

Standing on Guard for Thee: MEMORIAL LIBRARY 1914 1918

*O Canada! Our home and native land!
True patriot love in all thy sons command.
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,
The True North strong and free!
From far and wide,
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.*



It was no accident that the handsome heritage building designed by celebrated Canadian architect Andrew Randall Cobb was placed to stand proudly on the north face of the old academic quadrangle on the Mount Allison campus. This stalwart sentry, **MEMORIAL LIBRARY 1914 1918**, was dedicated as a War Memorial on June 8, 1927, to the glory of God and to the memory of Lost Allisonians.

Beloved Former President Dr Ross Flemington would tell you: "This is a Cenotaph, built to honor the 73 Allisonians who sacrificed their lives in the Great War so that we can live in a land that is '*glorious and free*'!"

At the outbreak of World War I the student enrolment at Mount Allison numbered about 600, half of these being accounted for by the Ladies' College. The students of that day rallied to the Call of Country. By the beginning of 1915 there were 160 students enrolled in the officer training corps program on campus. By the fall of 1916 one third of the student body had shipped overseas to serve on the battlefields of France and the *Argosy* was already reporting the first fatalities. The final tally for members of the Mount Allison Family was 73 killed, an almost unbelievable sacrifice for loyalty to Canada. Others limped home badly injured; irrevocably scared, maimed or cruelly "shell-shocked".

Following the Great War, the *Argosy* proclaimed a need "*to keep forever in the mind and before the eye of coming generations of students*" the sacrifices made by courageous students of this generation. The Alumni and Alumnae Societies of the day passed a resolution that "*an effort should be made to erect a library as a Memorial to the loyalty and heroism of Mount Allison men and women in the war*". The Families and Friends of the Fallen responded by giving of their hard earned dollars most of the funds necessary to complete the construction of the **MEMORIAL LIBRARY 1914 1918**, and then entrusted the care and upkeep to the University.

Imagine for a moment if such a conflict were to arise today and contemporary Mount Allison students were asked by their Canada for '*true patriot love*' as their Allisonian compatriots were asked in 1914. With the comparative 2011 fourfold increase in student enrolment, by the end of this year there would be about 600 enlisted in an officer training corps doing daily drills on the football field. By the start of fall classes one third of the student body would be gone to war. By the end of the conflict there would be near 300 lives lost; classmates not ever coming home. Families and Friends mourning the Supreme Sacrifice of these sons and daughters of Mount Allison would also respond by directly donating \$4 million to construct a fitting War Memorial. These families would also choose not a stone pillar but the more ambitious goal, a splendid building like the **MEMORIAL LIBRARY 1914 1918**; a sentinel to *stand guard* at the gateway to Mount Allison. This Architect's Fine Art would be widely recognized for artistic value and heritage splendour and would become an heirloom on the Mount Allison campus, much loved by Alumni. It too would become the **Heart of Mount Allison**. A President would preside at the dedication and pray with the assembled that subsequent generations of Allisonian students and Regents would Remember and would Honor the Memory of these 300. He, too, would challenge those fortunate to return to finish their degrees, and to us alongside them, to continue to *stand on guard*. As One, we would pray together to the God of All that '*we keep our land glorious and free*'.

Surely to wilfully destroy the **MEMORIAL LIBRARY 1914 1918** is an immoral act.

Save the Mount Allison Memorial Library Committee: mta.memorial.library@gmail.com