

A Soldiers Postcards ~ Mailed from The Somme & Flanders WWI ~ May 1915 to April 1916

The Synopsis

The treatment of the exhibit is to display a Canadian soldiers need, through postcards, to contact or connect to his family, to acknowledge a letter, best wishes for anniversaries, birthdays, a parcel or to apprise the family he was well.

In this exhibit we have the used the soldiers postcards, sent from the Western Front during WWI, in the Somme (France) & Flanders (Belgium), by a Canadian soldier in the 1st Division.

While there are some indication of battles, many of which ranged over several months and noted in exhibit, the cards and their dates represent where 3rd Battalion (Bn) were located and what they were doing on that day.

The exhibit is of postcards a soldier (shown in RPPC on Title page ~ see arrow) W.E. Marley, regimental number 9698, sent to his family in England, *during an 12 month period, during May 1915 & April 1916*

The postcards exhibited here, the soldier has conveyed, through his choice of cards (some in general nature others comic or satirical as to inject a little humor) and words to his family, he is thinking of them ~ all in a positive manner, while enduring unbelievable psychological & physical circumstances while engaged in combat.

The use of postcards at this period of time was prolific, as well as effective, as postcards would be received in Great Britain from France or Belgium in a couple of days. The Allied postal system involved more than 10,000 soldiers, for the movement of letters, postcards & parcels to soldiers, as well as return mail from soldiers, that was imperative to the moral well being of soldiers in the field.

The soldiers records ⁽¹⁾ indicate he joined the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) in August 1914 and the RPPC (see Title page, arrow) shows him at Camp Valcartier in Quebec, taken on strength Sept 22 1914 ~ the soldier, in first contingent, embarked, for Great Britain, from Quebec City, Oct. 3 1914

The 1st Div. 3rd Battalion, which the soldier was attached to, was formed as the *Toronto Regiment* ~ which was made up of *Queens Own Rifles (QOR)*; *10th Royal Grenadiers* and *Governor General's Body Guard*.

The cards in the exhibit and others acquired, these are best available for the time period to tell the story The exhibitor has not been able to obtain more from family or other sources and they are the only known available from the particular soldier.

The subjects in the post cards were photographed in studios, with backdrops & props as monochromatic (black & white) They were then tinted or coloured prior to printing.

The silk cards were handmade by local women and are & scarce, as these were three times more costly for a soldier to purchase. These cards are noted (3rd Battalion Cap Badge) as such



The material as presented in the exhibit has been set up chronologically as all cards were dated. Research has been done^{(3) (4)} to *provide where soldier would have been on any particular day indicated on all cards.*

Each card has been displayed, front(verso) with small overlay with messages shown written, on back (verso) of card. These were in pencil, and some have faded over time. *All cards were dated when written with message and postmarks/censors⁽²⁾ cancels shown.*

Every effort was made to identify & research, the printer/publisher of the cards during this period. Based on research of all cards all printer/publishers, where identified where possible this information is presented in the exhibit with the card.

There were millions of postcards printed and/or published, some with only a number and because of this limited research was available.

While the postcards are dated and censored⁽²⁾ all cards were mailed at HQ of 1st. Division (FPO)⁽²⁾ field post office ~ as there is *no indication as to where the unit was posted ~ that information provided in the exhibit for each card, and their activity that day⁽⁵⁾* was researched through Toronto Regiment battalion war diaries located at Casa Loma, Toronto with the *Queens Own Rifles.*

Research & Reference Notes 1 Attestation & Soldiers History ~ Library & Archives Canada (LAC)

2 Canadian Military Postal Markings ~ W.J.Bailey & E.R. Toop

3 McMaster University Map Collection 1914-18 ~ Western Front

4 "Rats Alley": Trench Names of Western Front 1914-18 ~ Peter Chasseaud, 2006

5 Toronto Regiment 1 Div. 3 Battalion of CEF ~ war diaries located at Casa Loma, Toronto, ON