The Story of the University of Toronto Soldiers’ Tower

Introduction

Military training courses had been part of the extra-curricular activities of the University of Toronto almost since its inception. In 1861 chemistry professor H.H. Croft created the University Rifle Corps because of the fear of American invasion arising out of tension between the United States and Great Britain during the Civil War. The Rifle Corps became the University Company or K Company of the Queen’s Own Rifles (QOR), a Toronto Militia regiment, in 1862. K Company sent 49 officers and men to counter the armed incursion of the Fenian Brotherhood who had crossed the Niagara River from the United States. Three students, the first University of Toronto students to die in defence of their country, were members of this unit who fell at the Battle of Ridgeway on the Niagara Frontier near Fort Erie in 1866.¹

The Company also sent men to aid in the suppression of the Red River Rebellion of 1870 and the Northwest Rebellion of 1885.²

The partnership with the QOR ended in 1891 because it had become difficult for students to combine university studies and military activities. A Field Company of Engineers was recruited at the university to replace it.³

At least ten students and graduates volunteered to serve in the Canadian contingents that were sent to fight in the South African [Boer] War (1899-1902) and at least one of these died of disease.⁴ Two of the students were later to achieve distinction in the First World War: John McCrae, BA UC 1894, MB 1898, MD 1910, became the author of In Flanders Fields in 1915; Victor W. Odlum, CB, CMG, DSO and Bar, VD, Vic 1902, became Canada’s youngest brigadier general in the Great War at the age of 35.

The University of Toronto and the First World War 1914-1918

The University of Toronto in 1914 at the outbreak of the Great War was a much smaller institution than it is today. Enlistment in the various branches of the military and auxiliary war services reduced the enrolment considerably. The number of students in the 1914-15 school year was 918 women and 2,926 men, a total of 3,844. By 1918 the total was down to 2,526 and, while the number of women students had increased to 977, the number of males had decreased to 1,559.⁵ The number of male students who volunteered before the Military Service Act (MSA) imposed conscription in late 1917 was so high that the MSA had very little effect on the enrolment. Staff, faculty, students, and graduates responded very enthusiastically to the call for volunteers.
The total enlistment of University of Toronto staff, graduates, and undergraduates was 5,308. The number of officers is disproportionate at 3,832 because university educated people had the qualifications to be officers. Only 1,591 served “in the ranks”. Professor Oswald Smith, who had recorded the names of the university’s war casualties, gives 531 as the number of deaths from war related causes. He notes that this was only a preliminary figure in December 1918 and was certain to increase. In the University of Toronto Roll of Service 1914-1918, which he edited, the number is 613. The actual number of names engraved on the Memorial Screen is 628. This number includes all those who died while serving in the armed forces and auxiliary units of Canada and the allied powers. The people on the university’s Roll of Honour are not all found on the list of war dead on the Virtual War Memorial of the Canadian Department of Veterans’ Affairs which lists only those who served in the armed forces of Canada.

The university also contributed in making available facilities for selection and training of soldiers. The U of T Contingent of the Canadian Officers Training Corps (COTC) was created in November 1914 under the leadership of Professor W.R. Lang, Head of Chemistry. This was a Canadian version of the UK Officers Training Corps (OTC) created to train Public School and university students in the art of being junior infantry officers. Throughout the Great War, it followed the same syllabus of training as the British OTC. In May 1915 the first COTC training camp was held at Niagara-on-the-Lake. By early December, 1,800 men were training. The 67th (Varsity) Battery, Canadian Field Artillery (CFA), was established in March 1916 to give basic training to artillery officers, especially students of mathematics and engineering. The 67th Battery was a ‘Depot Battery’ to train gunners who would go on to England for further training and then assignment to CFA batteries in France and Flanders. Early in 1916, the university recruited four companies of reinforcements for the Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI), which was the first Canadian battalion to see action in Europe. The PPCLI was organized by Hamilton Gault, a wealthy Montrealer, who used his own money to recruit a battalion composed of immigrants who had served in the British (UK) forces as well as Canadians who had experience in the Militia or in the South African War. It was a sort of ‘instant’ battalion sent to reinforce the British army. Named in honour of the daughter of the Governor General HRH the Duke of Connaught, the regiment is today one of Canada’s permanent force units.

