

Steven Luciuk

Christmas



This Christmas card was included with a small lot of postal history items purchased recently. While not having a direct philatelic connection it is rich in reference to Canada's military history. Moreover, being exactly 70 years old, it may be of some interest to our members in this season.

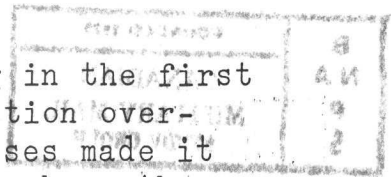
The card, printed in shades of brown, focused on Canada's part in the Second Battle of Ypres and noted certain subsequent battles involving Canadians. A maple leaf frames the war-damaged cloth hall at Ypres. This Flanders town was an important textile centre in the Middle Ages. Unfortunately, an envelope was not found with the card. A cover in the same lot, however, shows that the recipient of the card resided in Vanscoy, Saskatchewan.

Following a defence of the Ypres area, in the autumn of 1914 a pronounced salient was left in the line. The British decided against straightening their position. In April, 1915, the Germans succeeded in releasing a large quantity of asphyxiating gas. (An earlier attempt on the Eastern Front failed due to the extreme cold.) They chose the Ypres sector held mainly by French colonial and inexperienced Canadian troops. Canada's achievement in this engagement is well known and need not be recounted here. The significance of the Canadian stand is shown by Field Marshal French's tribute on the inside of the card.

A number of major developments, associated with Canada's military, occurred in the 20 month period encompassed by this card. A few can be considered briefly. Ypres confirmed a doubt widely held by soldiers. The Canadian-manufactured Ross Rifle was not suitable for rugged combat conditions. Despite the advocacy of Sam Hughes, Minister of Militia, the weapon was phased out and was finally replaced by the reliable British Lee Enfield by late 1916.

By then the Canadian Corps had grown to 4 divisions on the Western Front. They had been raised by voluntary recruitment and on the surface all appeared well. However, cracks were developing.

Encouraged by an enthusiastic response to recruiting in the first years of the War, Prime Minister Borden's administration over-committed the nation. By Christmas, 1916, heavy losses made it difficult for the traditional system of recruiting to keep the divisions and support units at effective strength. The stage was being set for the 1917 Conscription Crisis, a deeply divisive Canadian internal issue.



LORD FRENCH'S REPORT,
YPRES, 1915:

"The Canadians saved the situation"

On France's eternal camping ground
Their silent tents are spread,
And Glory guards with solemn sound
The bivouac of the dead.

GREETINGS AND BEST WISHES OF
THE SEASON

FROM

James M. G. Depot
James M. G. Depot

CANADIAN M.G. DEPOT,
CROWBOROUGH,
SUSSEX

1916.

(card inside-reduced to 74%)

Two top level leadership changes occurred in the period between Ypres, 1915, and Christmas, 1916. The commander of the British forces on the Western Front, Sir John French, was forced to resign in December, 1915. As the War developed, his competence came to be widely questioned. His leadership came to be associated with high numbers of casualties with little apparent military gain. His successor, Douglas Haig, faced similar charges after the dismal Somme Offensive. French, after the War, was given an earldom. He chose the title-Earl of Ypres. Sam Hughes, the driving force behind the raising of the C.E.F., was also replaced. He often overstepped his authority as Minister of Militia. His actions embarrassed Borden eventually making the irrepressible minister a political liability.

The status of senior Canadian officers improved markedly as the War continued. At Ypres, 1915, Arthur Currie was a brigade commander. Top positions were reserved for the professional Imperial officer class. Colonial militia officers seldom were held in high regard. Gradually, as their abilities came to be recognized, Canadian officers did command at the division level and beyond. Currie, shortly after Vimy, was given command of the Canadian Corps.

With Ypres a standard of fighting excellence was established, and it was to be emulated by later divisions of the Corps. The prowess of Canada's amateur army culminated at Vimy Ridge in 1917, a superb military effort. The Canadian Corps gained a reputation well beyond what could be expected from a young, thinly populated nation with little in the way of military tradition.

May this card, in a way, serve to wish study group members a joyful 1986 Christmas season.

