering that filled the eyes of those who were the actors in those great scenes or of the pain with which the anxious ones listened for the approach of the messenger of ill.” Do not speak of the horror, Murray said; instead, speak of their innocence, their youth and the joy they brought everyone. He also remarked of the important connection between past and present:

“Each age has left memorials of what they thought worthy of honour and reverence. The pyramids of Egypt, the temples of Greece, the Cathedrals of the Middle Ages,

the music, literature and painting of the Moderns reveal and reflect the highest and best of the thoughts of their time. In the years to come this age will be judged by the memorials which it has left of the services of its sons and daughters . . . [T]hese memorials . . . will testify to our honour and reverence for those who died that we might live in freedom.”

The Nutana Memorial Art Gallery became a part of the long history, according to Murray, of “honour and reverence” through built memorial structures. Yet the gallery would also “ennoble and refine the lives of the young for generations.”

After the ceremony, Cameron’s work was not done. By March 1928, he and Murray had hopes of expanding the current art gallery into a city-wide one. But he ran into trouble. Money had dried up, as students thought the fundraising campaign was over. Not only that, but students no longer had a vested interest in something in which they were not involved. What completed flattened Cameron’s hopes for a larger modern art gallery, however, was far beyond his control. On 24 October 1929, the stock market crashed, signalling the beginning of a ten-year depression that rocked Saskatchewan. The Nutana Memorial Art Gallery would remain as it was: a memorial to its fallen students and ex-students.

There is no denying the Nutana Memorial Art Gallery has little reference to the Great War. But perhaps this is what the deceased Nutana soldiers would have wanted. They may have looked at *Pauline*, and remembered their first high school crush. Others may have looked next to it, and saw *The Spirit of Youth*. They

may have imagined their youths, playing in the fields, swinging their bats in the summer sun, with a toothy grin of innocence, unbroken by war. Then again, some may have glanced off to the corner of Nutana’s Memorial Library (this is where the current art collection hangs) and seen *Off to Flanders’ Fields*, reminding them of their voyage overseas and the horrors that awaited them on the battlefields of France. We will never know exactly what these men would have thought of the gallery because they now belong to the pages of history.

As for those who composed the art gallery, there is an obvious theme: a reluctance to speak about the horrors of war. Metaphor and allegory was used to highlight ideas and thoughts of pre-1914. Those who attended Nutana Collegiate refused to talk about the Great War directly because it was so painful. The Memorial Art Gallery made this quite clear. Nonetheless, the gallery was a student-run, student driven project. It mythologized the war as much as it commemorated the collegiate’s fallen men. But for that, Nutana should not be faulted. There is only one Memorial Art Gallery in Canada, and it has remained a touching tribute to the twenty-nine who died too soon. ~



Allan Macmillan, one of the twenty-nine killed who went to Nutana Collegiate, 1916



Where

You

At?

***Finding a few of Saskatoon's
Great War Memorials***

Look them up on
Google Maps!

~ The 46th Battalion Stone --- 52.131027, -106.632992

~ The Hugh Cairns Memorial --- 52.132429, -106.652188

~ The Star-Phoenix Clock --- 52.130810, -106.657040





The 46th Battalion Stone, 2015

Photo by Eric Story

Written In *Stone*

The 46th Battalion Stone is the smallest of Saskatoon's Great War Memorials. But its meaning is large and everlasting, so long as we choose to remember.

How many Great War memorials does the University of Saskatchewan have? A keen observer may say one, while an aging staff member might count two. But wedged between the Physics Building and the Peter MacKinnon Building, and nestled underneath a tree lays a

third. One can easily mistake the university's smallest Great War memorial for a decorative piece on campus. On the contrary, this stone is so much richer than just a decoration.

The 46th Battalion plaque was gifted to the university in 1933. Surviving members of the 46th

believed it imperative that the memory of their brothers remain intact. Yet the decision to have it placed on campus reveals something even more significant. The battalion was born at Moose Jaw, so why would Saskatoon be an appropriate setting for this plaque? Perhaps it was because of men

such as Reginald Bateman, the university's first Professor of English, and as one of his comrades said of him, "one of the best loved men in the Battalion." Or maybe it was because the battalion's sole Victoria Cross winner, Hugh Cairns, lived in Saskatoon and the campus was one of the more aesthetically attractive



Past photograph of the 46th Battalion Stone, c. 1933

locations to put it.