The university provided trained staff for No.4 General Hospital which operated in Salonica, Greece, from November 1915 to August 1917, and Basingstoke, England, from September 1917 until 1919. The Connaught Laboratory was established to produce anti toxins for diphtheria, tetanus, and other diseases. The University Women’s Hospital Supply Association under the leadership of Lady Falconer and faculty wives raised $121,000 in donations and created 350,000 articles of hospital linens.
The Canadian Army Dental Corps (CADC) is “Believed to be the first separate military dental service in the world...”\textsuperscript{15} and four of the dentists responsible for its creation were graduates of the Royal College of Dental Surgeons, University of Toronto. There was a militia regulation that any recruit who had ten or more dental defects, including extractions and cavities, would be considered unfit for military service. Dr. Edmund Grant (DDS 1906) was a member of the pre-war militia. He and two other militia dentists from the U of T, Dr. Orvill Elliott (DDS 1910) and Dr. George Gow (DDS 1899) opened a dental clinic at the enlistment camp in the CNE grounds. Their dental skills made it possible for many men to enlist who would have been declared medically unfit to serve in the CEF. Sam Hughes, the Minister of Militia, visited the clinic and was so impressed that he ordered the establishment of a separate CADC with his personal dentist Dr. J. Alex Armstrong (DDS 1890) as Director. He was given the honorary rank of lieutenant-colonel to solace the dentists who had complained that the CAMC, run by medical doctors, would not give dentists a rank above lieutenant.\textsuperscript{16}

In December 1916, the British Royal Flying Corps (RFC) established training facilities in Canada with headquarters in Toronto. The university provided residences, grounds for drill, and classroom space. A Cadet Wing and School of Military Aeronautics were set up to train recruits in all levels of military aviation. In the spring of 1918 it was necessary to create a tent city on the back campus to accommodate the large numbers of men from all over Canada. A Curtiss JN4 “Jenny” aircraft, built in Leaside, was available for those who passed the preliminary stages and qualified for pilot training. On 1 April 1918, the RFC became the Royal Air Force which continued to train air force recruits on the campus until December 1918.\textsuperscript{17}

The university organized the University of Toronto Company of the 1\textsuperscript{st} Canadian Universities Tank Battalion in 1917.

So remarkable was the university’s contribution that President Falconer was created a Knight Commander of The Order of St. Michael and St. George (KCMG) in the King’s Honours List of June 1917.\textsuperscript{18}

Professor G. Oswald Smith (1876-1942), a teacher of classics and the Registrar of University College, undertook the task in 1916 of keeping records of those who served in the Great War and became the editor of the University of Toronto Roll of Service 1914-1918, published in 1921. This reference work contains short biographies of all the university’s war dead as well as those who enlisted and survived. It also included names of veterans who enrolled for the first time in the university after the war. The story of the University of Toronto’s contribution to the war effort is also to be found in the 646 pages of this remarkable work. The original questionnaires and other source material that Professor Smith relied on are preserved in the University of Toronto Archives where they have become a valuable resource for scholars and genealogists. Professor Smith died in 1942.\textsuperscript{19}
The Students’ Administrative Council produced the *Varsity War Supplement* containing pictures of those on the Honour Roll. These complement the biographies in Professor Smith’s book.

**The Canadian Military and the First World War**

When war was declared on 4 August 1914, Canada’s tiny military was unprepared. It was composed of 3,000 Permanent Force Active Militia and 55,000 Non-Permanent Active Militia. The only recent war that Canada had engaged in was the South African War of 1899-1902, and in this war fewer than 1000 Canadians went overseas. The Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF), as the Canadian army was called, would be composed almost entirely of amateur, non-professional soldiers. People with university educations filled many high ranks in the CEF.

