

A Kingston World War I Walking Tour – To Remember.

Welcome.

I'm R.H. Thomson.

Thank you for joining this PeaceQuest World War I walking tour. The route is about three kilometres, more or less. It will take you about an hour to visit the twelve points of interest. Along the way, you will pass many more memorials and reminders of what life was like in Kingston over one hundred years ago. We encourage you to explore them, too.

PeaceQuest is a non-profit, non-denominational and non-partisan organization based in Kingston. We support peace building projects across Canada. We're offering you this walking tour as a way to help you reflect on life in Kingston between 1914 and 1918, the years of what has been called the Great War, the War to End All Wars, and then, given the course of history, World War I.

What was it like to be a man, a hundred years ago, called on by your church, your community, and your country to go overseas to fight an enemy you didn't know?

What was it like to be a sister, wife, mother, or grandmother, left behind to wonder – before radio news programs and long before television and smart phones – to wonder what was really happening in faraway places?

At home, women kept their families and businesses going. They worked in munitions factories – where there were fires and casualties. They took jobs on farms doing the work left behind by men who had volunteered. They knit socks and tuques, and sent packages overseas to their family members on the front lines. They comforted each other when lives were lost. They took care of the injured who returned home.

They walked where we walk today.

Turn to face the water and the arched fountain in the park. You'll be able to see Shoal Tower in the harbour and to look across the water to the Royal Military College.

Stop 1

Ontario Street and Market Street, outside the Visitor's Information Centre

The Royal Military College, Fort Frontenac, Fort Henry, and the Canadian Armed Forces Base, Kingston, are all within a 20-minute walk. You may wish to explore them later.

John McCrae, the author of the famous World War I poem, "In Flanders Fields", spent time in Kingston in 1893.

He wrote to a friend:

"My windows look right out across the bay, and are just near the water's edge; there is a good deal of shipping at present in the port; and the river looks very pretty."(1)

Many permanent forces were stationed here -- the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery, the Royal Canadian Engineers, the Canadian Permanent Army Service Corps, and the Permanent Army Medical Corps, among others.

Try to imagine what it was like in Kingston in the summer of 1914, days before Britain declared war on Germany ... a busy port and a busy military town.

Noisy, dirty, vibrant.

Cars and trucks are not yet the main means of transportation. Between you and the water, trains are running back and forth. The streets are full of people, horses, and carts.

You are in the heart of the city.

Turn to face City Hall and with the water on your left walk past the Visitor Centre, going south along Ontario Street away from the harbour. Cross Clarence Street and head towards the corner of Johnson and Ontario Street. Standing at the southeast corner, look across the street.

Stop 2

Grand Trunk Railway Inner Station

In 1914, the restaurant on the southwest corner was the Grand Trunk Railway's Inner Station.

Troops heading to war left Kingston from this station or from the Outer Station a few miles north on Montreal Street.

There were no major highways then and trains were the most efficient way for people and troops to travel east -- to Montreal and then, for the military, to the training base at Valcartier, Quebec.

There is a newspaper report from the Daily British Whig, dated August 14, 1914, written by a reporter who must have been standing close to where you are now.

Headline: "Kingston Volunteers – Left for Valcartier on Saturday afternoon" –

"The eighty men from the 14th regiment, who have volunteered for overseas service, left the city on Saturday afternoon at 1.08 o'clock, from the Grand Trunk station. The volunteers assembled at the armouries at 12:15 o'clock, and marched along the streets, which were lined with citizens who in many cases went without their mid-day meal to bid farewell to the men who will represent the local rifle regiment on the battle-field.

The procession was led by the bugle band of the 14th regiment ...

There were very touching sights at the Grand Trunk station when the volunteers bade farewell to their relatives and friends and boarded the coaches. There were many tears in the eyes of mothers, fathers and sisters as the boys embraced them." (2)

With your back to the water, cross Ontario Street and head up Johnson Street towards St. George's Cathedral, the next stop.

