

## McGill Remembers: The Commemoration of Three Wars through War Records at McGill

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The McGill War Records Office contains a remarkable bank of information compiled on McGill alumni, staff and students who served in the Second World War. The war records have taken on a second life as an important part of a larger project called McGill Remembers that had its beginnings in 2005 when two researchers, Faculty of Education Professor Chris Milligan and Wes Cross from the Dean of Students Office, decided to celebrate the Year of the Veteran by creating a web site, since taken down, devoted to presenting stories and resources on McGill veterans. In the course of their research, several intriguing stories concerning McGill War veterans emerged, many from sources located in the McGill University Archives (MUA), including material found in the War Records Office as well as in *Old McGill* and the *McGill News*. Their enthusiasm, amply demonstrated during their presentation on *McGill, WWII and the Memorial Chapel*, at a James McGill Society meeting in November 2005, sparked an interest in the McGill community and a roundtable of interested parties was established. The members included potential partners with an interest in the actions of the McGill community in conflicts and in peacekeeping. They included researchers, fundraisers, librarians and archivists with McGill alumnus and Governor emeritus John Cleghorn as the honorary Chair. The roundtable agreed that the war records at the MUA were important and should be made widely available through digitization. Like most archives, however, the MUA lacked the resources needed, ranging from scanning equipment to such specialized skills as assessing copyright, protecting personal information and web design. Accordingly the MUA used exhibits at Remembrance Day events and Homecoming exhibits at Martlet House to help build on the interest in the McGill Remembers project. The McGill community responded positively to the themes of sacrifice and commemoration forming the substance of these presentations. As a result of these efforts, lobbying by the members of the roundtable and much hard work from McGill fundraisers of McGill, the project went ahead. Thanks to the generosity of McGill alumni and longstanding friends John and Pattie Cleghorn and the support of Principal Heather Munroe-Blum through the *McGill Remembers Project*, the McGill University Archives has completed the digitization of the McGill University War Records. See website at <http://www.archives.mcgill.ca/public/exhibits/mcgillremembers/warrecords.htm>

The extensive holding of McGill War records in the MUA reflects the activities of 6298 men and woman (McGill students, graduates and staff) who served during the Second World War, 1939-1945. It consists chiefly of index cards, supporting file folders of correspondence, news clippings and photographs. The War Records Office was an initiative of F. Cyril James, Principal from 1939 to 1962, and under the custodianship of Robert Collier Fetherstonhaugh (1892-1949). The creation of a specific office with administrative responsibilities for the keeping of records reflecting the war related activities of McGill people was both an administrative first and innovative. However, this also represented a continuation of the McGill tradition of remembering and honoring its war veterans on a less formal basis since the Boer War at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In all, there are more than a hundred years of records on paper as well as films, photographs and memorial artefacts including books, plaques and a memorial hall – all

commemorating McGill's veterans. This article draws on these and other records to document McGill's war contribution and suggest their potential for further research on McGill and war.

### **South African War**

McGill's commemoration of veterans starts with the South African War. The economic and political conflict between the British Empire and the Boers in South Africa finally erupted into a military contest in 1899. The war represented for many Canadians a grand imperial initiative to demonstrate the growing force of Canada within the British Empire. For the imperialist movement in Canada the war was also an opportunity to support and strengthen the ties with the Empire. This found particular resonance at McGill under the leadership of the Chancellor, Lord Strathcona, and the Principal, Sir William Peterson.

Donald Smith (1820-1914), 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Strathcona and Mount Royal was a Scottish-born financier who by 1870 was the chief executive officer of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) in Canada and was involved in negotiating the legal transfer of the HBC territories in the West to Canada and the creation of Manitoba. A founder of the transcontinental Canadian Pacific Railway, Smith also was President of the Bank of Montreal, 1887-1904 and served as an M.P. and the Canadian High Commissioner to London from 1896-1914. Smith became probably the best known Canadian imperial link to Great Britain as well as an important benefactor of McGill University, which he served as Chancellor from 1889-1914. Sir William Peterson, a classical scholar served as McGill Principal from 1895 to 1919. Peterson expanded McGill's curriculum, including the creation of graduate programs, and with the benefactions of Lord Strathcona, and Sir William C. Macdonald, 1831-1917, greatly expanded the physical facilities with the creation of Macdonald College, Royal Victoria College for women, a Student Union building, and physics, chemistry, engineering and medical buildings.

