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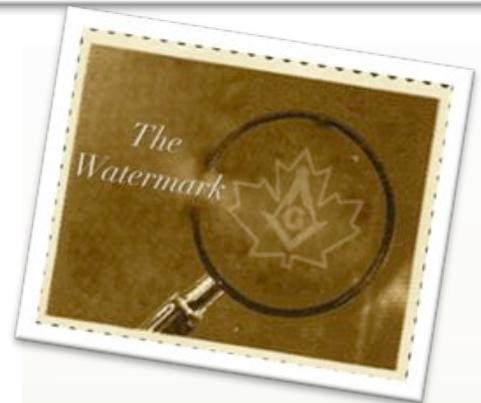
Watermark

Canada's Online Masonic Stamp Newsletter

A Time To Remember



Being the month of remembrance I decided to continue to dedicate the November issue to those Freemasons that served their nations and fought for the privileges so many take for granted. It may be cliché but journalists did not give us Free Speech; it was earned and is preserved by those who served in the military. So we need to remind others and ourselves that if freedom is valued the new



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You can find previous editions of the Watermark online at <http://bytown.ottawamasons.com>.

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Correction

I erred in last month's article on Jamaican Masonic stamps and was politely corrected by Bob Forbes the District Grand Secretary of Jamaica & Cayman Islands.

Dear Larry,

Pertaining to the Article on Jamaica at the end of your Newsletter, our District Grand Master has pointed out an inaccuracy regarding our History – “Freemasonry can be traced back to at least 1742 when the first Provincial Grand Master was appointed.”

In Gould's 'History of Freemasonry throughout the World', Jamaican Freemasonry was traced to a Lodge in Kingston warranted by the Premier Grand Lodge of England on April 14th 1739.

My apologies, and thanks for the correction. Larry

A Mountie In Flanders

The green fields of Flanders no longer bear visible signs of war or poppies. However, daily reminders of the horrors of the First World War still exist. The Flemish countryside of southwest Belgium is picturesque on this drizzly October day as our police car winds its way down narrow roads traveling towards the town of Ieper (Ypres) and the “Flanders Fields Museum”. Our guide explains that Ieper (pronounced eep-er) was completely destroyed in WW1 and was painstakingly rebuilt the way it originally was.

This far away land is full of history for Canadians. This is the land where over 16,000 Canadians are buried having died in a series of futile battles in a prolonged stalemate with the German Army. Our guide, a Belgian police officer, explained that his grandfather lived in the trenches for four years after the Germans destroyed his home and that this land for many years after the war was a large graveyard strewn with rubble. The picturesque local towns were finally rebuilt after many years of debate about leaving this field of death, as it was, a perpetual reminder of the horror and ravages of a war so long ago.

Forty-five years before my birth, my great grandfather, and my grandfather both lived and fought in the trenches near here. My father while stationed in Germany with the RCAF brought me here as a little boy over thirty-five years ago to see first hand where so many Canadians fought and died. Over eighty years after WWI, I returned to this hallowed ground, a guest of the Belgium Police to see first hand the land of John McCrea, Flanders Fields. Nearly every Canadian is familiar with the immortal words of Col. John McCrea, his poignant poem also are precious words to the residents of Ieper and many other nations. I have heard the poem recited more times than I can remember. But, like most Canadians I had a vague idea where Flanders Fields was and I assumed it was one big field full of poppies.

I was quite surprised to discover that the Flanders Fields of John McCrae’s poem was not one location but an entire region! Strange place names like “Ypres” and “Passchendaele” were actual communities where people lived, loved and died.

The Flanders Fields Museum is in the rebuilt Cloth Hall, originally built between 1260 and 1304, which along with the entire town of Ieper was reduced to rubble in four years of war. This somber museum is a combination of traditional materials and interactive exhibits which succeed in explaining the war and the effects it had on the Belgian countryside. There we learned how King Albert the 1st of Belgium ordered the canal locks to be opened to prevent the German Army breaking through, towards Dunkirk and Calais in France. This resulted in flooding the low countryside thereby halting the advance of the Germans and forcing them to transfer the offensive to the area around Ypres. This tactic created a prolonged stalemate in the area that lasted for several years and subsequently led to the land and nearly everything on it being demolished by prolonged artillery. The beautiful and productive farmland was turned into a crater-ridden wasteland of mud, trenches, and death. In addition to the physical effects of war, the museum provides insight into the lives of the people who lived and died in this terrible conflict. Not only does it show what happened to the allied soldiers (Belgium, France, Britain, Australian, Indian, and Canada etc.), but it also tells the story of the suffering and devastation experienced by both the German soldiers and the local inhabitants. Visitors to the museum are given a card bearing a name of an individual, which you are encouraged to insert into a computer at the end of the exhibits. When inserted the cards provide a photo and the histories of real people, men, women, soldiers and civilians who lived and died in the area.