Stop 3 St. George's Cathedral

Going to war was seen as a duty not only to Canada and to Britain, but also to God. Priests, ministers, and other faith leaders encouraged the men in their congregations to enlist and the

women to do what they could for the war effort, including pushing their brothers, fathers, and sons to volunteer for the war.

Kingston-born Samuel Dwight Chown was an important leader of the Methodist Church of Canada in the early 20th century, then Canada's main church. At the time, he was fervent in his support for the war effort --

“All Methodists should rally to the Standard and stand foursquare to the blast.” (3)

Chown's son wrote to him from Europe reporting that thirteen of his fifteen college classmates had been killed.

“But you needn't worry about me, Father, I am game for anything, and it does not seem like death over here, only like going up to something better.” (4)

Reverend Chown later wrote to a grieving father:

“Of course death is a great adventure, but we Canadians are a venturesome people; and so believing that the cause for which we are fighting is worth the sacrifice, we carry on.” (5)

The role taken on by so many churches to promote the war shocked pacifist Reverend J.S. Woodsworth, who left the Methodist Church before the war was over. He wrote to his mother about a service that he attended at a Winnipeg church, telling her about the war hymns, Old Testament scripture readings hailing the God of Battles, and the organ belting out the national anthems of the allied nations.

“The climax was not reached when the pastor in an impassioned [ap]peal stated that if any young man could go and did not go he was neither a Christian nor a patriot. No! The climax was the announcement that recruiting sergeants were stationed at the doors of the church and that any man of spirit – any lover of his country – any follower of Jesus – should make his decision then and there!” (6)

One can imagine that many prayers were said within the walls of St. George's Cathedral – and in places of worship across the country - for the safe return of family, friends, and neighbours.

Many Canadians were recent immigrants from Great Britain and were drawn quickly into World War I to support their home country.

South of the border, Americans were keen to stay out of the war. There, the anti-war song, "*I didn't raise my boy to be a soldier*," (7) was a hit in 1915. It was written by Canadian Alfred Bryan and set to the music by Al Pianadosi. [song]

Continue north on Johnson Street, heading away from the lake. Cross to the south side of Johnson Street at Wellington Street, going past the public library. When you are past the library, turn left onto Bagot Street, stopping in front of number 194 Bagot.

Stop 4 Bagot Street between Johnson and Earl

Thanks to the *Home Town, Home Front* (8) project of the Kingston Frontenac Public Library, we can tell you a bit about the soldiers who once called Bagot Street home.

James Crossley Stewart lived at 194 Bagot Street. He enlisted in 1917, rose through the ranks during the First World War, and was a Commander in World War II.

Further west along Bagot, near the corner of William Street, you'll find 180 Bagot. This was Arthur Tett's home. He left for the war in November 1916, leaving behind his pregnant wife, Bessie. He died overseas of meningitis in August 1917. His son, John, whom he never met, was then four months old.

Between William and Earl Street is 168 Bagot. It was the home of Thomas Vincent Hammond, a clerk who enlisted in January 1916. He survived the war and returned to Kingston.

Next door, at 166 Bagot, lived a tradesman painter, Donald Arthur Layzell. He drove an ambulance during the war.

Owen Michael Madden, a physician, lived at 164 with his widowed aunt. He enlisted in January 1916 soon after the death by drowning of his new bride. They had been married for two months.

Continue along Bagot Street to the corner of Bagot Street and West Street. When you get to West Street turn left, towards the lake. Cross Wellington Street and pass a few houses until you come to 55 West Street.

Stop 4A 55 West Street

This was the home of Nursing Sister Emma Florence Pense. She was born in 1885 and lived in this house with her widowed mother and three sisters. Like many other Canadian nurses at the time, she went to the United States for her training, learning to be a nurse at St. Luke's Hospital, Newburgh, New York.