Canada's involvement in the Boer war was entirely voluntary. For many Canadians, particularly francophones, the Empire either sparked little interest or did not seem to need the aid of Canada. For committed imperialists such as Strathcona and Peterson the war was a call to Canada for action to strengthen and reinforce the bonds of empire. Although small in number, Canadian imperialists had a profound influence at McGill until the end of the First World War; they supported military training, a conservative ideology harkening back to a simpler less industrial past and, as Carl Berger points out, this imperialism also served as a model for Canadian nationalism.<sup>1</sup> In a speech to McGill students, Peterson presented the Boer War as helping to evoke the creation of a new imperial federation: "soon people would be able to point to another United States-the United States of the British Empire".<sup>2</sup> And as reported in *Old McGill*, Peterson made the following comments to Canadian troops on their way to South Africa:

Play your part in the great drama which is being enacted in South Africa. This may be regarded only as a rehearsal-a most satisfactory and reassuring rehearsal-for any still greater war that may be forced upon us in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup>

The student publications of that era, the *Old McGill* and the *McGill Outlook*, frequently editorialized in support of the war. Chancellor Strathcona's pledge to pay for a cavalry regiment, Lord Strathcona's Horse, to fight in South Africa was characterised by students as causing them to "swell with pride that such a person was the Chancellor of McGill"; he would go down in history as one of the "master builders of empire".<sup>4</sup> Demonstrations, through rallies and parades by McGill students in favour of the war become more pronounced. When troops stopped in Montreal on route to South Africa, they were met by boisterous McGill students who reportedly hoisted a recent McGill graduate and military officer upon their shoulders and carried him up and down the railway platform.<sup>5</sup> In February of 1900 McGill students from all Faculties held a meeting in Molson Hall. The students decided to cancel the annual McGill Banquet dinner and pledge this money to a patriotic fund to help support the troops in South Africa. In March of the same year McGill students started a chain of events that came to be called the Montreal Riot. This incident was the subject of Professor Carman Miller's presidential address to the James McGill Society in 1991, "McGill and the Montreal Riot of 1900". The McGill students celebrated two British victories over the Boers by parading through the streets of Montreal and in the course of this event attacked the offices of three francophone newspapers and a campus of Laval University in Montreal. A retaliatory response by francophone students to march on McGill was headed off by local leaders including Principal Peterson. A more serious riot followed soon thereafter with many people from the Anglophone community being involved.<sup>6</sup>

There is little documentation on the extent of McGill student, alumni and staff involvement in the Boer War. The annual reports of the university from 1899-1902 show almost no evidence of McGill's formal involvement. The administrative, teaching and research activities appear to have continued normally. The war seems to have had its greatest impact on students and their activities. Consequently important sources on the war are student publications such as the *Outlook* and *Old McGill*. For example, *Old McGill* heralded McGill participation in the war by boasting that every contingent had McGill students or graduates in it. This student-led orientation was also reflected in how the war was commemorated at McGill. McGill students took the lead and erected the first McGill memorial, a marble plaque honouring two medical students who had fallen during the war, Edwin Patrick O Reilly and Harold L. Borden, son of the Canadian Minister of Militia and Defence, Frederick Borden.

The main impact on the McGill community of the Boer War was not the student parades or demonstrations of support for the war but rather the influence it had on the senior administration to reform military training after the war had ended. Thereafter, McGill University took a far more active role in the training and education of militia officers. Although the impetus for these improvements often came from the Canadian government seeking ways to improve the Canadian militia, the McGill support for these efforts was very pronounced, especially from Peterson. In 1907, after negotiations between McGill, the Department of the Militia and Defence in Ottawa and the War Office in London, the Board of Governors granted \$500 for militia officers to provide lectures to McGill students on military engineering, tactics, topography, history, law and administration. The Annual Report of 1906-07 proclaimed this measure was required to enable McGill graduates to obtain commissions in either the Canadian or imperial military services and to enhance their leadership skills.<sup>7</sup> Among those taking these courses was a

McGill student named A.G.L. McNaughton, later a general and Minister of National Defence. The lectures were followed by other initiatives launched to improve the military capabilities through training. Under the encouragement of Peterson and others formal military training for McGill students became a possibility with the establishment in 1912 of the Canada's first Canadian Officers Training Corps unit (COTC).

## World War I

At the outbreak of war in 1914, the support for the war was exceptionally strong among McGill staff, students and alumni. An indication of this enthusiasm can be found in the enlistment numbers. From the pool of McGill's able-bodied Canadians, roughly 50% of recent graduates and 45% of undergraduates joined the military services.<sup>8</sup> The McGill Provisional Battalion, picking up the void left when all the University Officer Training Programs were cancelled for the duration of the war, offered staff and students alike the possibility of military training right on campus. The McGill community also wanted to channel its war effort through recognizable McGill entities. It was an affirmation of the University's growing sense of its larger role in Canadian society. Some of the funding for these McGill fighting units came from the alumni through the Graduates' Society. There were two Siege batteries chiefly made up of members of the McGill community, the first was originally named the No. 6 (McGill Overseas Siege Battery) later renamed the 7<sup>th</sup> and the other named the 10<sup>th</sup>. The 148<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion also included many McGill people. Captain Percival Molson raised a mainly McGill company to serve as replacements, often in the ranks rather than as officers, for the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry regiment.