**A few remarkable personal stories from the 5300 U of T people who served**

**Major General Malcolm Smith Mercer:** BA UC 1885, Law, Osgoode Hall, 1888. He started his military career as a private in K Company, Queen’s Own Rifles, while still a university student. When war broke out this lawyer had become the Lieutenant Colonel Commandant of the Queen’s Own Rifles and immediately volunteered for overseas service. His leadership skills resulted in quick promotions. He was a brigadier general at the Battle of St. Julien in April 1915 when the Germans used poison gas for the first time. He was made a Companion of the Order of the Bath (CB) in the King’s Honours List in June 1915. Promoted to the rank of major general to command the newly formed 3rd Canadian Division, he was killed in action at the Battle of Mount Sorrel near Ypres on 3 June 1916. He is the highest ranking Canadian to have been killed in any war and one of the oldest.

**Major Thain Wendell MacDowell:** BA Vic 1915. He had played Varsity football and was a member of the 41st Militia Regiment, the Brockville Rifles. He volunteered for overseas service in the 38th Battalion from Ottawa. After a posting to the Bahamas to relieve the Royal Canadian Regiment for service on the Western Front, his battalion arrived in France near the end of the Somme campaign in October 1916. In an attack on a German trench, named Desire, he and his platoon captured three German machine guns, a deed for which he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO). This was an exceptional award because the DSO was normally only awarded to lieutenant colonels and above and MacDowell was only a captain at the time. Six months later, at Vimy Ridge, he led his platoon in the capture of a section of German trench, 77 prisoners, and two more machine guns, one of which is in the Soldiers’ Tower. For this he was awarded the British Empire’s highest award for bravery, the Victoria Cross. He was the only U of T recipient and one of only 70 Canadians to be awarded the VC in the Great War.
L/Cpl Frederick Hugh Wilkinson: BA UC 1919-1923. He was the son of the Rector of St. Peter’s Anglican Church on Carlton Street and a student at Wycliffe College when he volunteered in 1916. He served in the ranks as a signaller and was awarded the Military Medal for bravery three times. He was the only U of T student and one of only 38 Canadians ever to have done so. He later became Bishop of Toronto with many degrees and distinctions but has said that the one he was most proud of was the MM and Two Bars.\textsuperscript{23}

Harriet Cockburn: MD, CM. Trinity 1897. She was a surgeon who volunteered to serve in Serbia with the Stobart Unit. The Serbs had been able to contain the invasion of their country by the Austrian army but when the German and Bulgarian forces joined the Austrians in October, 1915, the Serbian army was forced to retreat into Albania with very heavy losses. Serbia was occupied. The Serb forces were accompanied by the Stobart Unit, a field hospital established by a suffragette, which consisted of British women volunteers who worked to supply medical care for the sick and wounded\textsuperscript{,24} Dr. Cockburn served during the retreat into Albania. She returned to Canada in January, 1916.

Lt. Colonel John McCrae: BA UC 1892, MB 1898, MD 1910. He served as an artillery officer in the South African War. In 1915 he volunteered as a medical officer to the 1\textsuperscript{st} Artillery Brigade. At the Essex Farm Dressing Station near Ypres, he composed \textit{In Flanders Fields}, the iconic poem of the First World War. He died in service in 1918 of pneumonia.\textsuperscript{25}

Creating the Soldiers’ Tower

The idea of building a permanent memorial was raised by the president of the university, Sir Robert Falconer, in an article in the \textit{University of Toronto Monthly} in December 1918, only a month after the armistice was signed. He proposed that the alumni raise funds for “...the erection of some memorial. It must be a beautiful structure, as fine as the architecture can make it, not too large, but a true memorial, worthy of the greatest event in the University’s history. I myself believe in addition there should be an endowment to perpetuate otherwise than in stone the work of our soldiers.”\textsuperscript{26} He attended the meeting of the Alumni Association chaired by Mr. Justice Cornelius Arthur Masten (Vic 1879), President of the Alumni Association, held on 11 December 1918. Mr. Justice Masten (1857-1942) was appointed to the Ontario Supreme Court in 1915 and to the Court of Appeals in 1924. A resolution endorsed the president’s ideas and he and Mr. Justice Masten were members of the committee struck to “elaborate the details of the plans which have been approved by this meeting” and which would “report to a general meeting of the Alumni not later than February 1\textsuperscript{st} 1919.”\textsuperscript{27} Mr. Justice Masten was made chairman of the War Memorial Tower Committee that resulted. He and President Falconer were the driving forces leading to the raising of the funds for the memorial.
The consensus was that the permanent part of the memorial should be a building of great architectural beauty in which the memorial function would not be submerged in some utilitarian aspect. The committee quickly came to the decision that a memorial tower complex linking the new Hart House to University College would be appropriate. The Toronto architectural firm of Sproatt and Rolph, which had designed Hart House, was hired and prepared a Preliminary Sketch with an estimated cost of $175,000. Over $350,000 was raised and on 11 November 1919 the cornerstone was laid by the Governor General of Canada, the Duke of Devonshire. The building was constructed by Walter Page and Company which had also built Hart House.