Then again, according to Brigadier-General Alex Ross, who spoke at the unveiling ceremony, the only way to attain world peace was through "citizenship, education and common sense." For this reason, the university was an entirely appropriate place for the 46th Battalion's plaque. The exact reasons for its chosen location are unknown. But the decision to place it in "The Bowl" demonstrates that the University of Saskatchewan was a cherished and important part of the 46th Battalion's identity during and after the war.

A Winnipeg woman named M.J. Taylor was the plaque's designer. And her design reinforces what historian Jonathon Vance calls the myth of the citizen-soldier. The image on the plaque depicts a farmer on the left with a bundle of hay, and on the right, a soldier raising his helmet to the heavens. In fighting at the battles named on this plaque, the farmer had effectively been transformed into a patriotic citizen-soldier. This depiction may be myth, but it was entirely accurate for a university setting at the time—particularly at

the U of S. Most U of S men who fought for the 46th had their best years ahead of them. Thirty-two-year-old Hedley McCreedy was a car inspector and teacher when

he enlisted. George Peters was only nineteen, recently employed as an engineer. Sadly, he would die at the tender age

of twenty-one on 3 June. It was his

birthday. Both men were without any military experience. But they put their careers aside, and took up arms for their country. They were true citizen-soldiers. The same can be said for the majority of the university's members of the 46th Battalion.

The decision to memorialize the battalion with a plaque, however, was not a foregone conclusion. As early as February 1925, there were discussions at the sixth Annual Reunion to create "footstones" as the memorial and place them at each grave of a member of the 46th. Those present at the following year's reunion supported the motion almost unanimously. The 46th also hoped to write a battalion history to memorialize its members. A small committee of the battalion was in the midst of researching its war diaries in November 1926. Yet nothing ever came of it. By November 1933, the only memorial would come in the shape of a plaque. And it was not until 1978 the battalion received its written memorialization. James L. McWilliams and R. James Steel published *The Suicide Battalion*,

an entirely fitting name for a unit that sustained a 91.5% casualty rate during the Great War.

In the afternoon of 11 November 1933, a crowd gathered at Convocation Hall for the unveiling of the 46th Battalion's memorial plaque. Seventy members of the battalion were in attendance, alongside numerous others. Among them were Hugh Cairns' parents, George and Elizabeth. Chairman of the 46th Battalion Association, Captain J.S. Woodward, believed that the unveiling would "perhaps [be] the last ceremony that the unit as such will be called upon to celebrate." And it likely was. After the hymns had been sung, and the speakers had spoke, the plaque was put away until a stone in which to mount it was found. Once it was found, the stone and plaque were put to rest in front of the Peter MacKinnon Building.

The university's third memorial is relatively unknown. One must be aware of his or her surroundings to find it. And even when one does, it is static and dull. The stone is uninspiring in comparison to the Memorial Gates, and rather simple as opposed to the Memorial Ribbons. Yet the stories behind this stone are remarkable. The plumber-turned-war hero, Hugh Cairns, fought for the 46th, and perhaps best represents what the memorial hoped to commemorate: the citizen-soldier. And although it lays motionless, the memories it carries live. For the plaque says: "They are too near to be great, but our children shall understand when and how our fate was changed, and by whose hand." ~



Back of the Hugh Cairns Memorial, 2015

Photo by Eric Story

Looking

Down On

Us All

“It was particularly fitting that the monument should be placed on the very field on which the boys had so often played.”

Somewhere stuck in the public conscious of Saskatoon is Hugh Cairns. He was a Great War hero and now has a memorial in his name. Too often forgotten in the myth that has developed around Cairns are those commemorated on his memorial. They were soldiers. They were soccer players. They were also Saskatonians.

Hugh Cairns V.C. has come to symbolize the Great War in Saskatoon.