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After touring the museum we walked down the street to the Menin Gate. Here the names of 56,000 soldiers of the British Empire who were killed in the battles in and around Ypres and whose resting place is unknown are engraved on the walls of the gate (another 34,888 names are record at the nearby memorial at Tyne Cot in Passchendaele).

Names of young men long since forgotten by most of the empire, but not by the people of Ieper who at 8pm every single night since World War One (excepting the Second World War when the community was occupied by the Germans) remember the dead by the playing of "The Last Post" by buglers in the massive memorial.

Reviewing the names of the fallen, I was dumbfounded by the size of the memorial and the approximately 56,000 of names of the dead carved into every wall both inside and out of this massive structure.



When I searched out the names of Canadians, I discovered that nearly 12% (6900) of the memorial was comprised of names of Canadian soldiers from every region of the country. Until now I had not appreciated the sacrifice my country had made in this bloody, useless war. Canada proportionally had sacrificed more of her sons (60,661) in World War

One than any other country in the empire and shared in the near extinction of an entire generation of young men! Our time was running short and on our return trip to the coast we stopped at the Canadian Memorial which was located at a cross road in the tiny village of St. Juliaan. I stared up at the 35 foot high towering and imposing monument of a Canadian soldier atop the column. The soldier emerging from the stone waist up, with his head bowed and his eyes staring mournfully towards the ground immediately makes direct eye contact with all who approach the memorial. *Continued on Pg 4*



Masonic Stamp Of The Month

Chile - Francisco Bilbao

Francisco Bilbao Barquín (1823-1865) was a writer, Philosopher and radical Chilean politician. In 1844 he published an article titled "Chilean Sociability" in which he criticized the Catholic Church and called the government politically and socially backward. As a result he was charged with blasphemy, sedition and immorality. Although he was acquitted of the sedition charge he was convicted for the remaining charges. He was excommunicated and his work was seized, burned

1998 Scot #1260 and he was fired from his job at the National Institute. He left the country living in Paris before returning in 1848 and was elected to public office. In 1852 he took part in a failed coupe de tat and fled to Peru and then back to Europe. He died in Buenos Aires Argentina after contracting tuberculosis. His remains were repatriated to Chile in 1998 after spending 134 years in his family tomb.

Our purpose building that temple on whose altar the nations will come one day with all despotism trophies won, to reach out to remove the final alliance of human elements, featuring the creator of the most beautiful spectacles: Freedom fraternizing, asking the creator freedom another land or another to continue their victories sky light, strength, love, until the end of time. Bilbao – 2nd Masonic Speech

Mountie In Flanders Cont...

Attached to the column was a brass plaque inscribed upon *“This column marks the battlefield where 18,000 Canadians on the British left withstood the first gas attacks the 22 -24 April 1915, 2000 fell and are buried nearby”*

I was overcome with emotion, and could not look into the statues eyes without feeling his pain and despair over the number of fallen comrades that were buried near this place.

At the base of this massive monument were arrows pointing in different directions to the nearby battlefields “Passchendaele”, “Ypres”, “Hooge”, “Zonnebeke”, “Langemarck”, “Poelcappelle”, “Boesinghe”, where thousands of young Canadians saw intense action and suffered the grisly effects of mustard gas. As I wandered the grounds of this stately memorial blanketed in light rain thinking of my grandfathers enduring the hardship of living in the mud of the trenches with the rats, artillery and gas. Had they not survived this place I would not be here either. As I meditated upon the sacrifices made in this area, I realized that I had wandered into a small grove of Maple trees and scattered upon the ground all around me were a variety of colours and types of maple leaves. The symbolism of the maples leaves lying on Belgian soil and the variety of colours of the leaves before me made a deep and lasting impression. I gathered up a few leaves and returned to the car and placed them inside a writing pad where later that night, wide awake wrestling with the effects of jet lag and a nine hour time change I composed a poem “Maple Leaves Upon The Ground” in an effort to try and express the impression this land had made upon me and the feelings for I had for this place.

Our next stop was very special to our guide, for his grandfather had labored in the trenches along the Ijser River at “De Dodengang” the infamous “Trench of Death” in Diksmuide. This is where the entire Belgian army struggled for nearly four years in the trenches,

literally a stone throw away from the Germans who were trenched in on the opposite side of the river. Soldiers lived in these trenches, three days on and three days off under heavy fire, artillery, and gas, with the dead, the dying and the rats. The memorial site, nearly a kilometer in length is a fraction of the size of the original trenches that ran along the bank of the River Ijser, several miles in length.