**Completing the Soldiers’ Tower**

It was hoped that the Tower would be completed in time for dedication on Armistice Day 1923. By October 1923, it had reached the height of 85 feet and the deadline could not be met. The structure was completed to its full 143 feet (43.59 metres) and ready for the dedication of the Memorial Screen on 5 June 1924. This structure is the second tallest war memorial in Canada, surpassed only by the Peace Tower in Ottawa. Some of the pledged funds were used as loans to returning veterans to complete their degrees because the federal government refused to make funds available on the grounds that funding education was an exclusive provincial responsibility.

The clock and carillon were not ready until three years later and were dedicated on 6 October, 1927, in the presence of Mackenzie King, Prime Minister of Canada, as an alumni gift to commemorate the Centenary of the university. The bells were cast by Gillett and Johnston, Britain’s finest bell founders, in Croydon, England; a part of an original University College bell which had been damaged in the Great Fire of 1890 was used for casting one of these to symbolize the continuity of the old with the new. In 1953 additional bells were installed in memory of those U of T personnel who died in the Second World War. These were replaced in 1979 because they were out-of-tune and there are now 51 bells.

**The Soldiers’ Tower as a symbol of unity at the University of Toronto**

Sir Robert Falconer had hoped that the Soldiers’ Tower would symbolize the unity of the university. Its location joining the new Hart House to the old Main Building (as the University College building was usually called then) would, he thought, help to make students feel more a part of the university rather than of the recently federated colleges and faculties. Some memorials had already been created for previous military engagements in which U of T students and faculty had been involved, and more would be dedicated after the Tower was built. Croft Chapter House was built as the Chemistry Laboratory of Professor H.H. Croft, the captain in the Rifle Corps that fought the Fenians in 1866. A stained glass window was installed in the East Hall of University College in memory of students J.H. Mewburn, Malcolm
MacKenzie, and William F. Tempest who were killed in the same battle. This window was replaced in 1909 after its destruction in the Great Fire of 1890. Colleges created their own honour rolls, and individuals such as Dr. Norman Bethune who served in the Second Field Ambulance from 1915-1916, have commemorative plaques. The Soldiers’ Tower was intended as the central memorial for students, alumni and staff of the university who served and died in the country’s defence, and it has served this function since 11 November 1924.

An impromptu victory celebration was held on 11 November 1918 when a group of approximately 500 students met at Convocation Hall and then paraded downtown and back to the campus. The university was closed for Armistice Day 1919 and several memorial events were held. Hart House was officially opened at 11:00am. A special Convocation was held to present Thain MacDowell VC, DSO, with an MA honoris causa in the afternoon, and the Governor General, the Duke of Devonshire, laid the cornerstone of the Tower at 4:00pm. “Following the Dedicatory Prayer by the Hon. H.J. Cody, the ‘Last Post’ blown by cavalry trumpeters, rang out into the stillness. When the plaintive, haunting notes died away the audience, as if by common consent, remained still for some moments.”

The practice of annual commemorative services began on 11 November 1924 with the “First Annual Recognition of Our Soldier Dead” at the recently completed Soldiers’ Tower. A remembrance service has been held every 11 November (or on the nearest Friday if the eleventh falls on a weekend when classes are not in session) since 1924. In 1942, because of the large numbers of soldiers, airmen, and sailors training at the university, Remembrance Day services were held on the campus in front of University College and were described in the University of Toronto Monthly. Note that Armistice Day has been renamed Remembrance Day.

With a light snow falling during the entire service, members of the five military units of the University of Toronto Detachment, Canadian Red Cross Corps, graduates, women students of the University, and members of the maintenance staff gathered on the front campus on Remembrance Day, November 11, to pay tribute to the university’s fallen in this and the last war.