REFERENCES:

- McWilliams, James and R.J. Steel. Gas! The Battle For Ypres, 1915. St. Catharines: Vanwell Publishing Limited, 1985.
Stanley, G.F.G. Canada's Soldiers: The Military History Of An Unmilitary People. Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1974 (3rd Ed.)
Swettenham, John. Canada And The First World War. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1969.

1st CANADIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE - 1914- SHIPS IN CONVOY

Colin Campbell

Part 3

From our principal reference: page 134

Debates, House of Commons, Session 1916, Vol. III, p. 2693, 10th April
Transportation of First Contingent

Mr. J.J. Hughes:

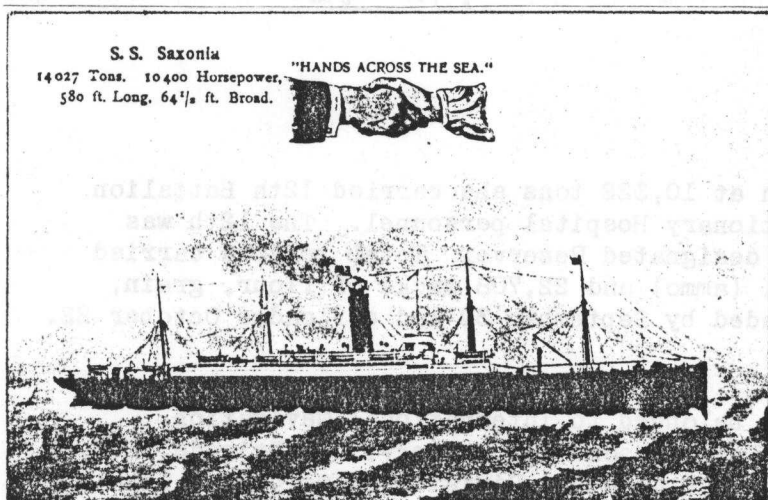
1. How many ships were employed to carry the first contingent of 30,000 men across the Atlantic?
2. (a) From whom were these ships chartered?
- (b) and what did they cost?

Mr. Kemp:

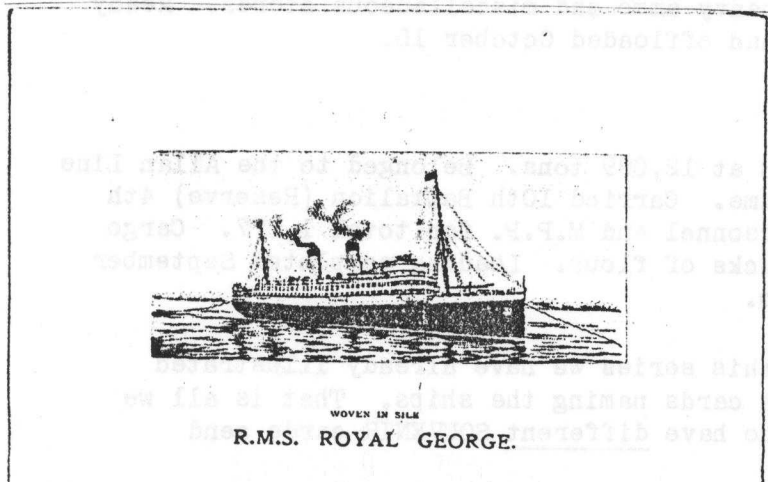
1. Thirty one ships.

2. (a) Donaldson Line, Cunard Line, Canadian Northern, Canadian Pacific, Canada S.S. Company, Royal Mail Steam Packet, Allan Line, White Star Dominion Line.