Members of the medical faculty created special units, the most important being the No. 3 General Hospital, by far the most recognizably McGill unit of the First World War. The hospital was headed by the Dean of Medicine, Herbert S. Birkett, a retired officer from the Canadian medical corps, who initiated the idea of a McGill staffed military general hospital which included personnel from McGill's academic staff and students as well as nurses<sup>9</sup> from the affiliated McGill teaching hospitals, the Montreal General and the Royal Victoria. He quickly gained Peterson's support and official approval through a resolution in the McGill Senate in October 1914.<sup>10</sup> The No. 3 or "McGill" Hospital remained in operation throughout the war and supplied more than 1000 beds for patients with 40 medical doctors, over one hundred nurses and a support staff of over 200. The hospital was highly renowned for the quality of its medical care. For example in 1916, it admitted 36,141 patients, logged 3704 operations and lost only 151 patients.

A commemorative history, *No. 3 General Hospital (McGill), 1914-1919* was written by Fetherstonhaugh and published in 1928 by McGill's Faculty of Medicine.<sup>11</sup> The work itself drew largely on the official war diaries of the hospital held in Ottawa. Fetherstonhaugh's clearly stated goal was to present the story of the hospital in a chronological fashion using non-technical language, in order presumably to engage as wide an audience as possible. The living conditions

for hospital staff and patients were often difficult. John McCrae, the Pathology lecturer and poet, commenting on the winter of 1917 noted that “the cruel cold is still holding..I do not think that I have ever been more uncomfortable. To go to bed is a nightmare and to get up a worse one... ”<sup>12</sup> The patients suffered from a variety of wounds and illnesses related to the horrific conditions of trench warfare including painful shins, trench foot and in McCrae’s phrase a “bankrupt nervous system” (or shell shock) where the symptoms included a pulse rate of 150 beats a minute. These particular patients were evacuated to England for further treatment.<sup>13</sup> John McCrae who penned one of the most famous verses of the war “In Flanders Fields” in 1915, died of complication from pneumonia in 1918. He received a solemn funeral attended by many Canadians including the head of the Canadian Corps, General Sir Arthur Currie.

The McGill involvement in the war was significant: the total number of McGill student and past students (alumni) who enlisted was 3059 with 363 described as killed or died in service.<sup>14</sup> There were 791 decorations including two Victoria Crosses awarded to the McGill contingent.<sup>15</sup> Other contributions to the war effort were scientific innovations. McGill physics professors Louis V. King and A.S. Eve were engaged in submarine detection work. Several members of the chemistry department, including Prof. Robert F. Ruttan, developed chemical processes to help replace supplies no longer available from the German chemical industry. They helped produce acetone and such basics as a cadmium-copper alloy needed for field telephones and applications. Alfred Stanstead from the Department of Metallurgy served as a member of the copper and zinc commission, formed by the Department of National Defence, and conducted experiments to develop a process to produce magnesium products used in flares and tracer bullets. This chemical technique was used in a plant in Shawinigan Falls, Ontario which became the biggest producer of magnesium in North America during the war.

The McGill focus on the war changed campus life from 1914-1918 in several ways. The advent of compulsory military training for all medically fit males meant that the campus took on the appearance of a military camp; a student, John Ridington, having just finished his library training at McGill in 1915, later recalled, “The campus had been transformed into a drill ground and the lawns were trampled by marching feet: little squads of men were being instructed in bayonet practice and all sorts of military training activities were in progress.”<sup>16</sup>

McGill women also supported the war effort. The McGill Women's Union, chiefly made up of Faculty wives, had been created from the Ladies' Auxiliary of the McGill Y.M.C.A., to supply clothing to the soldiers from McGill and then worked on the production of Sphagnum surgical moss dressings. In 1916 the Warden of Royal Victoria College, Ethel Hurlbatt, chaired the Women’s War Register Committee. The Committee was established by the Women’s Canadian Club of Montreal to create a list of women in Montreal who wished to work as substitutes in civilian jobs for men fighting overseas.<sup>17</sup>

With so much of the University’s resources being directed towards the war effort the development of many University oriented projects was curtailed. To quote from the annual report of 1915-1916; “Many pressing problems... were about to be undertaken on lines that would have written a new chapter in the history of McGill; but the war has put a stop to everything.” These

sacrifices were justified because, the report argued, “it has called forth the best in us”. The transformation of the campus was viewed in a far larger framework than just University goals and objectives. For during “summer and winter alike that our Campus has echoed to the tread of marching men: it has been one of the great rallying points of Canadian patriotism”<sup>18</sup> including the remarkable applied research work that had been accomplished in chemistry and physics.