The service, which was under the direction of the Alumni Federation, was read by Dr. Cody. Facing the platform which was set up in front of University College main entrance, the representatives of the armed forces were drawn up. At the east end of the campus was the Number 1 Canadian Army Course. Opposite them, on the west end of the campus, were representatives of the Air Force. These were Number 23 Detachment R.C.A.F., and Number 3 Squadron (University of Toronto), University Air Training Corps. The largest group of all was the University of Toronto C.O.T.C. which was drawn up facing the College.
The University in the Second World War

The COTC had continued at the university in the 1920s and 1930s in greatly reduced numbers. In the 1938-39 school year there were 327 members under the command of Lieutenant Colonel H.H. Madill, professor of architecture. Property was bought at 119 St. George Street in the spring of 1939 for offices for the COTC and for the construction of a Drill Hall at the rear capable of training 300 recruits. This building complex is now the home of Woodsworth College. When classes resumed in September 1939, the enrolment was 7,202, a decrease of 206 from the previous year. However, so eager were the undergraduates for military training that 1,800 students and graduates overwhelmed the facilities. Students were urged to continue their studies until adequate training facilities were available. In late 1940 the COTC received permission to use the Toronto Armouries on University Avenue on the site of the present court building. By December 1940, "A very military atmosphere surrounds the University this year. Every male undergraduate who is not exempted for medical or other reasons, is taking military training in one form or another."

Members of the COTC were divided into two groups called battalions. The First Battalion was composed of men who had completed 110 hours of training and were ready to go to the Officers' Training Course at Brockville. The Second Battalion was made up of those who had not completed 110 hours.

COTC training was primarily for soldiers in the land forces. In September 1941, the University Air Training Plan was inaugurated to train air force officers as part of the COTC. This was later separated from the COTC and renamed the University Air Training Corps and then the University of Toronto Squadron Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF). Students who intended to join the RCAF could complete the RCAF Initial Training School program (ITS) at the same time they were taking university academic courses.

In early 1943, the University Naval Training Division (UNTD) was established on campus to train men for the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN). Unlike the COTC, men enlisted as ratings and did not automatically become officers on completion of their training.

The three training units resulted in over 2,250 men serving in the Canadian army, 450 in the RCAF, and 300 in the RCN.

Because of a decline in enrolment during the war years, space was available for accommodation and instruction on campus. The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) was created in 1939 by Britain and the Dominions. The Royal Canadian Air Force undertook to train air crew for the whole Commonwealth in Canada. The BCATP had an Initial Training School in the former Eglinton Hunt Club on Avenue Road. Recruits from the many countries of the British Commonwealth were given basic training and were selected for specialist training. No.1 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) was created at Malton on
the grounds of the present day Pearson International Airport. Training for radar technicians was given to over 500 recruits who were housed in tents and fed at Hart House. The university had one of the four flight simulators called “Link Trainers” in Canada. The university’s contribution to the BCATP is memorialized by the wooden propeller in the Memorial Room. The propeller is from an Avro Anson, the basic two engine plane used to instruct bomber crews in Canada.

The University of Toronto Women’s Service Training Detachment (WSTD) was inaugurated in 1941 to train women to serve in various capacities. Flavelle House on Queen’s Park Crescent became a training centre for the Women’s Royal Canadian Naval Service (WRENS). The RCAF Women’s Division (WD) trained in Hart House.

In addition, U of T scientists worked on developing the proximity fuse which made it possible for anti-aircraft shells to destroy enemy aircraft without actually hitting them. This was an important weapon in the fight against the later German rockets. The first decompression suit in North America to study the effects of high level flight was created. Researcher Wilbur Franks developed the world’s first anti-gravity flying suit. The university’s Connaught Laboratories produced large amounts of penicillin.

Eventually, over 10,000 U of T personnel served in the Second World War.

After the war, the university’s enrolment increased from 7,000 to 17,000 as the federal government assumed financial responsibility for veterans who wished to obtain university educations.