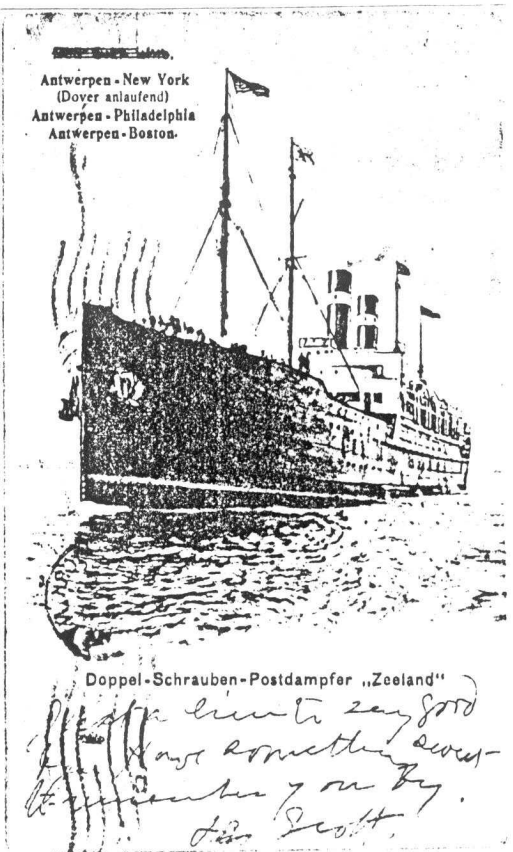
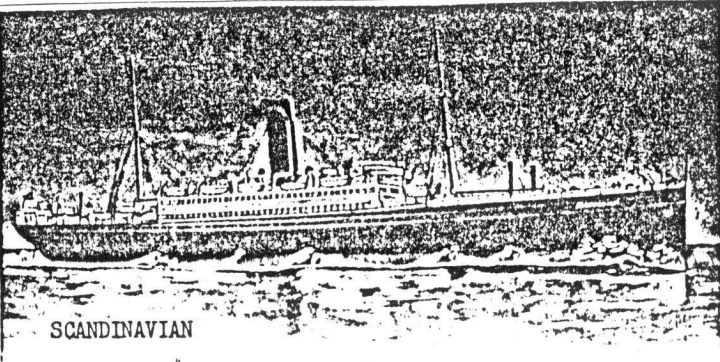
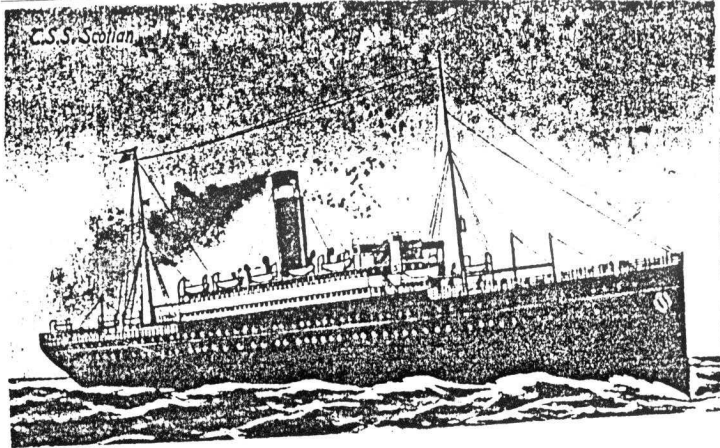
(b) \$3,363,240.42. These ships were under Admiralty rates and regulations. The cost was largely increased in consequence of having to charter ships some time in advance, in order to secure a sufficient number and to go into (sic. in) consort, under a convoy of war ships, entailing considerable expenditure for demurrage. As these ships all had to go to one port to disembark their troops, this also added to the cost of victualling, as well as further demurrage charges.



SAXONIA- Belonged to Cunard on launching 1900. Carried 1st Brigade C.F.A. personnel (1st, 2nd & 3rd Batteries,) etc for total 863. Cargo consisted of 1,000 tons of coal and small arms and ammo. Finished loading at Quebec September 27 and offloaded October 17.



ROYAL GEORGE - Built 1907 as Heliopolis selling to Canadian Northern Steamships in 1910. From information on back of card Royal George returned from Bristol, England just in time to join the convoy. She transported P.P.C.L.I. troops and C.A.S.C. Details for total 1,175. Also ammo and 5,602 sacks of flour. Loaded at Levis Quebec by September 30. Fitting out prior to war service her tonnage changed to 11,146. Broken up 1922.



SCOTIAN built 1898 for Allan at 10,322 tons she carried 12th Battalion (4th C.I.B.) as well as #2 Stationary Hospital personnel. The 12th was from Central Ontario and first designated Reserve. Total persons carried (military) 1,309. Cargo s.a.a. (ammo) and 22,708 sacks of flour, grain, cheese, lumber and silver. Loaded by September 30 and offloaded October 22.