The First World War evoked strong McGill community support. The University administration focused on military contributions, especially by current students or recent graduates; the McGill community demonstrated a desire to serve in units that had a McGill connection such as the No. 3 General Hospital. McGill made important contributions in the area of research and development but these received far less attention than the deeds of larger than life military officers such as Percival Molson, a star student athlete and the winner of the Military Cross and John McCrae. Molson, who died during the war, left funds for the building of a sports stadium later named for him.<sup>19</sup>

Due to illness Peterson resigned as Principal in 1919, to be succeeded eventually in 1920 by the Canadian-born head of the Canadian Corps, General Sir Arthur Currie. Although not a University graduate, his success as a military commander including the development of tactics such as better training and co-ordination of resources, would serve him well as Principal. Canadian losses (68,000 war dead) had dampened enthusiasm for imperialism. Currie was much less concerned with the Peterson’s lofty ideals of empire than in much more practical Canadian matters, especially treatment of veterans. During his time at McGill, he was oriented far more towards encouraging peace rather than war, and especially with the remembrance of the sacrifices made by Canadian soldiers. He played an important, continuing part in the national Poppy Day campaigns, serving as patron of local poppy days and as the National Treasurer in 1921. Concerned for the economic difficulties faced by returning veterans, he argued that money raised in Canada during the Poppy campaign should be used for relief work for veterans and their families.<sup>20</sup>

He constantly attended and spoke at remembrance ceremonies on Armistice Day and lobbied for veterans’ rights and benefits. Of particular relevance to memorializing the War, he gave careful attention to the production of the McGill Roll of Honour commemorating McGill’s activities in the First World War. Currie’s correspondence in the MUA is filled with his answers to all kinds of enquiries and requests for help from veterans. He wrote letters of recommendation for veterans, including missives to various agencies of the Canadian government asking for medical help for individuals. He wrote letters to some of the biggest employers in Canada including the Grand Trunk Railway urging them to hire returning veterans.<sup>21</sup> He also lobbied for veterans’ rights in the political arena. In 1930 he appeared before the Special Committee of the House of Commons on Pensions and Returned Soldiers’ Problems arguing for having fairer mechanisms concerning the awarding of pensions and the appeals process. He cited the case of a soldier in the signal corps, exposed to the rain and cold on a regular basis, who suffered during the war from rheumatic pains in his back. In 1924 the soldier received a pension for medical reasons. Due to the ongoing pain the former soldier sought further treatment and asked for additional funding from the government. This was refused and subsequently his pension was

revoked. The original diagnosis had been overruled and his condition was labelled as a pre-existing condition not caused by war service. Currie was exasperated that someone whose position in the signal corps meant he was constantly exposed to the elements could be treated in this manner: "I know that there is not a living man in this country who would say that the man received fair treatment".<sup>22</sup> Currie believed that nations should think in terms of peace not war, take adequate care of veterans and their families and honour their memory.

For Currie, commemoration of the Canadian war effort was best realised at McGill through the publication of the *McGill Honour*. Even before Currie's arrival, Peterson had planned such a work. The roll was to provide a complete list, kept by McGill's Registrar's Office, of those who served in the war as well as the honours awarded. During the war, yearly Honour Roll lists were appended to the annual reports of the University. This was an excellent example of how closely McGill tied military activities to the goals and objectives of University. In these lists the members of the McGill community were categorized as graduates, undergraduates, and past students. The original plan for the roll called for the compilation and verification of these lists and the production of a small pamphlet. The *McGill Honour Roll* as finally published in 1926 differed dramatically from the original plan. The modest pamphlet had evolved into the production of an elaborate bound volume, both listing the McGill men who had died during the War and providing brief biographical sketches, along with portraits (if available), for each one. The remaining entries were characterised as "Other Enlistments" and included all the other participants in the war without any images. The material for the sketches was gleaned from the University scrapbooks housed in the Registrar's office and from *Old McGill*.

The purpose of the *McGill Honour Roll* was clearly stated in the introduction. It was written "in honour of those who served in the Great War". There was no specific mention of the McGill research work done during the war and only one reference to the supporting activities by women on the home front through the activities of the Red Cross. The purpose was clearly to memorialise the members of the McGill community who had enlisted and fought during the war. To quote from the preface:

"More even than it is an honour to the living, however, this book is a tribute to the dead, to those splendid souls, released in the flame of battle or in the cool hospital ward, have winged onward to a glory past all knowledge".<sup>23</sup>

The COTC was given credit in the introduction for the start of military activities on campus; and the Graduates Society was praised for the financial support given McGill oriented units. McGill's contribution to the war was couched in larger terms as part of Canadian universities' contribution to the war effort through the provision of training and knowledge for the troops.

Correspondence from the Principal's office provides ample evidence of Currie's involvement in every aspect of the *McGill Honour Roll*. The Registrar's Office had since the early days of the war been tracking the involvement of McGill students and recent graduates and had completed the first draft of the work by the end of 1921. Currie wished to verify the McGill

records against the military records held in Ottawa and wrote to the war records office in Ottawa for ask for help; he was looking for “someone familiar with the routine of the Records Office..and look(ing) for employment..although it would be better if someone currently on staff could do this”.<sup>24</sup> The records keepers in Ottawa accepted the request and placed two employees on the project.