**A few remarkable stories from the 10,000 University of Toronto people who served in the Second World War**

**Major (later Colonel) Frederick Albert Tilston:** Pharmacy 2T9. Major Tilston was the only U of T alumnus to be awarded the Victoria Cross in the Second World War. Only 16 Canadians in total were awarded the VC in this conflict. Major Tilston served in the Essex and Kent Regiment of south-western Ontario. On 1 March 1945 he was in battle for the first time and despite being wounded three times led his platoon to victory at the Hochwald Forest west of the Rhine River. The wounds received in this action resulted in the amputation of both legs. There is a replica set of his medals and decorations in the Tower.

**Dr. Jacob Markowitz:** MD 2T3, Ph.D. 2T6. Dr. Markowitz did not get a reply from the Canadian Army Medical Corps when he volunteered in 1940 so he sailed to Britain and joined the Royal Army Medical Corps. He arrived in Singapore as the medical officer for the British garrison just six days before the colony surrendered to the Japanese army. As a prisoner of war, he became the medical officer at the camp housing POWs working on the Burmese railway that became infamous in the movie *The Bridge on the River Kwai*. With very little
medical equipment he was forced to improvise and performed more than 1,000 amputations with a hacksaw. He survived and died in the 1960s.50

**Major General Victor Wentworth Odlum:** BA Vic 1902. Victor Odlum served in three wars. He left Victoria College after his first year to serve in the South African War as a lieutenant in the Royal Canadian Regiment and the 2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles. He returned and completed his degree. In the Great War he became Canada’s youngest Brigadier General when he was appointed to command the 11th Canadian Infantry Brigade at age 35. In the Second World War he was promoted Major General and served for a year as General Officer Commanding the 2nd Division Canadian Active Service Force (CASF), as the Canadian Army Overseas was called initially. In 1942 he was appointed Canadian High Commissioner to Australia. He was one of the university’s most decorated soldiers, being made Companion of the Order of Bath (CB), Commander of the Order of St. Michael and St, George (CMG), Distinguished Service Order (DSO) and Bar, the Volunteer Decoration (VD), the Order of Danilo (Montenegro), and was seven times Mentioned in Despatches (MiD). He was wounded three times in the Great War.51

**Wing Officer Jean Davey:** BA Vic 3T3, MD 3T6. Jean Davey became medical supervisor of the Canadian Women’s Auxiliary Air Force (CWAAF) on its creation. When it was renamed the RCAF Women’s Division (WD) in 1942, Dr. Davey was appointed Head of Medical Services and served throughout the war. She was made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 1943 for her service. After the war she was Physician in Chief at Women’s College Hospital until 1965. In 1973 she became an Officer of the Order of Canada. The insignia of her Order of Canada is in the Memorial Room.

**Flight Lieutenant Gordon A. Kidder:** BA UC 3T7, and **Flight Lieutenant George E. McGill:** former student Engineering 3T9. The movie about *The Great Escape* is well known but less well known is the fact that nearly half the prisoners involved in organizing it were Canadian. F/L Kidder and F/L McGill were both students at the U of T before the war. They were among the 50 escapees who were recaptured and murdered by the Gestapo.52

**Section Officer Jean Burgess Atkinson:** BA UC 3T6. Canadian Women’s Auxiliary Air Force (CWAAF) and RCAF (WD). An outstanding athlete at University College, she was killed in an aircraft accident in 1944.53

**Major Sir Frederick Banting:** MB 1T6. Served in the Canadian Army Medical Corps in the First World War and was awarded the Military Cross. In 1923 he won the Nobel Prize in Medicine as co-discoverer of insulin. While serving in the RCAMC in the Second World War, he was killed in an airplane crash near Gander, Newfoundland, in 1941.54

**The Memorial Archway**
“The base of the tower is cut through by a fan-vaulted passageway, the sidewalls of which were redesigned in 1949 by Mathers and Haldenby and inscribed with the names of those of the University killed in World War II.”

In 1994, Brigadier General (Ret’d) H.E. Brown, a member of the Soldiers’ Tower Committee, researched and wrote *The University of Toronto Memorial Book 1939-1945*. This book records the names of 554 men and three women of the University who died. It was published by the STC and copies are still available.

