

THE GREAT WAR MEDAL EXHIBIT



About Fort York

National Historic Site

Submitted by Wayne Reeves,
Chief Curator, City of Toronto

Upon becoming Upper Canada's first Lieutenant-Governor in 1792, John Graves Simcoe was charged with finding a site for the provincial capital that would not be threatened by the new American republic to the south.

In July 1793, Simcoe established a garrison at the entrance to a large natural harbour on the north shore of Lake Ontario. The garrison – Fort York – was intended to protect a new community, the Town of York. Three years later, the town became Upper Canada's capital; in 1834, the town became the City of Toronto.

Fort York represents more than the genesis of urban Toronto. The site was the location of a battle during the War of 1812 when British, Canadian and First Nations combatants defended York against US forces. Destroyed after the violent climax of the Battle of York in 1813, the fort was rebuilt and now contains Canada's largest collection of authentic War of 1812 buildings.

Located on the original shoreline of Lake Ontario, Fort York was the city's primary harbour defence between the 1790s and the 1880s. The Fort continued to house military families and supplies until the early 1930s. In 1934, the City of Toronto opened Fort York as a historic site museum – one of 10 museums now owned and operated by the City.

Fort York's status as a significant place gained official recognition a decade before it became a museum. In 1923, the National Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada declared Fort York a national historic site. Today, Fort York National Historic Site spans 17.5 hectares,

taking in the 2.8-hectare walled fort and a significant portion of the original Garrison Common, including Victoria Memorial Square, Strachan Avenue Military Burying Ground, the mouth of the now-lost Garrison Creek and the still-active Fort York Armoury.

The Fort welcomes tens of thousands of visitors every year and helps engage citizens through changing exhibits, tours, programs, lectures and events. The Fort York Visitor Centre opened in 2014 as the hub connecting visitors to the experience and content of the entire site as well as to the surrounding neighbourhoods and city.

Efforts continue to complete the Visitor Centre and revitalize the full National Historic Site through landscape improvements and new exhibits and programming. To achieve this, the City of Toronto has been collaborating with the Fort York Foundation.

As an independent, federally registered charity, the Fort York Foundation is leading the private sector fundraising for capital projects at Fort York. The priority project has been the Visitor Centre, which has been supported financially by the Foundation as well as by the governments of Canada, Ontario and the City of Toronto. The Foundation is also supporting the rehabilitation of Garrison Common, and has established an acquisition fund to enable the City to purchase artifacts to enrich the interpretation of Fort York.



The walled fort, looking west from the Bathurst Street Bridge, 2013
Photo by Andrew Stewart



Plan of the newly rebuilt Fort York, 1816
Library and Archives Canada, NMC-23139

LYNDEN BEESLEY,
In the Fields where Poppies Blow
BRONZE, 85MM X 90MM



Description of Medal:
My medal depicts the corn fields of Flanders with a red poppy in the foreground symbolising the fallen soldiers who gave up their lives to preserve our freedom. One word "Remember" is written across the centre of the medal which harkens to Kiplings poem. "Ode to Rememberance" and references his famous line "lest we forget"

ANNE-LISE DEERING,
Can there be peace in the world?
COLD CAST BRONZE, 90 MM



Description of Medal:
War street scene.

GEORGE FARMER,
The Great War to End
COLD CAST IRON, 170MM X 120MM X 15MM



Description of Medal:
The medal's main shape is a fallen Brodie Allied helmet. Inside is a sketch of the last thing the owner of the helmet saw, going up over the trench into No Man's Land.

MARINA GUGLIELMI
The Great War: 100 Year Anniversary Commemorative Medal
Bronze, 85mm x 85mm



Description of Medal:
This medal is designed to commemorate the efforts of Canadian men and women to end 'The Great War'.

ELAINE JAQUES,
Holding Peace
BRONZE, 68MM X 98MM



Description of Medal:

The obverse is a left hand gently cupped, open to a dove in flight. The image speaks both to hope and the awareness of the fleeting nature and fragility of its' continued attainment. The battlefield image on the reverse visually references the words from Laurence Binyon's poem "For The Fallen". "At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them".

ELAINE JAQUES,
Medal of Remembrance
BRONZE, 100MM X 85MM



Description of Medal:

The obverse of this medal commemorating Canada's "Great War" features a poppy overlaid on a maple leaf against a large W capped with praying hands. A formalist treatment, it references medals made to be worn. The reverse is a statement about the power of individuals to speak to us through the medium of graffiti on public walls. "W is for war, wounded, widowed, world, why," etc.