The photos included in the *McGill Honour Roll* were solicited from next of kin for the soldier with complimentary copies of the book presented to the person who had supplied the photo. The distribution and sale of the *McGill Honour Roll* in 1928 resulted in hundreds of letters being written to the University. Many were from the next of kin who viewed the book as a venerated artefact to be placed with the medals and other mementoes of their fallen son. Some people also wrote saying that they had been missed, despite all the research that had been done. The Registrar T.H. “Tommy” Mathews simply wrote back to these missives to say that they would be included in later supplements.

The *McGill Honour Roll* is clearly a substantial publication but how did it compare to those from other from other Universities? This was a question that truly interested McGill because in the files on the distribution of the publication there some samples from other Universities including Yale, that were pamphlets of not more that 20-30 pages. In the opinion of Librarian John Ridington from the University of British Columbia, having received a number of these honour roles from Canadian and British Universities, McGill’s was the best that he has seen, “whoever is responsible for its production is to be congratulated”.<sup>25</sup> In any case, Sir Arthur Currie deserves a major credit for the book.

Currie would serve as principal until his death in 1933. His funeral was a major Canadian event including a live radio broadcast and news reel footage, with the service being conducted at the Anglican Christ Church Cathedral. Afterwards Currie’s body lay in state in the Arts building before being taken by a horse drawn carriage to Mount Royal cemetery through the streets of Montreal where thousands of people viewed the proceedings. The members of the procession included Prime Minister R.B. Bennett as well as provincial and municipal politicians, representatives from Great Britain, members of the McGill’s Board of Governors and other local dignitaries. The procession itself was supported by a variety of military units.

The tributes to Currie were numerous including this one by humourist Stephan Leacock speaking on Currie’s special relationship with the University;

“Now it is over. We have laid him to rest. Yet we who served with him at McGill can only hope that somewhere in the sound of the martial music and the measured step of his soldiers, his soul might hear the shuffling feet of his dusty professors, out of step and out of breath, but following him, -as they have been wont to do these thirteen years, -as best they could.”<sup>26</sup>



Sir Arthur was a most successful Principal, and his accomplishments included securing Wilder Penfield and the Montreal Neurological Institute and Hospital for McGill. He deserves at least as much credit for his support for McGill and other Canadian veterans.

In 1931 Currie had identified the construction of a gymnasium as a priority for the University. In 1935 the Graduates Society decided to honour Currie's memory by launching a fundraising campaign to create the Sir Arthur Currie Memorial Gymnasium-Armoury. The Gymnasium was built in 1939 (without the swimming pool and Memorial Hall, built later) from funding secured through the Graduates Society and a Strathcona donation. It was dedicated by General A.G.L. McNaughton, a McGill graduate, commander of the First Division of the Canadian Army who had served under Currie in the First World War. In his speech he praised Currie's military exploits and asked the audience to "remember the greatness of the contribution that he made to Canada in war and peace."<sup>27</sup> Lady Currie laid the cornerstone for the building aided by the Chancellor, Sir Edward Beatty, President of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

### **World War Two**

The construction of the gym had been going on as the Second World War threatened; a war which would require the dedication of the totality of McGill's resources. Upon the beginning of the war on September 1, 1939 (even before Canada officially declared war on September 10<sup>th</sup>), McGill University began marshaling resources to aid the war effort. On September 5, 1939 Chancellor Sir Edward Beatty in a letter drafted by Principal Lewis W. Douglas to Prime Minister Mackenzie King ) pledged that "McGill University extends to the Government all of its facilities and resources for the prosecution of the war".<sup>28</sup> To help fulfill this goal the War Service Advisory Board was created on September 13, 1939, consisting of representatives from the Students' Society, Graduates' Society, Department of National Defense, Canadian Officers Training Corps, and academic staff. This body was to gather information in a voluntary fashion through responses to a survey questionnaire to be used to direct the human and physical resources of the McGill community for war service in the most effective way possible. Members of the McGill community staff, students and graduates were called upon to register with the Board. The Emeritus Dean of Medicine C.F. Martin chaired the Board with physics professor David A. Keys serving as the executive secretary.

The Board's role was to evaluate the qualifications of McGill people and to help direct them to the areas where their special skills could be best utilized, whether in military endeavors, research or administration. Douglas and Beatty as Principal and Chancellor addressed a letter to McGill students urging them to consult the advisory board before they enlisted to determine the most effective way of contributing to the war. Unlike the First World War where most of the effort was directed into recruitment for military service, contributing to this new war included other avenues such as science, medicine, and the management of production or administration.

Within two months more than 1200 members of the McGill community including students registered with the Board on a voluntary basis. These records collectively can be

masked as needed, are a rich source of the McGill community's involvement in the war and merit further study.<sup>29</sup> While many of the responses from the academic staff were from science or medicine, responses were also forthcoming from other disciplines.