Nursing Sister Pense was 29 at the start of the war in 1914. She soon left Kingston for England to serve with the Canadian Army Medical Corps.

She was one of the first Canadian nurses to serve on the front lines in Europe. The King and Queen of England presented her with the Order of the Royal Red Cross in 1917, only the second Canadian to receive this honour. Miss Pense survived the war.

Retrace your steps by going away from the lake, to the corner of West Street and Wellington Street. Cross West Street and go to the Memorial Monument for the 21st Battalion.

Stop 5 Memorial to the Twenty-First Battalion

This statue recognizes infantry, the foot soldiers of an army. During World War I they dug kilometres of trenches, waiting for orders to fire from their position or to go over the top on raids or attacks. Men from this area who signed up for the infantry in 1914 were assigned to the 21st Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. The group trained in England and crossed into France in September

1915. This memorial recognizes infantry losses in several of the main battles of World War I -- Ypres, Somme, Vimy Ridge, Hill 70, and Passchendaele.

The battle at Vimy Ridge lasted four days, from April 9 to April 12, 1917. It involved 100,000 Canadian soldiers.

Losses were heavy ...

7,000 Canadian soldiers were injured ... 3,500 were killed.

4,000 German soldiers were taken prisoner. The number of German lives lost or soldiers injured is unknown.

At the end of the four days, the German army had been forced off the Ridge, although the Allied forces did not break through the German line. The German military did not attempt to recapture Vimy Ridge, and it was held by the British until the end of the war.

The Germans considered the Vimy battle a draw, not a major loss.

Kingston author Jamie Swift and historian Ian McKay, a professor at Queen's University for many years, have taken a critical look at the four-day battle at Vimy Ridge. Their 2016 book "The Vimy Trap, or How we learned to stop worrying and love the Great War" documents the views of veterans, artists, politicians, and faith leaders. It shows how this short battle came to be misrepresented as a major military victory and, in the 1960s, began being touted as a Canadian coming-of-age-story.

The 21st Battalion survivors of the April battle at Vimy Ridge went on to fight at Passchendaele in October, where heavy rains, deep mud, and exhausted soldiers made it next to impossible to get the big artillery guns to the front lines.

Almost a year later, between August and November 1918, during the final 100 days of the war, the battalions with Kingston soldiers suffered their heaviest casualties.

The words on this memorial, "to the end, to the end, they remain" are from a poem written by Laurence Binyon and published in The Times, London, on September 21, 1914. At that point, the war had only been going on for a few weeks and Binyon was already reflecting on the tragedy of lives lost. Binyon was reflecting also a romantic style that he inherited from the nineteenth century and that writers were still using at the beginning of the twentieth century. World War I was one of the social phenomenon that banished romantic writing forever.

For the Fallen (9)

by Laurence Binyon

With proud thanksgiving, a mother for her children,
England mourns for her dead across the sea.
Flesh of her flesh they were, spirit of her spirit,
Fallen in the cause of the free.

Solemn the drums thrill; Death august and royal
Sings sorrow up into immortal spheres,
There is music in the midst of desolation
And a glory that shines upon our tears.

They went with songs to the battle, they were young,
Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow.
They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted;
They fell with their faces to the foe.

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

They mingle not with their laughing comrades again;
They sit no more at familiar tables of home;
They have no lot in our labour of the day-time;
They sleep beyond England's foam.

But where our desires are and our hopes profound,
Felt as a well-spring that is hidden from sight,
To the innermost heart of their own land they are known
As the stars are known to the Night;

As the stars that shall be bright when we are dust,
Moving in marches upon the heavenly plain;
As the stars that are starry in the time of our darkness,
To the end, to the end, they remain.

Follow the path behind the statue directly across the park. When you get to Barrie Street, look for the Royal Canadian Air Force Memorial.