Few locals have trouble conjuring up the name plastered on a school, an armoury, and a street in the city. Yet many do not know of the Hugh Cairns Memorial located on the west side of University Bridge. It lies at the south edge of Kinsmen Park, and, in the spring, summer and early fall, is surrounded by a beautiful array of flowers. Towering above the flowers stands Hugh Cairns, a soccer ball beneath his foot, and a hand on his hip, his gaze stern. From afar, this memorial would seem a permanent reminder of one man's impact on a sporting community, as well as the importance of that sport in Saskatoon. Upon closer inspection, however, the seventy five-name honour roll of Saskatoon's fallen soccer players located below Cairns' feet actually demonstrates a profound loss of life, and perhaps even the fall of a beloved sport in a small city on the banks of the South Saskatchewan.

Hugh Cairns was born in Ashington, Northumberland, England



Hugh Cairns, c. 1914

in December 1896. He was the third child of eleven to George and Elizabeth Cairns. By 1911, his family had immigrated to Canada, and found residence in Saskatoon. Although Cairns did not follow his father's career path as a carpenter, he did take up a job in the trades. By the time he enlisted in 1915, Cairns was an apprenticed plumber.

It is difficult to determine the exact reasons for Cairns' enlistment. Each and every Canadian enlistee had very personal and different reasons for enlisting. Yet it seems a number of factors aided in Cairns' decision to sign his attestation papers in August 1915. One may have been his allegiance to Canada's mother country and Cairns' home, England. Many English-born soldiers hoped to see their families and friends once again when enlisting for overseas service. However, the most important factor in Cairns' enlistment was his older brother, Albert, signing his own papers on the same day. Both described as "keen footballers," the Cairns brothers were inseparable, having "gone through thick and thin together." Brothers for life, Hugh

and Albert were determined to make the transition from citizen to soldier together.

Being a part of the 46th Battalion meant Cairns was subject to some of the bloodiest battles of the Great War, including Arras, Vimy and Passchendaele in 1917, and Amiens in 1918. Cairns excelled at soldiering, and immediately distinguished himself as an elite machine gunner. Following the Battle of Vimy Ridge, on 3 June 1917, the 46th was ordered to attack the enemy line. When



Carrying in the wounded at the Battle of Vimy Ridge, April 1917

another battalion began to retreat, Cairns led his machine gun crew forward, providing covering fire. Cairns himself recovered two of the retreating battalion's machine guns, and turned them on the enemy. One of his

mates, Bill Musgrove, described Cairns' actions:

"Cairns saw some of the Germans coming out of their trench trying to cut our men off at the flank. He lined his gun on them and drove them back. His two helpers on the gun were casualties. He grabbed two men from the retreating battalion and put them loading the ammunition drums.



The Battle of Passchendaele, November 1917



Canadians entering Cambrai,
9 October 1918

While his back was turned those two beat it. Boy, Hughie was mad.”

Afterward, Cairns colourfully told the two soldiers’ adjutant of their actions. Alarmed by the young sergeant’s language, the adjutant recommended Cairns for a court martial, but Colonel William Robert Dawson, instead, decided a Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM) recommendation was more appropriate for Cairns’ heroics. Of course, he did not forget to remind the young man of his manners in front of his superiors.

Although quite humourous, this story speaks to some of the characteristics Cairns possessed. There is no doubt he was heroic. Yet he was also fiercely loyal to his fellow men, repulsed by anyone who placed their own needs in front of the collective. Cairns’ admiration for camaraderie was likely forged on the soccer fields of England and Saskatoon.

Cairns did have a breaking point. At the Battle of Cambrai in September 1918, Cairns was severely wounded. He would never be the same. This wound came in the form of his brother’s dead body. On 10 September, Albert was killed. One of Cairns’ mates recalled, “Hughie said he’d get fifty Germans for that. I don’t think he

ever planned to come back after Abbie [Albert] got killed.”

By November 1918, Cairns’ thirst to avenge his brother’s death had grown too strong. On 1 November before the Battle of Valenciennes, Cairns was ordered to not partake in the upcoming confrontation. Cairns refused to stand down: “. . . [E]ver since Albert was laid out beside him . . . [Cairns] always said he had a lot to get evened up . . . [H]e went before the C.O. and said if he were left behind he would follow the battalion into action,” one of his comrades recalled. Two local historians argue that Cairns’ proceeding “superhuman” feats were induced by the death of his older brother.