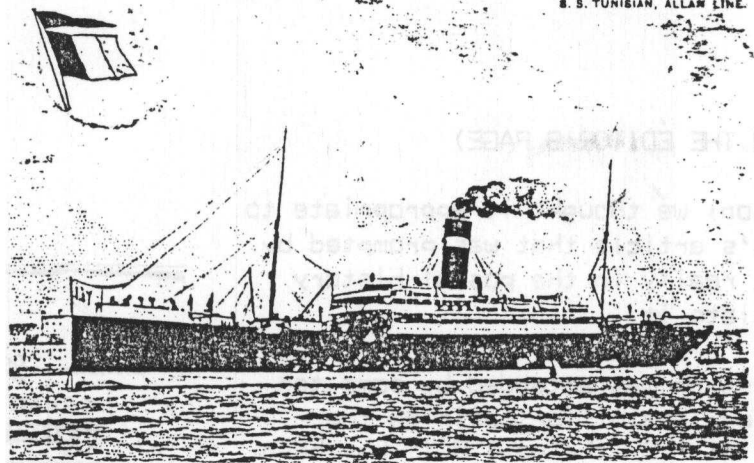
ZEELAND At date of convoy she belonged to International Navigation. Launched 1901 at 11,905 tons. Carried some 8th Battery, 3rd Brigade, C.F.A. personnel, H.Q., 1st and 2nd Field Companies, Divisional Engineers, 9th Battalion, Reserve, (4th C.I.B.), plus Details for total 1,577. Cargo of large quantity small arms and heavy ammo and miscellaneous stores. Ready to sail from Quebec October 1 and offloaded October 15.

SCANDINAVIAN Launched in 1898 at 12,099 tons. Belonged to the Allan Line and was their second of that name. Carried 10th Battalion (Reserve) 4th C.I.B., #1 General Hospital personnel and M.P.P. for total 1,277. Cargo consisted of ammo and 21,109 sacks of flour. Loading completed September 29th and offloaded October 19th.

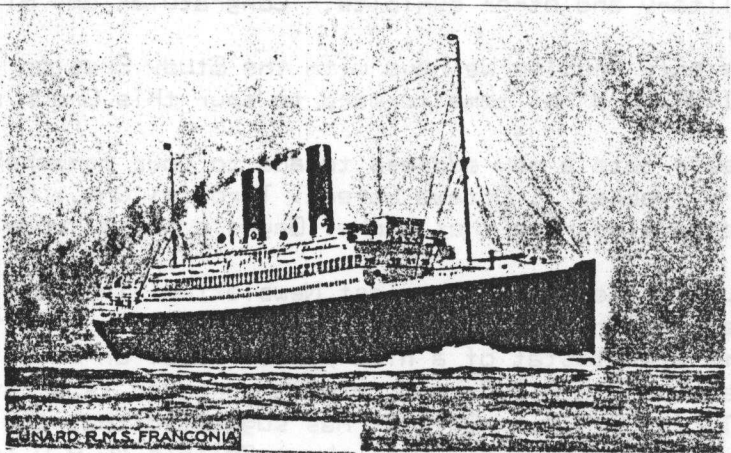
NOTE: In the three parts of this series we have already illustrated different SOUVENIR post cards naming the ships. That is all we have. Would readers who have different SOUVENIR cards send photocopies please.

S. S. TUNISIAN, ALLAN LINE.

TUNISIAN 10,576 tons, launched 1900 for Allan Line. Carried H.Q. staff (1st C.I.B.), 3rd Battalion (Toronto) 1st C.I.B. and #3 Field Ambulance for total 1,412. Cargo of 37,086 sacks of flour. Loaded by September 26 and off-loaded October 19.



FRANCONIA Completed in 1911 for Cunard. 18,150 tons. Carried 1st Contingent H.Q., Div. Arty., H.Q. Div. Signals Comp., 8th Battalion (90th Wpg. Rifles) (2nd. C.I.B.), Div Supply Col., Ammo Park, #2 General Hospital, Cdn. Nursing Sisters, Cdn. Pay Corps & Cdn. Postal Corps. Total 2,298. Ready October 1 and off-loaded October 15-16. Franconia torpedoed near Malta two years later with loss of 12 persons only.