The Board worked closely with federal agencies. They discussed plans on how to augment military training possibilities for students through the re-invigorated COTC. At the very beginning of the war, the COTC had only 85 members but by the end had providing training for 7000 students. The Board also had several discussions with the National Research Council. James reported that the Council would provide McGill many grants related the research work of Chemistry professors J.B. Collip and Otto Maass. It was made clear to McGill that there would be no large overlapping grants given when one university clearly held more expertise than another. McGill researchers received research grants for work in such areas as blood storage for transfusions and a study of the psychological effects of shell shock. The Board also sought coordinated use of McGill facilities such as laboratories and equipment.

At a War Service Advisory Board meeting in February 1940 in the Principal's Office, it was decided after consultation with Ottawa to develop training programs for short wave radio, directed by Professor David Keys, for the R.C.A.F. In a meeting later that year it was noted that McGill professor of mathematics, Albert H.S. Gillson, a naval veteran of the First World War with experience in training Royal Naval Air Force navigators, was engaged by the R.C.A.F. to teach navigation with recent McGill graduates in science and engineering serving as navigation instructors. In addition to the management goals espoused by the Board, there was also an appeal to McGill's pride in its past accomplishments of World War I. The McGill actions in the Great War had "added immeasurably to (the University's) prestige and distinction".<sup>30</sup>

For many students, campus life reflected the University's dedication to the war effort. More than 850 students registered with the War Service Advisory Board. The students coordinated their effort through their War Council made up of the representatives from student clubs and societies. Students on the campus organized blood drives, collected salvage, volunteered to help the war effort as human subjects for war time experiments and helped raise funds through Victory Loan Campaigns. Students also took military training through the COTC and received lessons on how to fight fires and bandage wounds. They also engaged in their own creative fund raising endeavours paying for two Bren guns by lining up a "Mile of Pennies" from the Arts Building to Sherbrooke Street.

The creation of a specific special office to keep records concerning McGill's involvement in the war was a reflection of the impact of total war was to have on records keeping. Large scale production required more efficient organization and co-ordination of systems for producing the materials of war. These more complex working environments produced a need for more systematic records keeping practices. In the First World War McGill needed to track about 3000 members of its community but in the Second World War this number had almost doubled. In January 1942, with approval from the Board of Governors, Principal F. Cyril James, who had replaced the American born Principal Lewis W. Douglas, established the McGill University War Records office, whose objective was to compile a thorough record of the war effort of McGill

faculty, students, and staff, past and present, in all branches of armed and civilian war services. R.C. Fetherstonhaugh, who at the time was Vice Chairman of the Editorial Board of the *McGill News*, was appointed head of this office. Associated with *The McGill News* as an editor for more than a decade by the outbreak of World War II, Fetherstonhaugh had written many military history books, including the history of the Number 3 General Hospital. In 1927 he was awarded the David Prize by the Government of Quebec for *The Royal Montreal Regiment, 14th Battalion, C.E.F., 1914-1925*. He also contributed articles to *The McGill News*, *The Dalhousie Review*, and *The Beaver*.

As early as the winter of 1939, Fetherstonhaugh started writing a quarterly column in *The McGill News* entitled "On His Majesty's Service". After being named custodian of the war records, he also published, until the end of the war, in every issue of *The McGill News*, a "McGill University War Records" column, depicting faculty, students, alumni, and staff involvement in the war. In the *McGill News* Spring 1942 issue, he expressed his vision for the War Records office: that "McGill may possess war records not surpassed by those of any university in Canada, or, indeed, of any university elsewhere." When the hostilities ceased, Fetherstonhaugh published columns entitled "The Veterans' Conspectus" highlighting McGill community members' post war activities. Fetherstonhaugh began his position as records custodian by building file folders on individual soldiers participating in the war effort. In conjunction with the Office of the Principal and the Graduates' Society, the War Records Office solicited information from individuals and families in creating these files. These records consist of index cards, newspaper clippings, correspondence, and photographs of individual soldiers. Approximately 7000 index cards and 3000 documents and photographs were created and accumulated by Fetherstonhaugh and placed in alphabetical order within specific categories, such as honours, awards, and prisoners of war, killed and missing. Other files include correspondence and newspaper clippings concerning the McGill War Memorial Campaign. In May 1946 the War Records Office closed and in the same year the University granted Featherstonhaugh an honorary LL.D. In 1947, he published *McGill University at War 1914-1918; 1939-1945*. There were 6298 McGill people (including 295 women) on active service during World War II. By the end of the war, there were 287 dead, 52 prisoners of war, and 629 recipients of medals.