Cairns hopped the parapet. He killed seventeen Germans, took eighteen prisoner, and captured three machine guns. He then proceeded to reconnoiter a forward area, and found a small courtyard packed with Germans. He slipped back to his unit, picked up four men, returned and kicked down the courtyard door, Lewis guns blazing. Sixty-some alarmed Germans threw their hands up in surrender, unaware that only five men had ambushed them. One German officer, however, realized the actual number, pulled out his pistol and shot. Cairns fell to his knees, but his machine gun remained hot. He mowed down the officer, and many other grey-clad figures. A firefought broke out and, already in pain, Cairns felt another bullet hit him, this time shattering his wrist. He kept shooting. Finally, he was hit a third time. Cairns collapsed, blood pooling around him. The Saskatonian’s limp body was roughly thrown onto a door-turned-stretcher, when the bearer too

was hit and killed. Another bullet entered Cairns’ body. When the firefought finally ended, a handful of Germans exited the courtyard with their hands held high. Cairns had killed his fifty Germans. But he too had lost the fight. The following day, on 2 November, Cairns was pronounced dead.

On 1 November 1919, Cairns was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross for his “superhuman deeds” at Valenciennes. He was also awarded France’s highest honour, the Legion of Honour. In 1936, a street was named after him in Valenciennes: L’Avenue Hugh Cairns. His parents were present at all ceremonies.

Cairns’ story is one of coming-of-age, heroism and the impact of death, yet too often overlooked are those whose names are etched on the Hugh Cairns Memorial. Below the stone carving of Cairns are seventy-six names (including Cairns’). Although they may not have received a Victoria Cross, these men too have tales to tell.

Of the seventy-six names, sixty-eight were found to have enlistment and death records. The makeup of this group of sixty-eight is predominately English and Scottish. Thirty-eight were born in England, while twenty-one were in Scotland. And so it is no surprise that the majority of these men enlisted in the early years of the war in 1914 and 1915. September 1914 saw the highest number of enlistees at eleven, while the second highest was October with eight. Strong ties to the mother country, a desire to travel and seek out adventure, and consistent pay likely played a role in this group’s decision to enlist. Seven of the sixty-eight were born in



Hugh Cairns Memorial, c. 1921

University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, MSS 6555071_25#

Canada. And of these seven, only one is native to Saskatoon. James Thomas Clinkskill, the son of Saskatoon's first mayor, enlisted in September 1914. He would die at the Somme in September 1916.

There are two sets of brothers on the Hugh Cairns Memorial. One of which was the McNeil brothers, who enlisted on the same day on 4 January 1916. Much like Hugh and Albert Cairns, it seems their motivation to enlist was aided knowing they would be doing so with one another. Sadly, the first to die was Fred in May 1917 following the victory at Vimy Ridge. His brother, Stanley, would survive the war, but for only two more years. He died five days before Christmas in 1920, and is the only soldier on the Hugh Cairns Memorial whose body is interred within city limits. It lies in the Woodlawn Cemetery.

Less than six months after Stanley had passed, his name was immortalized with the unveil-

ing of the Hugh Cairns Memorial on 8 June 1921. Yet the memorial almost completely ignores the war. The only indication these men had fallen in the war was an inscription on the bottom pillar of the memorial that reads: "In Memory of Our Fallen Comrades 1914-1918." Otherwise, this memorial would seem a tribute to a soccer player and flourishing soccer community. This decision reflects the community's decision to avoid remembering the horrors of the Great War. Instead, it chose to emphasize the fallen men's identities before the war. Additionally, Mayor Young highlighted the important geographic location of the memorial: "It was particularly fitting that the monument should be placed on the very field on which the boys had so often played." Soccer games were predominately played at City Park (known today as Kinsmen Park), and that was where the Hugh Cairns Memorial was placed. Yet again, this decision reinforces an identity built around sport as opposed to the Great War.

Few stories have been told of the men whose names cover the Hugh Cairns Memorial. Yet many more remain hidden. Cairns' has been told for almost one hundred years, his name featured in articles in *The Star Phoenix*, posted in small booklets and even larger, full-size monographs. But others, like the McNeil brothers, have not. Questions about why

these men enlisted, their deeds (and misdeeds), and the details surrounding their deaths needs to be answered. But we must not forget that their stories do not start and end with the war. Memorials such as Hugh Cairns' demonstrate exactly that. Although these men were soldiers, they too were soccer players.