**After the Second World War: The Korean War, Peacekeeping, Afghanistan**

The COTC, UTND and U of T Squadron RCAF continued after 1945 until the late 1960s. In the 1950s the continuing need for officers with university educations resulted in the Regular Officers Training Plan (ROTP) by which the government financed the students’ university educations in return for a commitment to serve in the regular forces for at least five years after graduation. But the federal government’s decision to integrate the Canadian forces and to end officer training in universities to reduce costs resulted in the abolition of the COTC on 31 May 1968 and “the Canadian Forces disappeared from the campus.”

University of Toronto students and graduates have participated in Canada’s military as peacekeepers and on active service. However, it has not been possible to obtain records of these men and women. The Soldiers’ Tower honours the memory of these people as well as those who served in Canada’s defence before 1914.

**The Garden of Remembrance**

On the western side of the wall on which the names of the university’s Great War dead are engraved is the Garden of Remembrance. The idea of the garden was originally that of Douglas LePan (1914-1998), principal of University College from 1964-1970. He was a noted academic, civil servant, and poet and had been a friend of John Kenneth Macalister during his student days at UC. The garden was to be a memorial to John Kenneth Macalister and Frank Herbert Dedrick Pickersgill. Both of these U of T alumni had been executed by the Nazi SS in Buchenwald Concentration Camp on 10 September 1944.

John Kenneth Macalister was born in Guelph, Ontario, in 1914. He graduated from UC with a BA from the Department of Law, Faculty of Arts, in 1937. He won a Rhodes Scholarship to Oxford University and graduated at the top of his class with a Bachelor of Civil Law (BCL) in 1940. He had spent part of his time in France studying French law and had married a French woman and was able to return to England before the Fall of France.

Frank Pickersgill was born in Winnipeg in 1915 and was the youngest brother of J.W. Pickersgill who became an important civil servant and politician in the governments of prime
ministers King, St. Laurent, and Pearson. Frank graduated with a BA from the University of Manitoba in 1936 and won a scholarship to do post-graduate work in Classical History at the U of T. He was awarded his MA in 1938. He did not write a thesis and passed examinations on the political thought of St. Augustine of Hippo, Roman History, and Aristotle.\textsuperscript{58}

Frank had visited Europe in 1934 by working his way across the Atlantic on a cattle ship. In the summer of 1938 he returned and settled in Paris where he perfected his knowledge of French. He was in Poland when the Germans invaded and was able to make his way to neutral Romania and then back to Paris by train. He was still in France when the Germans invaded. He went to Brittany hoping to get a ship to England but he was arrested by the Germans. After 18 months imprisonment, he escaped and made his way to Unoccupied France (Vichy) and eventually to Portugal. He arrived back in England by air in October, 1942, and was recruited by the Special Operations Executive (SOE), a highly secret British organization that was assisting Resistance groups in occupied Europe. He was Mentioned in Despatches for his bravery.

John Kenneth Macalister had also been recruited by British Intelligence. He was trained as a wireless operator and Frank was trained to establish a resistance group in the north of France. They became a team and were dropped by parachute into France on 15 June 1943. Unfortunately for them, German military counter intelligence was on high alert because a drop of arms and munitions just previous to their drop had resulted in an explosion when the cargo hit the ground. Ken and Frank were arrested at a roadblock as they were being driven to a railway station a few days later.

In 2001 the Soldiers' Tower Committee under the chairman, Captain (Ret'd) John G.W. McIntyre, decided to replant and enlarge the garden and rename it the Garden of Remembrance. This work was completed in 2002. Two bronze plaques were commissioned; one bears a general inscription naming the Garden of Remembrance and the other notes that it had originally been dedicated to the memory of Captains Pickersgill and Macalister