As we travelled across the Belgian countryside, I noticed that the telephone poles in the area were different from poles I had seen elsewhere and asked our guide “Rick” about their design. The poles are concrete “A -frame” style, with a series of large holes running the length of the pole. He explained that the farmers still regularly dig up unexploded bombs from WW1 and place the unexploded shells in a hole in the pole. The Belgian Army makes regular patrols of the area and collect the shells and dispose of them. As we were driving along Rick turned up the police radio and then advised us that someone in his neighborhood had just dug up three unexploded bombs on his own street! It was as if the dead in this area cannot rest and are busy pushing up the unexploded bombs, until all of the explosives in the area are removed from the ground and the soil made pure again.

As we continued our journey back to the coast our guide insisted we stop in Langemark where one of two German graveyards was located. This dignified and solemn place held the remains of 44,061 German soldiers who died in this area between 1914 -1918. A poignant reminder that it is not just allied soldiers buried in this place, but that there are the sons of parents from many lands who never returned home to their friends and family, but lie buried here in Flanders Fields.

I could not help but think about the closing line in John McCrea’s poem;

*“If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders Fields.”*

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Maple Leaves Upon The Ground

*Maple leaves upon the ground
Where granite eyes, stare sadly down
Sixteen thousand lie near by
Where larks, still singing fly*

*Granite eyes in downward cast
Provide a testament, to the gas
The craters gone, the grass returned
Historic lessons, never learned*

*Names upon the Menin Gate
Reminders of, the cost of hate
While silver trumpets, each evening sound
Red leaves of maple, fall to the ground*

*Poppies dwelled once, in the fields
Where bombs each day, are still revealed
Restless souls in Belgian soil
Push up explosives, to end their toil*

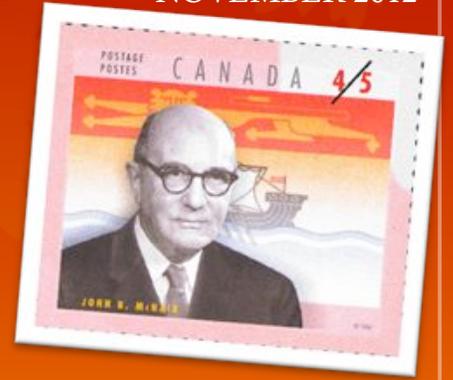
*From graves the fallen, from far and near
Cry to the visitor, we are still here
The torch we passed so long ago
The path to peace, its intent to show*

*Hope, not death, is the message we still give
From we the dead, to you who live
In Flanders Fields, stone eyes stare down
At maple leaves, on Belgian ground*

Canadian Freemason of the Month – John B. McNair

John Babbit McNair, CC (1889-1968) was the 23rd Premier of the Province of New Brunswick. Born and raised in Andover, N.B. He graduated from the University of New Brunswick in 1911 and was awarded a Rhodes scholarship at Oxford. He served as an officer in both world wars. After WWII he pursued a career in law eventually being appointed a King's Counsel on July 16, 1935.

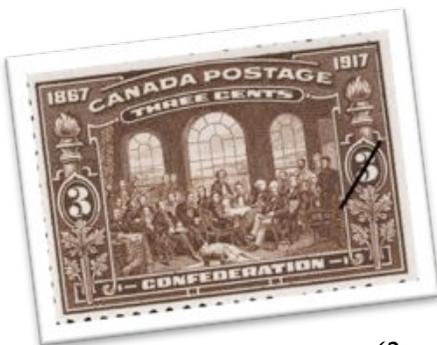
The same year he was elected as a Liberal candidate and was appointed Attorney General and became premier in 1940. In 1952 he returned to the practice of law and was appointed he was appointed Chief Justice in Appeal, Supreme Court of NB in 1955. In 1967 he was awarded the Order of Canada. Brother McNair was a past master of Hiram Lodge #6, in Fredericton NB.



1998 Scott #1709c

Mountie in Flanders continued...

The so-called “Great War” did not end all wars as it promised. Only twenty years later, death and destruction rained upon this beautiful land again. Over ninety years later war still rages around the world. Though few poppies grow today in Flanders Fields, the dead have kept their promise, they do not sleep and likely will not sleep for a very long time. Meanwhile the ghosts of the dead, now all allies in spirit, continue to push up explosives from the soil in an attempt to purify the ground where they are buried and try to remind the living of the sacrifice they all made so many years ago in a far off land called “Flanders Fields”.



The Same But Different

On Face value the two stamps depicting the Canadian “Fathers of Confederation” based on the painting by Robert Harris look the same but they are not. Stamp #135

(3 cent brown) released in 1917 excluded eight men

from the original painting because the painting was cropped! Stamp #142 (2 cent green) released in 1927 correct the slight and includes all of the men depicted in the painting. Of the 34 original fathers of confederation only four were Freemasons; Sir John A. MacDonald (ON), Col. John Hamilton Gray (NB), Sir Alexander Hamilton (ON), William A. Henry (NS). Gray and Henry were among those omitted from the first stamp.