A memorial to the dead often invokes a sense of finality. However, the soccer scene in Saskatoon did not die. Although the Great War brought a halt to soccer in Saskatoon, as the city league was postponed from 1915 to 1918, soccer once again flourished in the 1920s. The city league was re-established, and a Mercantile League was reborn. Touring teams from Great Britain also visited Saskatoon, demonstrating the sport's popularity and the city as a central location to play it. One of these teams was from Scotland, and they visited in June 1921. Before the match, they participated in a memorial unveiling ceremony. The Scots placed a wreath at the bottom of this memorial. When they looked up, they saw a man with a ball beneath his foot. Hugh Cairns would be watching them play. ~



Saskatoon Soccer Team, 1914

University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, P336



Who Would Have *Known?*



- ~ The Nutana Memorial Art Gallery is incomplete. In March 1922, Principal Alfred Pyke sent a letter to artist George Reid, enquiring about a “central piece” painting for the collection. Reid was initially receptive to the idea; however, it would have to wait until 1923 because of insufficient funds. It was not until 1924 that the idea resurfaced, but it seems that financial considerations forced Pyke’s hand. The painting would never be painted

- ~ The designer of the 46th Battalion Stone was a woman. She was from Winnipeg, and her name is M.J. Taylor

- ~ The University of Saskatchewan considered moving the Memorial Gates in 1988. Due to a heavier volume of traffic, the Memorial Gates were becoming increasingly less suitable as a gateway. The idea was eventually scrapped and, instead, a new five-lane road was constructed just west of the gates as an entrance to the Royal University Hospital. The utilitarian aspect of the memorial was no more. It would remain a mark of remembrance and only that

- ~ The Star-Phoenix Clock was moved in 1967. After the newspaper office of *The Star Phoenix* moved, so too did the clock. It was moved to its present-day location on Twenty-Fourth Street East and Fifth Avenue

- ~ The Saskatoon Cenotaph was also moved. On 15 August 1957, the memorial was moved from its location on Twenty-First Street and Second Avenue to City Hall Square





The Star-Phoenix Clock, 2015

Photo by Eric Stov

The Tragic Story of Talmage Lawson

The clock stopped. At 11:59 PM, the blackened hands of the Star-Phoenix Clock, its dial illuminated in the cool fall air, grinded to a halt. It seemed the new clock, installed only five days earlier, on 6 October 1920, was broken. Shortly after the hands stopped, a dark shadow approached the clock from a short distance away. Just as the shadow reached the large memorial, it stopped and began to read a small passage engraved near the foot of the clock: "Erected by W.F. Herman To the Memory of TALMAGE LAWSON Killed in Action October 8th 1915." After a

short time, the shadow's shoulders rose and fell in a deep, saddened sigh, its breath escaping in a cloud of mist. The shadow then proceeded to open the back of the clock, inserted a crank and began to wind. Just as the shadow closed the backing, the hands of the Star-Phoenix Clock began to inch their way towards midnight. It was not broken after all. It just had to be re-wound. The shadow then walked away—its head down and mist escaping with every breath it took.

Talmage Lawson was a Maritimer. Born at Prince Edward Island in 1879, Lawson had grown

up the son of Stephen Lawson, a well-known clergyman and farmer. Lawson lived on the Island until he was twenty-one, when he and his family moved to Canada's frontier in 1897. Two years later, he moved out with his two brothers Newton and Oliver, relocating to a quarter section of land just south-east of his father's. Today, it would be located in the Lawson Heights area near Spadina Crescent and Ravine Drive in Saskatoon.

Once he had settled onto his quarter section, Lawson became involved in the horse trade. One of his associates remembered his claim to have never lost a dollar in selling horses: "He would size up the men who came to him, cross question them, and if he thought they were telling the truth the horse was theirs; strange as this might seem, these men invariably came back and paid him," he said. Clearly, Lawson was an intelligent yet caring businessman.