MAGDALENA LESNIAK,
Marshall Jozef Pilsudski

PLASTER OF PARIS, 100MM X 100MM X 10MM



Description of Medal:

This medal depicts Marshall Jozef Pilsudski, the most important Polish politician.

JANINE LINDGREN,
Victory Medal?

BRONZE, 85MM X 90MM



Description of Medal:

The global shape is subdivided by a peace sign; a state many of the world hoped for. A soldier replaces the Angel of Victory, arm raised, signaling to "stop" the fighting. Skeleton arm and false leg reveal effects of battle. Wings are emerging; is he a broken Allegory of Victory? A dead soldier as heavenly angel? His helmet reveals head bandages, the rim like a halo, is he "Saint Soldier"? Two tortured figures, their abstracted style emphasizes break from reality, fragmented, broken souls, casualties of war, civilians and soldiers. Other symbols include; white feather, rat, hand grenade, poppy, waving flag, rifle, and laurel wreath.

GEERT MAAS,
Wardemonds II

BRONZE, 129MM X 104MM X 18MM



Description of Medal:

The medal depicts images of soldiers.

LORRAINE WRIGHT
Combat Helmet

BRONZE, 90MM X 90MM



Description of Medal:

At the beginning of WWI there was no head gear provided for protection and many soldiers succumbed to deadly head wounds. The combat helmet introduced in the summer of 1915, by the French and the British, was to protect them from shrapnel shells raining down into the trenches. The Canadians purchased the British "Brodie" helmet to minimize injury but it still provided too little protection in such a horrific war.

RICHARD MCNEILL,

1914

CONSTRUCTED AND PATINATED BRONZE,

115MM X 125MM X 30MM



Description of Medal:

With pincers spread and gaping maw, a monstrous beetle rolls over a devastated terrain, pocked with holes and trenches. The year marks the onset of this horrendous period but also marks the end of humanity's climb to the modern age and its calamitous plunge into it. The sacred dung beetle, the scarab, was revered as a sign of change and regeneration in ancient Egypt and is used here accordingly. The reverse shows the devouring head, a corrosive helmet-like form, and a partial cross to honour the fallen.

JUDITH CHRISTINE MILLS,

After Vimy

BRONZE, 95MM X 95MM X 12MM



Description of Medal:

"AFTER VIMY" With all four divisions of the Canadian Corps fighting together for the first time, The Battle of Vimy Ridge (April 9-12, 1917) came to symbolize Canada's independence and autonomy, though the human cost of the battle was brutal and far reaching - 3,600 Canadians killed, 7,000 wounded and an estimated 20,000 German casualties. OBVERSE: The lion rampant, symbol of the British Empire, gives way to the maple leaf, symbol of Canada. REVERSE: The poppy, worn in remembrance of sacrifice, with the word: 'VIMY'.

JEANNE STEVENS-SOLOMON,

Ipres. Ipres Levelled

BRONZE, 2/10 EDITION, 72MM X 72MM X 10MM



Description of Medal:

Foundation ruins of the town after bombing.

His medals hang on the wall in a small brick home just outside the Walloon area of France. My great uncle lost his life for the cause of WWI. Ipres was demolished in 1916, a beautiful medieval town, bombed to ruins, annihilated to rubble. My father and I stood on this site in 1993. Together absorbing the disaster, the loss, the 1.2 million casualties by gas attacks, initiated during this hellish event. Ipres. Standing there in its reconstruction, walking through it's museum presenting the eye opening reality of life – not, life – death.

SUSAN TAYLOR,

Remembrance

BRONZE, 90MM X 90MM



Description of Medal:

“Remembrance” honours the heroic efforts of my grandfather, George Edie and his fellow comrades who fought in the 2nd Battle of Ypres during the “Great War for Civilization. The portrait of the young soldier framed by the barbed wire represents youth sacrificed through the loss of life, imprisonment and emotional trauma. On the reverse the poppies emerging from the barbed wire symbolize the loss of life through the spent flowers, the flowers in bloom: the survivors and the young buds: the future, lest we forget.

Opening Night



MASC members at opening night, left to right: Judith Mills, Elaine Jaques, Paul Petch, Lorraine Wright, Lynden Beesley, George Farmer, Janine Lindgren, Susan Taylor, and Wayne Reeves, Chief Curator, City of Toronto



Janine Lindgren and Ana Silva