Stop 6 The Royal Canadian Air Force Memorial

Airplanes are a 20th century invention. Wilbur and Orville Wright's first flights took place in Kitty Hawk, North Carolina in December of 1903. Ten years later, the first flying machines were made of animal skins, canvas, and wood. They were unreliable and built without any standards. Each plane handled differently.

So, at the start of the First World War, the role of planes in war was uncertain. There were not many trained pilots and the Generals thought that the planes might scare the horses, the backbone of warfare at the time.

They thought that planes could best be used for reconnaissance, providing information about the movement of troops and identifying weaknesses in battle lines.

A Royal Air Force pilot, Kenneth van der Spuy, reported on an air encounter with another plane:

I spotted a strange aircraft, which I thought didn't look like any I knew, so I sidled up to him and saw that he was a Hun, so I got my shotgun out, and I fired it all away. Then I got my revolver, and we had a revolver battle up there. We were very close to each other, and I could see him quite well, and he could see me quite well. I finished [off] my six shots and he had finished his. We both waved each other goodbye and set off." (10)

It did not take long before the combat role for planes emerged and they began to be outfitted with machine guns to attack other planes – the infamous World War I dog fights in the sky -- or with bombs or fire bombs to drop on battlefields below.

During the war, the Royal Flying Corps set up six flying schools in Ontario. There were long waiting lists to get in. This, even though the life expectancy of a new pilot at war was an average of 11 days, or about 50 hours of flying time.

14,000 Allied pilots died during the war, half of them in training.

Continue down Barrie Street on the park side of the street towards the water. Look for a large oak tree with a stone plaque in the ground next to it. It's near the corner of Barrie and Stuart Streets.

Stop 7 Peace Trees

An oak tree that is over 100 years old was chosen by the City of Kingston and PeaceQuest Kingston members as a symbolic peace tree. It would have provided shade in 1914, at the start of the First World War.

It was commemorated on September 21, 2013, the United Nations International Day of Peace, with the placement of a plaque at its base. The inscription reads:

“Grieving the tragedy of war
Committed to the promise of peace.”

The city also planted a young oak tree in 2013, as part of the International Day of Peace activities. You'll find it in the park on the way to the next stop. Look for it as you head to the lake, at the corner of Barrie and O'Kill Streets, opposite 28 Barrie Street.

This is the proclamation passed by Kingston City Council in 2013:

Proclamation: Peace Day in Kingston (11)

Whereas the United Nations has declared that September 21st be celebrated annually as International Day of Peace, and

Whereas people, communities, and countries around the world mark September 21st as a day to cease hostilities and practice non-violence and to promote peace through education and public awareness activities, and

Whereas actions of peace on Peace Day have included of a 60-tonne food drop in Southern Sudan in 2006, the vaccination of 1,400,000 children against the polio virus in Afghanistan in 2008, and the yearly playing of soccer games in all United Nations member nations under the banner “One Day One Goal”, and

Whereas the citizens of Kingston are all too familiar with the costs of war and cherish the value of living in peace, and

Whereas the Kingston group, PeaceQuest, is dedicating an old oak tree and planting a young tree in City Park on September 21 to build awareness of peace activities in Kingston, across Canada, and around the world,

Therefore be it resolved that the Mayor and City Council of Kingston declare September 21st to be Peace Day in Kingston and [to] encourage all citizens to do something positive to promote peaceful living in our community and our world.

Continue walking towards the lake on Barrie Street. At the corner of Barrie and King Street, you’ll find the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery monument. Look for the artillery – the big guns – around the monument.

Stop 8 The Royal Canadian Horse Artillery

This monument lists the names of human casualties. But human lives lost are only part of the story of the war.

It is estimated that 8 million horses died during World War I.

Horses had many roles. They dragged heavy guns into position. They carried soldiers to the front lines, they were often in the fore front of the charge. They moved supplies, pulled ambulances, and took soldiers from place to place.

The value of horses was well recognized, as author Bert Stokes wrote ...