After six years of homesteading, Lawson became acquainted with W.F. Herman and his family, who had recently moved from the United States. Herman was hoping to take up a homestead



Photo courtesy of The Windsor Star

W.F. Herman, date unknown



Photo by Eric Sharp

and farm himself, but his hopes were short-lived. Herman had previous experience working in the newspaper business, starting at a small-town newspaper in Nova Scotia, and then moving to Boston, Massachusetts with higher aspirations. Almost immediately after moving to the North-West Territories, his wife, Adie, sensing that Herman was not destined to be a farmer, sent a letter to Saskatoon's local newspaper, informing them of the arrival of a "crackerjack printer." The following day, he had a job at *The Phoenix* newspaper.

As the years passed, Herman and Lawson developed a close friendship. Perhaps it was because both men were born and raised in the Maritimes, or maybe it was because they had similar business interests. Nonetheless, these two men grew fond of one another. By 1908, both men had moved into Saskatoon, opting to live across the street from each other. Lawson purchased a lot on the east side of Second Avenue near Twenty-Third Street, while Herman took one on the opposite side. Herman remained at the

Engraving on the Star-Phoenix Clock

local newspaper office, while Lawson continued dealing horses.

Yet, in 1910, tragedy struck when Lawson's mother, Alice, passed away. It seems Lawson took the news quite hard. In later years, Herman would call Lawson an "extensive traveller, [un]contented to see a place through a car window." And according to the Henderson's Saskatoon Directories, Lawson did not own property in the city between 1908 and 1911. He may very well have left after his mother's death, not just to see the world, but to escape the pain of losing someone close.

When Lawson returned to Saskatoon in 1911, he moved into the Herman household. It seems Herman hoped to return the favour Lawson had offered his family five years before when they first arrived on the open prairie. Lawson may also have desired a place near his aging father, Stephen, who was now in his mid-seventies.

For a number of years, Lawson and Herman had been in business together. Although it is unclear exactly what that business was, they both dreamed of running a news-

paper together. Herman had years of experience, while Lawson's father, Reverend Stephen Lawson, had published *The Presbyterian* and *The Protestant Union* out of Prince Edward Island from 1875 to 1881. Lawson had likely grown up hearing stories of his father's rather vicious publishing reputation. In March 1912, Herman and Lawson decided the time had come. They purchased the weekly newspaper *The Capital*, and changed its name to *The Saskatoon Daily Star*.

In 1913 and 1914, Lawson again travelled extensively. He visited China, Japan, India and Africa, the latter which he trekked over five hundred miles. He loved to explore, see new things. At the risk of his own life, he was motivated to visit and explore everything he possibly could. When he was in Africa, he travelled as far as the railway would take him, and then continued by foot. After only a few days of hiking and sleeping on the ground, Lawson came down with a fever. He had to return to the train, but his illness grew gravely worse. He eventually reached the railway, but his fever worsened. For nine days aboard the train, Lawson became delirious. But with the help of two men, "a most rugged constitution" and "great strength," Lawson survived.

Although Lawson was one of the proprietors of *The Saskatoon Daily Star* Herman ran the newspaper. Lawson instead chose to travel. But his travels were cut short when Britain declared war on Germany on 4 August 1914. Although it took a few weeks for news to reach Lawson, he knew he had to return home. At the end of August, amidst his tour of Africa, he was alerted of the declara-



Volunteers from Humboldt, August 1914 bit strange, especially in comparison to the majority of Canadian enlistees. Most enlisted out of a desire for adventure, to return home to England to see familiar faces, earn a consistent wage, or simply to fight for king and country. Yet it seems that Lawson desired none of these. He had travelled the world extensively over the past five years, having more than enough adventure for anyone's lifetime. And because of these travels, as well as the assertion of his business partner that he was a successful businessman, Lawson certainly did not require \$1.10 per

tion. He boarded a steamship prepared to don a uniform. It was soon after he arrived in Saskatoon that Lawson enlisted in October 1914. By the time he had done so, however, there were more than enough enlistees to fill the necessary ranks. And this fact was pointed out to him. Lawson's business partner, Herman, remembered him replying that if it was necessary, he would travel to England to enlist if Canada would not take him. Once he had enlisted, Herman said, he was "as happy as a school boy."

Lawson's enlistment seems a

day that the lowest-ranking soldier would receive. Nor did he have any immediate family in England. So that begs the question: why did Lawson enlist?