As the war progressed McGill researchers became increasingly engaged in war related research. The Pulp and Paper Institute studied the improvement of filters for gas masks. The Chemistry Department was also active under the leadership of Otto Mass, R.V.V. Nicholls and C.A. Winkler. These three along with other professors and graduate students produced important studies on explosives (R.D.X.) as well as chemical warfare, including the detection of poisonous gases and smoke screens. McGill researchers, again chiefly from Chemistry, also contributed to Canadian research on the atomic bomb. E. Godfrey Burr from the Faculty of Engineering worked extensively with the Royal Canadian Navy on the development of camouflage for ships at sea. The Montreal Neurological Institute (MNI) studied the causes of blackouts for pilots flying at high speeds and developed a test for seasickness. The first set of tests were run with McGill students on amusement rides at Belmont Park in Cartierville, Quebec but these were found to be inadequate. Soon volunteers drawn from the Royal Canadian Navy were being tested on a

battery of swings constructed at the MNI. McGill also served as the temporary headquarters for the International Labour Organization, a labour research agency of the League of Nations

James's leadership extended well beyond McGill. He was named the Chair of the Committee on Post War Reconstruction, to advise the Federal government on policies for post war Canadian society. The committee advocated better social and economic national planning and more government intervention to ensure full employment and avoid economic depression. Leonard Marsh, a noted McGill university social scientist, whose employment at McGill was terminated in 1941, ostensibly because his Rockefeller grant ended, by James' predecessor, Lewis Douglas<sup>31</sup> but more likely because of his left wing political views, was appointed as the director of research. In 1943 produced the *Report on Social Security for Canada* that outlined and foreshadowed the construction of a social welfare state for Canada. Although the committee's activities produced a fair amount of discussion, including a full-length title page spread in the *Financial Post*, the major recommendations of the report were not acted upon immediately.

The thousands of veterans returning to McGill threatened to swamp the university's facilities. In order to accommodate this influx, James leased a former R.C.A.F. base at St. Jean, Quebec. Dawson College, named for former McGill Principal Sir William Dawson, was opened on September 26, 1945. All first year students in Science and Engineering as well as some second year students from these faculties attended the college. Dawson was a residential college with accommodations for the returning veterans as well as for their spouses and children. The boisterous spirit of these returning veterans animated Dawson College and manifested itself through enthusiastic support of clubs, social events and athletic teams as well as a tendency towards practical jokes. The inscription of "Dawson – Montreal branch" on the student ice palace of the McGill downtown campus and the crowning of Betty, a Saint Bernard dog, as Queen of Dawson were two well-known examples of this humor. The student population of Dawson College peaked in 1947 with 1687 students but had declined to 654 by 1950 when it was closed. In all over 5600 students, chiefly veterans, attended Dawson College.

In 1947 a Memorial Hall was opened to commemorating McGill's sacrifices during the war. The Memorial Hall, first discussed in the annual report of 1917-1918, was constructed as an addition, including a swimming pool, for the Currie Gym. The funding came from the Graduates' Society and McGill students enrolled in the COTC. At long last, the most elaborate and substantial memorial to McGill at war and peace was built. Located directly in front of the Hall there is a flag pole with the names of members of the 10th Canadian Siege Battery killed in the First World War. In the Hall itself, there are stained glass windows by Charles W. Kelsey, installed in 1951, containing St. George and the Dragon along with the shields of the army, navy and air force. The marble utilised in the construction came from the various places where battles were fought. Battle flags contain the McGill coat of arms and the battles where McGill units fought in the First World War. A Book of Remembrance containing the names of all the soldiers killed in the Two World Wars was placed in a display case in the Hall. Later, for preservation reasons the book was removed for safekeeping in the McGill Archives. A copy of this book is now on permanent display in the McLennan Library Building. A magnificent group portrait by

Richard Jack of the participants in the McGill Convocation in Quebec City in 1944 was donated by J.W. McConnell. This Special McGill Convocation was held in Quebec City in 1944 in order to bestow honorary degrees on British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and American President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. For the only time in the history of McGill a Convocation was held outside of Montreal to accommodate the two honorees who were planning for the war and the peace to come at the Second Quebec Conference.

The funding came from the Graduates' Society and McGill students enrolled in the COTC. At long last the most elaborate and substantial memorial to McGill at war and peace was built. The process of creating memorials to sacrifices of war started modestly at McGill with a few records and one marble plaque from the Boer War.

By 1947 the university had created a Memorial Hall to honour the sacrifices made in both World Wars. The memorials are not just these physical artefacts; they are also to be found in the textual, photographic and moving image records of the University, created by the Principal's Office, Board of Governors, Senate, War Advisory Council and student publications such as *Old McGill*, the *Outlook* and the *Daily*. There are other invaluable sources in the records of the COTC and the speeches of Currie. The War Records Office is the first step for the McGill Remembers project. While most of the records concerning McGill's activities in war are scattered throughout archival holdings, those of the War Records office have the immense advantage in having had a strong mandate to create and accumulate these records. The War Records also had the advantage of employing Fetherstonhaugh, a person who had a real passion for the military history of McGill. Fetherstonhaugh's book revealed the breadth of McGill's contribution to the Second World War from both men and women in military service as well as in research and teaching. For Sir Arthur Currie, both as McGill Principal from 1920-1933 and commander of the Canadian corps in the First World War the choice and responsibilities were clear. He often spoke at remembrance events on November 11<sup>th</sup> and in one speech put forth the idea that the sacrifices of war should promote the "vision of the world forever at peace, an ideal for which Canadian shed their blood in generous profusion". The goal for Canada was quite straightforward to "keep the faith with the men and women who gave so much, by adequately caring for the broken that came home, and for the dependents of the fallen whose memory we treasure in our hearts and minds".<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power, Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1967-1914*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, p. 259.