“... to lose a horse was worse than losing a man because after all, men were replaceable while horses weren't.” (12)

During the war, machine guns came into use and horses became an easy target. This ended the dominant role of horses in warfare.

The poem, “A Soldier’s Kiss”, written by British poet Henry Chappell, speaks to the sense of loss soldiers felt when their horses were injured or killed.

A Soldier’s Kiss (13)

by Henry Chappell

Only a dying horse! pull off the gear,
And slip the needless bit from frothing jaws,
Drag it aside there, leaving the road way clear,
The battery thunders on with scarce a pause.

Prone by the shell-swept highway there it lies
With quivering limbs, as fast the life-tide fails,
Dark films are closing o'er the faithful eyes
That mutely plead for aid where none avails.

Onward the battery rolls, but one there speeds
Needlessly of comrades voice or bursting shell,
Back to the wounded friend who lonely bleeds
Beside the stony highway where he fell.

Only a dying horse! he swiftly kneels,
Lifts the limp head and hears the shivering sigh
Kisses his friend, while down his cheek there steals
Sweet pity's tear, "Goodbye old man, Goodbye."

No honours wait him, medal, badge or star,
Though scarce could war a kindlier deed unfold;
He bears within his breast, more precious far
Beyond the gift of kings, a heart of gold.

Cross the street at Barrie and King Streets and turn to the right past the Murney Tower to the Cross of Sacrifice.

Stop 9 The Cross of Sacrifice

The Cross of Sacrifice was designed by British architect Sir Reginald Bloomfield in 1921 after much discussion about how to mark the burial places of British war dead in Europe.

Bloomfield said:

“What I wanted to do in designing this Cross was to make it as abstract and impersonal as I could, to free it from any association of any particular style, and, above all, to keep clear of any sentimentalism of the Gothic. This was a man's war far too terrible for any fripperies, and I hoped to get within [the] range of the infinite in this symbol ...” (14)

Over 1,000 Crosses of Sacrifice, following Bloomfield’s design, were placed in Commonwealth War Graves cemeteries around the world.

Unusually, a private group, *The Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire*, erected the Cross of Sacrifice here in 1925.

This Cross of Sacrifice is the site for Kingston’s main November 11th Remembrance Day ceremony. The laying of wreaths starts early in the morning followed by an official service. Like Remembrance Day events across Canada, it is attended by veterans, current personnel in the Canadian Armed Forces, elected officials, other dignitaries, and citizens. A minute of silence is observed at 11 a.m. preceded by *The Last Post* and followed by *Reveille*.

Retrace your steps and walk with the lake on your right back towards downtown, past the Murney Tower and the Newlands Pavilion to the Richardson Bath House, which is right along the lake.

Stop 10

Richardson Memorial Bath House

This limestone building houses washrooms and change facilities to serve the Richardson Beach area, a popular swimming spot in the past, now being revitalized by the city of Kingston.

The Bath House was built in 1919 partly from a bequest in the will of Captain George Richardson, with equal contributions from his brother and sister, and the City of Kingston.

George Richardson was an excellent hockey player and a leader on the Queen's University hockey team and then on teams that played for the Stanley Cup. (15) He worked in his family's national grain shipping business and was a millionaire.

He answered the first call for volunteers, joining the Canadian Expeditionary Force in September 1914. It was reported that when he left for war he had gold stashed in the heels of his boots in case of an emergency.

He was killed in 1916, going into no man's land to retrieve explosives that had been abandoned during a foiled night-time action.

It was said that he was "a man who never gave a command he would not himself have executed willingly." (16) His life ended at 29.

A newspaper report on the opening of the bath house began:

"With simple ceremony the magnificent limestone bathing house at Macdonald Park, which is dedicated to the memory of the late Captain George T. Richardson, was formally handed over to the custody of the city before a large assemblage on Tuesday evening.