The answers lie in Lawson's deep-seated Canadian patriotism, as well as his local pride. During his journey back to Canada after hearing of the war's outbreak, he stopped in England. Yet he did not enlist. And once he returned to Canada, he could have enlisted anywhere along the way back home to Saskatoon. Yet again, he chose not to enlist. It was not until he reached his home that he finally found himself at a recruiting booth.

But to dig even deeper, it was likely not out a desire to enlist and fight with familiar faces that Lawson chose to enlist at Saskatoon. For he was a lone wolf. A former mayor of Saskatoon remembered Lawson "cultivating few intimate friends," while Herman, when speaking of Lawson's travels, admitted he spoke to very few people about the details of his voyages. And so Lawson enlisted out of a sense of duty to Canada. Even more importantly, however, he wanted to represent his home when he did so. He was a proud Saskatonian.

A full year after Lawson's enlistment, a telegram arrived at his brother's home. Oliver opened it: "Deeply regret to inform you 73952 Pte. Talmage Lawson, 28th Batt., officially reported killed in Action October 8th," it read. That day, on 22 October 1915, the city of Saskatoon was rocked with one of the first deaths of a beloved local citizen. The following day, a flood of letters were sent to *The Saskatoon Daily Star's* office. Although he had been a lone wolf,



Front page of *The Saskatoon Daily Star*, 4 August 1914

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Lawson was remembered fondly by the community. Mayor Frederick Harrison wrote, "I had the honour of numbering [Lawson] among my friends and I in common with many, many others will mourn the passing of Mr. Lawson for more than one day." Former mayor James R. Wilson wrote directly to Herman,

"Knowing him as I did, I can understand what a blow his death is to you. A manly man of ideal principles, very reserved, cultivating few intimate friends, but those who had the pleasure of knowing him intimately could not fail to appreciate his sterling qualities, which were borne out in his service to his King and Country."

Prominent businessman J.F. Cairns also wrote to the paper, speaking of his last encounter with Lawson:

"The last time I talked to Talmage Lawson was the day he left for the front. At that time I was giving an order for a dollar's worth of merchandise to every private and N.C.O. who left Saskatoon. Mr. Lawson came to my office to thank me and said he had used my order for something which would be a remembrance and that he would carry it into battle with him . . . The bitterness of the sorrow of his friends may be tempered by the immortal badge of honor, 'killed in action,' which Lawson bore with him in passing out. He has left them a sad but proud legacy in the blessed memory that he saw his duty and did it well."

Each person writing to the paper seemed genuinely upset about Lawson's passing. Regardless of his limited number of personal relationships, Lawson touched the hearts of many in the community

of Saskatoon.

But perhaps no one was more affected than his business partner, Herman. The two had met ten years prior, lived in each others' quarters, shared business propositions and even owned a newspaper together. The following day after Herman received the shocking news, he wrote a column in memory of his partner and friend, saying, ". . . no person knew him as well as myself, [so] it might not be out of place here to set down a few things to illustrate this." Herman gave a short account of his partner's life, detailing their dreams of owning a newspaper, his strengths as a businessman, as well as his travels overseas. He concluded with a moving passage to a friend he would deeply miss:

"Mr. Lawson needs no eulogy from me. His numerous friends in the city and country can attest to his many excellent qualities. They know that his heart was as big as his body. But I didn't want one who has been more than a friend to me and mine, a man who has done so much in his own way to further the best interests of Saskatoon,



Talmage Lawson's Grave in Belgium

and who gladly gave up his life in defence of the Empire, to pass away without a word from one who knew him best."

Lawson's passing reflects the reverberations of death in the Great War. Even in the city of Saskatoon, which, by 1916, had a population of over 20,000, a single death sent some of Saskatoon's most prominent citizens into mourning. Whether it was because of his father's distinction as a reverend in the community, his title as proprietor of the local newspaper, or his ties to the pioneering days of Saskatoon, Lawson's death was felt widely and deeply.

Yet Herman's lengthy column was not enough. In October 1918, three years after Lawson's death, Herman announced plans to erect a clock in his partner's name. Two years later, on 6 October 1920, that clock was unveiled to the public. It was located at the corner of Twentieth Street East and Second Avenue, just outside of the doors of *The Saskatoon Daily Star's* office. It was Saskatoon's first Great War memorial. And its most personal.

