

## The Mount Allison Memorial Library 1914-1918 Is a Cenotaph



Carved in stone over the archway it was written '*Memorial Library 1914-1918*'. Beloved Former President Dr Ross Flemington would tell you: "*This is a Cenotaph, built to honour the 73 Allisonians who sacrificed their lives in the Great War so that we can continue to live in a land that is 'glorious and free'!*"

During the Great War, The Right Honourable Sir Robert Borden, then Prime Minister of Canada, declared that "*a larger proportion of the students of Mount Allison had enlisted in the service of the Empire than from any other College in Canada.*"

After the Great War the Alumnae and Alumni Societies determined "*to erect a library as a memorial to the loyalty and heroism of Mount Allison men and women in the war*" where names placed there will: "*go down through the years cherished and revered by successive generations of grateful students*".

The Families and Friends of the Fallen responded by subscribing for \$80,000, almost 80% of the cost of this War Memorial with the understanding that *Memorial Library 1914-1918* be '*held in trust*' by the University. As quoted in the campus newspaper, *The Argosy*, there was a recognized need "*to keep forever in the mind and before the eye of coming generations of students*" the sacrifices made by courageous Allisonians.

By definition, the *Memorial Library 1914-1918* is a Cenotaph, a monument erected in memory of persons whose bodies are buried elsewhere. The *Memorial Library 1914-1918* ... building, plaque, and stone ... is a Cenotaph registered in the DND National Inventory of Canadian Military Memorials. It would be a shameful act, unbecoming a university with the stature of Mount Allison, to needlessly destroy this Cenotaph.

Not only is the *Memorial Library 1914-1918* a Cenotaph, but as described recently in literature sent forward to Alumni and Friends of Mount Allison as part of the *JUMP Campaign*: "*The Centre for the Arts will be constructed around the University's historic Alumni Memorial Library building, mixing the traditional architecture of that landmark with exciting contemporary design*". As that 'landmark' the handsome *Memorial Library 1914-1918* stood proudly on the Mount Allison campus in 1938 when Sir Charles G D Roberts returned to Sackville for a tour of the campus with President Dr George J Trueman and exclaimed: "*It is the most beautiful campus that I know in Canada*".

Not only is the *Memorial Library 1914-1918* a Cenotaph, but it is an architectural treasure designed by “one of Canada’s great architects”, Andrew Randall Cobb. Made of red sandstone cut from the local Pickard quarry by men of the Tantramar community, its Tudor Revival design envelops a grand reading room, maybe the most impressive interior space on campus. Cobb was an accomplished artist, a lover of theatre, a founding member of both the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia and the Nova Scotia Association of Architects, designer of the Halifax Neptune Theatre, and a strong advocate for the Arts. In 1940 he became the first Canadian architect east of Montreal to be elected a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects. Cobb was architecture professor at the Nova Scotia College of Art and in 1934 received an honorary degree from that institution.

Not only is the *Memorial Library 1914-1918* a Cenotaph, but it is one of the campus's oldest buildings. On the main campus of Mount Allison only three buildings are older: the President’s Cottage, Owens Art Gallery and Hart Hall. The *Memorial Library 1914-1918* is the first building designed by Andrew Randall Cobb at Mount Allison; it is the building that defined the old academic quadrangle; it is the building whose spirit is reflected in the design of the new Science Building, Centennial Hall and Trueman House; and it is the building which truly delineated the ‘signature look’ of the campus. A heritage building is defined, not by its age, but by the story that it tells. There is no other building on campus with a narrative quite like that of the *Memorial Library 1914-1918*. This is indeed Mount Allison’s most important historic edifice. The *Memorial Library 1914-1918*, by definition, is the quintessential paragon of what is heritage at Mount Allison University. The Minister of Wellness Culture and Sport for New Brunswick has deemed this property worthy of designation as a ‘Provincial Heritage Place’.

Prominent Canadian military historian Dr. Marc Milner, a native son of Sackville and author of *HMCS Sackville 1941-1985*, provides this provoking thought: “It is tragic to think that on the eve of the centennial of the most catastrophic event in Canadian history, Mt A is even considering destruction of its memorial to those who died in the service of their country during the Great War.”

The Board of Regents of Mount Allison must not allow this destruction to happen. To destroy this Cenotaph not only betrays the Methodist traditions of honesty and integrity upon which Mount Allison was founded, but when measured according to any reasonable standards, this act is both morally and ethically wrong.



In the recent words of an illustrious alumnus: “Mount Allison needs to change its thinking dramatically and begin to celebrate the historic Alumni Memorial Library.”

Robert Eaton

Save the Mount Allison Memorial Library Committee  
for more info visit: [www.eastmarket.com/smash](http://www.eastmarket.com/smash)  
[www.thepetitionsite.com/2/save-the-memorial-library](http://www.thepetitionsite.com/2/save-the-memorial-library)  
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