CUNARD R.M.S. FRANCONIA

Souvenir List OF SHIPS

TRANSPORTING FIRST CANADIAN OVERSEAS EXPEDITIONARY FORCES TO GREAT BRITAIN.

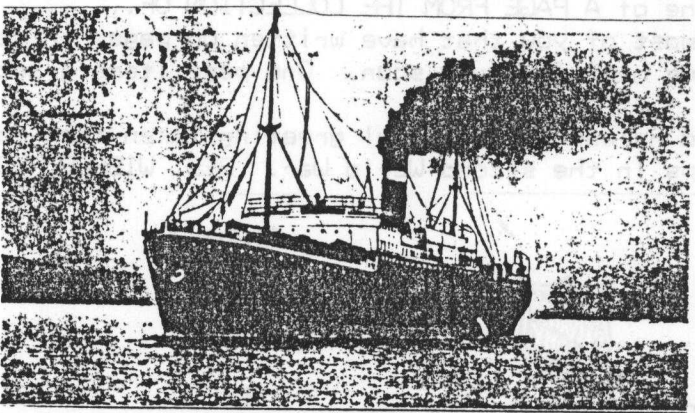
Sailing from Canada, October 1st 1914.

Diana	2nd CLASS CRUISERS Eclipse	Charybdis
Megantic	TRANSPORTS Caribbean	Arcadian
Ruthenia	Athenia	Scotian
Bermudian	Royal Edward	Zealand
Alania	Franconia	Corinthian
Ivernia	Canada	Virginian
Scandinavian	Monmouth	Andania
Sicilian	Manitou	Saxonia
Montezuma	Tyrolia	Grampian
Lapland	Tunisian	Lakonia
Cassandra	Laurentic	Montreal
Florizel		Royal George
	CRUISER Talbot	

Battleship Glory

CORINTHIAN

Launched 1900. 7,332 tons. Carried Contingent H.Q. Staff, Heavy battery and ammo column, Div. Signals Comp., Motor Machine Gun personnel for total 387. Cargo of small arms ammo, grain, cheese and lumber. Ready to sail September 30 and unloaded at Plymouth October 20.



ALLAN LINE ROYAL MAIL STEAMER "CORINTHIAN."

Total Number carried on all Ships comprising Men of all Ranks 33,000. And Ships Crews 8,000 Total number of Horses 7,600.

NEWS OF THE MONTH (OR THE EDITOR'S PAGE)

Since it is very near the Holiday Season, we thought it appropriate to start the Newsletter with Steve Luciuk's article that was prompted by his 1916 Christmas card. Although not really in the postal history category, am sure that you will appreciate it.

The Dearborn convention Study Group meeting was attended by some ten persons. Our thanks go to Bill Robinson, again, for chairing the session, and showing some of his material. By the way, Bill has been exhibiting "everywhere" this year and has won many medals for his military and other exhibits. Congratulations Bill!

The only problem we have with the Study Session is that a new, or old EDITOR, did not come forward to spur this Group on.....

Please note a new address to add to your membership list:

John Tyacke 1 Ottawa Street, Toronto, Ont., M4T 2B5

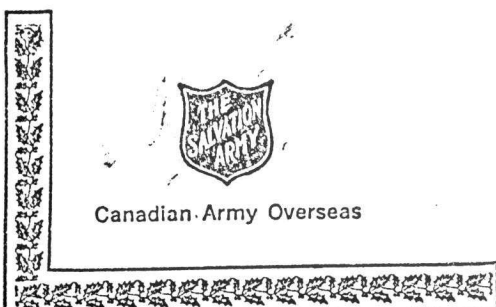
Please also note that Michel Gagne's postal code should read J4B 4T9.

You will recall in the last Newsletter, in the C.C.A.C. article, there was mentioned an abbreviation - C.B.D. In a letter from Colin Pomfret came a photostat of a nice parcel label on which there is a m/s note "No Trace - 3 G.B.D.", and on another cover is a return address "C.A.S.C. M.T. / C.G.B.D." Bill R. has suggested that the C.B.D. could be Canadian Base Depot. What about Colin's "G.B.D.'s" above. While both 'G's' look like 'G's'-- could they be 'C's'? Help requested!!