The purpose for erecting the clock where it stands demonstrates the personal nature of the memorial. One writer speculates Herman placed it where he did because the city had moved the old Stephenson Clock away from Second Avenue, which upset him. Yet the friendship that developed between Herman and Lawson tells a different story. The clock stood outside *The Daily Star* because it served as a daily reminder to Herman of his deceased friend. Indeed, as the phrase on the clock's dials said, "The Star Goes Home." The star was Lawson, and his home was Saskatoon. At least the

Photo courtesy of Keith Sorenson

clock had brought the memory of Herman's business partner back to Saskatoon. When he would arrive in the morning and leave in the evening, he would remember Talmage Lawson.

In 1928, *The Saskatoon Daily Star* and *The Daily Phoenix* amalgamated into *The Star-Phoenix*. And from that day forth, the Daily Star Clock became the Star-Phoenix Clock. Of all Saskatoon's Great War memorials, the Star-Phoenix Clock is the most personal, and thus evokes great emotion. It is dedicated to a proud Canadian who travelled the world, but kept his roots in Saskatoon. He was a strange man, with few close friends, but still had a vast impact on the Saskatoon community. Talmage Lawson deserved to be remembered. Every Monday at 11:59 PM, the Star-Phoenix Clock made sure of it. ~

Conclusion

Saskatoon has many Great War memorials. This short magazine covered seven of them, yet there are many more. The Vimy Memorial Bandstand, Next-Of-Kin Memorial Avenue and the Soldiers' Cairn at the Woodlawn Cemetery are just three examples of Saskatoon's "Hidden History" that needs to be found and written. Although this magazine was meant to be extensive, Saskatoon's Great War memorials story is not yet complete.

For the seven that were covered, there are a few themes that run through many of these memorials' stories. One is the commemoration of the citizen-soldier. Many of Saskatoon's military men were not trained soldiers, but rather ordinary citizens who responded to the call to arms. The 46th Battalion Stone reminds us of the many farmers who exchanged a plough for a gun to fight for king and country. A second theme in this magazine is the purposeful neglect of addressing the war directly in the city's memorials. The Nutana Memorial Art Gallery, for example, avoided the horrors of the first modern war in each of its paintings, and instead attempted to remember the golden years before 1914.

Yet another common theme is the Anglo-nature of the memorials. Although many different ethnic groups from Canada fought in the Great War, the built memorials tend to remember those of Anglo-Canadian descent. This tendency is perhaps best represented in the competition to design the Saskatoon Cenotaph, when only British citizens were allowed to submit applications.

The most prominent theme that runs through each and every memorial, however, is an unconditional commitment to remembering the fallen men of the Great War. They were brothers and fathers, sons and grandsons. They were loved by many, and their deaths were felt throughout the community. The decision to erect memorials around the city helps us understand how important it was for Saskatonians to remember the Great War. Maybe not the war itself, but certainly the men who helped fight and win it. The memorials were an attempt to keep the memories fresh for generations to come.

Although I have uncovered a large portion of Saskatoon's "Hidden History," there is much, much more to explore, the memory of the Great War included. Various strands of memory need to be recalled, beyond those that are visible to the public eye. As I have already said, Saskatoon's Great War memorials are inherently Anglicized. For the most part, they were created by English-Canadians, for English-Canadians, and in memory of English-Canadians. And in many cases, they reflect a male-focused memory strand of the war.

Aboriginal peoples and other ethnic minority groups tend to be disenfranchised from the dominant collective memory. Yet this does not mean that these groups do not have memories of the war. It is simply that they are not as easily recognizable as a cenotaph or an art gallery. Women too tend to fall outside of Saskatoon's collective memory of the war, yet they also played key roles in the war effort. They fundraised, sewed and nursed, making sure their citizen-soldiers were as comfortable as they could be in the muddy trenches of Flanders. Yet their roles are downplayed, as a pair of socks sent to a son overseas is less easily commemorable as taking a bullet for one's country.

Oral histories, mapping and deep digging into the archives can help uncover more of these hidden histories. Hopefully in the following years, others can help uncover the treasures of Saskatoon's history. Until then, happy hunting!

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