<sup>2</sup> *McGill Outlook*, Vol. II, No.18, March 1, 1900.

<sup>3</sup> *Old McGill*, 1903, p.140.

<sup>4</sup> *Old McGill*, 1903, p. 138.

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<sup>6</sup> *Old McGill*, 1901, p.61.

<sup>5</sup> Carman Miller, *Painting the Map Red: Canada and the Boer War, 1899-1902*, Montreal: McGill-Queens Press, Montreal, 1993, p.300.

<sup>7</sup> Military Affairs, RG2, c.25, File number 00098, Office of the Principal, McGill University Archives, Montreal, Canada.

<sup>8</sup> *McGill Honour Roll*, 1914-1918, Montreal: McGill University, 1926, p.2.

<sup>9</sup> The war diary of nurse Clare Gass is located in the Osler Library of McGill University. See

<http://osler.library.mcgill.ca/archives/index.php/detail/?fondid=4706>

<sup>10</sup> MUA, Secretariat Office, RG8, c8, file number 0019, Senate Minute book, Resolution, October 14, 1914.

<sup>11</sup> R. C. Featherstonhaugh, *No. 3 General Hospital (McGill), 1914-1919*, Montreal: McGill University, Faculty of Medicine, The Gazette Publishing Company.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p.38.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> R.C. Featherstonhaugh, *McGill University at War, 1914-1918; 1939-1945*, Montreal: McGill University, 1947, p.119.

<sup>15</sup> McGill Honour Roll 1914-1918, McGill University, 1926, p.228

<sup>16</sup> MUA Currie, Morgan, Douglas fonds RG2, c.45, file number 00403, War Memorial, 1921-1927, [Letter] John Ridington to Arthur Currie, December 16, 1926.

<sup>17</sup> Guide to Archival Resources at McGill University, Volume 3, Private papers held at McGill University (Part II), Women's War Registry Committee, 1916-1917, MUA, MG 4003, *Guide to the Archival Resources at the McGill University Archives*, 1985, p. 204

<sup>18</sup> McGill University, *Annual Report, 1915-1916*, p.2-3.

<sup>19</sup> Stanley B. Frost, *McGill University: For the Advancement of Learning, Volume II, 1895-1971*, Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1984, p.303. 14

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<sup>20</sup> MUA, Currie/Morgan/Douglas fonds, Office of the Principal, RG2, c28, file 0154, War Memorial, 1921-1927.

<sup>21</sup> MUA, Currie/Morgan/Douglas fonds, Office of the Principal, Veterans Re-establishment, 1920-1928, RG2, c39, files 00157-00159.

<sup>22</sup> *The Legionary and Carry-On*, Vol. IV, no.11, p.5,17, 33.

<sup>23</sup> *McGill Honour Roll, 1914-1918*, Montreal: McGill University, 1926, *Preface*.

<sup>24</sup> MUA, Currie/Morgan/Douglas, Office of the Principal, War Memorial, 1921-1927, RG2, c.45, file number 00403.

<sup>25</sup> MUA, Currie/Morgan/Douglas fonds, [Letter] John Ridington to Arthur Currie, December 16, 1926, War Memorial, 1921-1927, RG2, c.45, file number 00403.

<sup>26</sup> Stephen Leacock, "The Passing of the University's Principal", *McGill News*, Vol. 15, Number 1, December 1933, page 9-10.

<sup>27</sup> "Gymnasium Cornerstone Laid", *McGill News*, Vol.21, Number 4, November 4, 1939, p.10.

<sup>28</sup> MUA, F. Cyril James fonds, Office of the Principal, Committee - War Service Advisory Board, 1939-1940, RG2, c39, file 00198.

<sup>29</sup> MUA, F. Cyril James fonds, Office of the Principal, War Service Advisory Board - staff, student and graduates files, RG2, c39-40.

<sup>30</sup> MUA, F. Cyril James fonds, Office of the Principal, Committee - War Service Advisory Board, 1939-1940, RG2, c39, file 00198.

<sup>31</sup> Stanley B. Frost, *The Man in the Ivory Tower: F. Cyril James of McGill*, Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1991 p. 53-54

<sup>32</sup> MUA, Sir Arthur Currie fonds, Speech on Armistice Day, November 11, 1929 from volume "Speeches on subjects chiefly related to the War, 1918-1931, MG1030, c2.