Several new books are in the works and two noted are I AM WELL on the Field Service Postcards and, ON MY HONOUR which deals with the Green, or Honour envelopes. The books cover both wars and are by Peter Burrows. Although essentially British these items were used by Canadians and other Commonwealth countries. For a distinctive Canadian card not unsimilar to the British types see Item 350 in N.L. 42.

You will have noticed the article on the Canadian Segregation Camps by now. The cover may not come out too well as it is of a dark manila color. We would like more pieces like this that would fit under the byline of A PAGE FROM THE COLLECTION OF..... . This should not be hard for most of you that have written up pages in your collections. Please let us hear from you soon. One page items greatly appreciated.

Noted hereon are Seasonal greetings taken from envelopes used by the troops in the second World War. BEST WISHES FROM THE EDITOR TOO!



"SEASON'S GREETINGS"

CANADIAN  LEGION

WAR SERVICES

CANADIAN CAMP POST OFFICES IN ENGLAND 1914-18

CANADIAN SEGREGATION CAMPS

This cover of 17 September 1918 likely came from a soldier in the Canadian Segregation Camp at Frensham Pond which was near enough to Farnham, south of Aldershot, to receive the civil postmark of Farnham of that date.

The postmark of 17 September 1918 reads as follows:

CAMP POST OFFICE / CANADIAN SEGREGATION CAMP

The following information is taken from Macphail's HISTORY OF THE CANADIAN FORCES, 1914-19, MEDICAL SERVICES, Published in 1925 by the Minister of National Defence, Ottawa, pages 211, 271-74.

"Segregation Camps were established in England where troops arriving from Canada were assembled for a period of quarantine, instead of being sent direct to their regimental depots. Their training was continued, and they were not a menace to the trained troops by reason of infectious diseases imported from civil life. The limitation of those diseases peculiar to childhood is a present relief to the child, a hardship to him when he becomes a soldier, a menace to the army."

"Of the infectious diseases, influenza was the most prevalent and the most fatal."

On board the troop transports, both going to England and return, epidemics of influenza were common and presented peculiar difficulties. In these conditions a great many were sick, and many deaths occurred at sea.

On arrival in England in the later years of the war the soldiers had to spend 28 days in a segregation camp, and at the same time continuing their training. This method practically eliminated epidemics in the training camps.

Other infectious diseases affecting the troops, besides influenza, were mumps, pneumonia, tuberculosis, measles, scarlet fever, rheumatic fever, German measles, diphtheria, malaria, chicken pox, etc., etc.

"The first segregation camp was opened at Otterpool in September 1916; the plan was enlarged at Frensham Pond, between Witley and Bramshott, in the spring of 1918. The great influx of troops from Canada in that year demanded the opening of a second camp at Bourley Wood. These camps being tented were not suitable for winter occupation, and in the autumn they were closed after a large hatted camp had been secured at Rhyl. This was also a more suitable spot, being close to Liverpool, where the great majority of Canadian troops were disembarked. The same reason marked the camp for use in the future when the cessation of hostilities would demand concentration (assembly, would be a better word in today's usage!) camps near the principal port of embarkation for home."

"There were already in England 13 Command depots allotted to the various commands with accomodation for 45,577 men, when the Canadian service resolved to conform. Accordingly, Canadian command depots were organized beginning at Hastings, February 27, 1917: No. 1 for troops in the Shorncliffe area; No. 2 in Bramshott; and No. 3 for troops in other parts of England. Each depot had an establishment for 5,000 soldiers, and was in command of a combatant officer with medical officers attached as required. Men discharged from convalescent hospitals who required "hardening" before joining their units, passed through these command depots. They received physical training, instruction in musketry, bombing, and bayonet fighting. On discharge from the depots, they were sent to the reserve units of their various regiments and corps; thence through the base depot and corps reinforcement camp to rejoin their units in the line."

"A command depot was officially defined as a convalescent camp equipped with facilities for electrical and massage treatment under medical direction, but mainly organized and controlled under purely military officers, with the object of hardening men by suitable exercises and graduated drill for return to active service at the front in a period of about six months."