The edifice is a bequest to the children of Kingston from the deceased officer, and in presenting the key to His Worship Mayor Newman, James Richardson stated that it was intended for the free use of the citizens. He expressed the pleasure it gave to him to present the building on behalf of the Richardson estate and trusted that it would conduce to the health and happiness of Kingstonians." (17)

The gift gave people a place to enjoy in times of peace.

His will also directed that funds be provided to the families of Kingston men under his command who died or were permanently injured during the war and left their families in need.

With your back to the lake, walk to King Street and turn right to return to downtown. At West Street, turn right and go along Ontario Street, going parallel to the water until you arrive at the Royal Canadian Navy Memorial, in between Lower Union and Gore Streets.

Stop 11 The Royal Canadian Navy Memorial

There are memorials for the infantry, the air force, the artillery, and now you are at a memorial in the shape of a ship's prow, with an anchor on top – a tribute to seafarers.

This memorial is dedicated to “the men and women of the Royal Canadian Navy and Merchant Marine who served their country in war and peace.”

Canada did not have a navy until 1910, a few years before the start of World War I. When the war started in 1914, Canada had two ships – the HMCS Rainbow and the HMCS Niobe – with only 350 people serving in the navy. By the end of the war, 5,000 Canadians had enlisted in the Royal Canadian Navy and the fleet had more than 100 ships, including two submarines and many converted private yachts.

People in the Merchant Marine, however, were not considered to be part of the military. They were citizens working on transport ships which travelled to South America and the Caribbean for supplies, then taking them across the Atlantic to Britain. The ships were vulnerable to attacks especially from German U-boats.

The exact number of people in the Navy and Merchant Marine who lost their lives in the First World War is unknown.

Continue walking along Ontario Street with the lake on your right for two blocks. When you get to William Street, turn left and cross the street. Go up one block to the corner of William and King Streets to the Frontenac Club Inn, which is on the south side of the street. Look for the plaque on the outside wall at the corner of the building.

Stop 12 Memorial to the Officers of the Frontenac Club

Built in 1826 as a private home, this solid stone building became a bank and then, in 1908, was turned into a private gentlemen's club for influential Kingstonians including Queen's University faculty and Royal Military College faculty and military officers.

The plaque at the corner of the building was installed in 1919 to recognize 10 Frontenac Club members who lost their lives during the war. The youngest was 29, the oldest 58. Some died of war wounds; some from disease; one from an accident while on leave. They included a former mayor of Kingston, a doctor, engineer, French teacher, and a miner. (18)

As you have seen, the names of people who lost their lives fighting on the side of Britain and its allies during World War I are listed in a variety of places in Kingston – on memorial statues, in the foyers of places of worship, in schools, government offices, and private businesses. Their names are remembered.

What about the other casualties of war?

Turn right on to King Street and continue until you reach the square behind City Hall. Turn right and go back to the Tourist Information Office.

Final stop

The Tourist Information Office on Ontario and Market Streets

This tour has taken you through the downtown streets of Kingston, past public spaces and the homes of families whose occupants left for war. Some returned. Some did not. The losses are recorded on the monuments that you visited today.

Do you think monuments make it easier for survivors to recover after war?

Are monuments a good way to be reminded of history and to share memories of the past?

Do monuments help us to commit to building peace?

John Buchan, an author and Governor General of Canada, who spent the war years working for the British War Propaganda Bureau and as a war correspondent to the Times, based in France, wrote:

“Every sane man must be a devotee of peace, for most of us, except the very young, have had some personal knowledge of the terrible consequences of war. Heaven forbid that I should minimize these terrors; the best guarantee of peace is that the world should remember them.” (19)

Please take time to visit the PeaceQuest web site at peacequest.ca.

Consider completing the White Square activity described on the Home Page ...

In our quest for peace, we need to ...

[Fade to music]

Works Cited

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PeaceQuest has striven for accuracy in this work. Please offer further information or insights to PeaceQuest through the Contact Us page on our web site.