**Creation of The Memorial Room**

The room at the top of the stairway was originally called the Muniment Room,\textsuperscript{59} a name given to a chamber in a castle, church, or university where documents were kept. It was intended that the room should serve as a depository for records of the university’s war efforts. However, the function of holding these documents was assumed by the University Archives. The Muniment Room, which held few paper records, contained artifacts such as flags and the King’s Colour of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} Pioneer Battalion. (The soldiers of pioneer battalions were largely unskilled labourers who dug trenches and constructed roads. Many of the officers in charge of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} Pioneer Battalion had been engineering students at the U of T.) Inscriptions engraved high on the walls listed the donors and dedications of the bells in the carillon. The room was
rarely open for visitors and fell into a state of disrepair. In 1973, John Duncanson, the Director of Alumni Affairs, sought to revive interest in the room. A group of veterans, led by Major Roy Oglesby, proposed that the room house a small collection of artifacts from university people who had participated in the wars and become a memorial for all the U of T personnel who had served in defending Canada and freedom. In 1979 the name was changed to The Memorial Room. The name of the Muniment Room and Remembrance Day Committee was changed to the Soldiers’ Tower Committee (STC) and it came under the direction of the University of Toronto Alumni Association (UTAA). The STC acquired MacDowell’s medals on loan from Victoria College which had become the owners after MacDowell’s death in 1960. One of the two machine guns he captured and which had been donated to Hart House was obtained. Pictures of the Second World War VC recipient, Frederick A. Tilston, and others were commissioned. This collection was intended to emphasize to students of today the sacrifices made by former members of the university community in Canada’s defence as well as their contributions to international peace.

In 1982 just before Remembrance Day the Memorial Screen was defaced by someone using a spray can. This desecration dismayed the university community. It was feared that the damage was permanent but a painstaking cleaning was able to restore the memorial.

The Memorial Window

In 1995 the Memorial Window was dedicated. Designed and installed by the Russell C. Goodman Stained Glass Studios of Parry Sound, Ontario, the symbolism is based on the poem *In Flanders Fields* by U of T graduate in medicine, John McCrae.

The Staircase of Honour

Along the stairs leading to the Memorial Room are eight stained glass windows installed in May 2005 to honour Canadian forces wartime service. They are the work of Goodman Zissoff Stained Glass Studio of Kelowna, BC.

Repair and Renovation of the Tower

In 2008, a chair glide was installed to facilitate access to the Memorial Room by persons with mobility challenges. Repairs were made to the bell chamber to upgrade the drainage. New display cases were designed by committee member Chris Lea and were installed in the spring of 2008. Planning is underway to improve the lighting in the Staircase of Honour and to create instructive panels and graphics to emphasize the contributions of those of the university community who have sacrificed for the country in time of war and peace. It is hoped that this work will be completed in 2009.
The Toronto City Council designated Hart House including the Soldiers’ Tower as a Heritage Property by enacting By-law 129-90 on 20 February 1990.

**Fundraising**

The current fundraising campaign began in 2002. The late Mr. Irving Frankle, then a member of the Soldiers’ Tower Committee, suggested a number of fundraising strategies and agreed to be head of the fundraising committee. The original goal was to raise funds for the stairway stained glass window project and $65,000.00 was dedicated to this.

The Tower is a very well built structure with walls three-feet thick. The dressed lighter coloured stone is Indiana limestone; the darker, rougher, rubble stone is Georgetown sandstone. By its eightieth anniversary it was beginning to exhibit signs of age and E.R.A. Architects Inc. were hired to report on the state of the building. They found that water seepage was the most immediate problem. The solution to this problem was to cost $140,000. This work was completed in 2006.

The E.R.A. Architects’ Report listed a number of costly maintenance and restoration projects that would have to be undertaken over the next few years if the Tower is not to suffer further damage. The estimated cost for all the work is $1,250,000. Funds are still being raised to pay for this anticipated work.

**The Soldiers’ Tower— Past, Present, and Future**

As the Soldiers’ Tower Committee looks to the future, it remembers the past. The objective of the Memorial Committee which established the tower was “to erect a Physical Memorial, beautiful and impressive, a monument to those who fell, an inspiration to all succeeding generations of students.” With the passage of time, and as those who served in the country’s wars become fewer, the cultural significance of the World Wars may diminish, and it becomes more of a challenge to keep Remembrance Day relevant. Nevertheless in recent years attendance at the Soldiers’ Tower Remembrance Day ceremony has always exceeded 1,000 people and in 2008, the 90th anniversary of the armistice which ended the Great War, the enthusiastic response of the 1,300 in attendance confirms that Remembrance Day holds meaning for young and old.

*By Gordon MacKinnon, Soldiers’ Tower Committee*

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