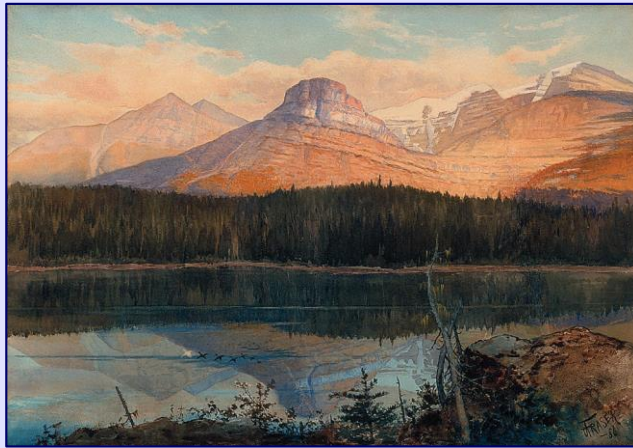


Northern Voices: Confederation

*Lake in the
Rockies
Viewed from
Canadian
Pacific
Railroad
John Arthur
Fraser
1886*

This session will take us from Confederation through to World War I. This was the time that Canada came of age.

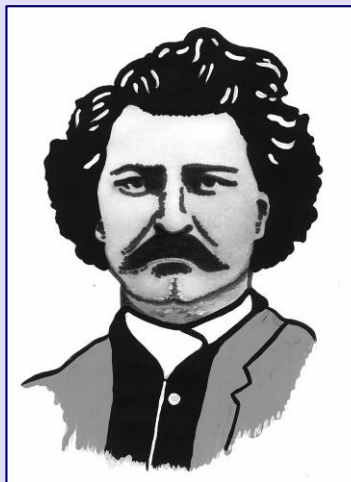
The most significant development was Canada's expansion to the Pacific Coast. This was begun by Canada's purchase of the territory that had previously been administered by the Hudson's Bay Company, and cemented by the building of the Canada Pacific Railroad.

During this expansion the rights of the indigenous and Métis peoples were severely curtailed.

Certain events stood out in the history of this time: the rebellions of Louis Riel, the transcontinental railroad, the Klondike Gold Rush, the sinking of the Titanic and the Great War. In terms of poetry this period gave birth to the Confederation Poets, to Robert Service, and to the poets of World War I.

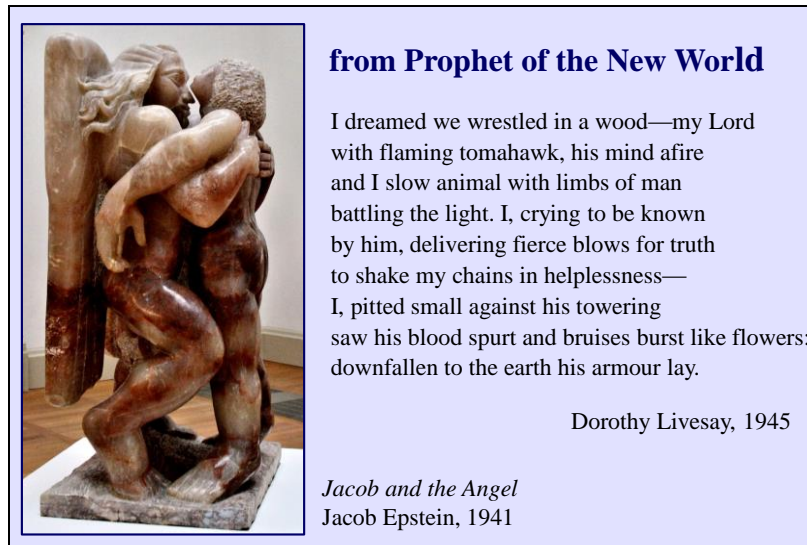
Louis Riel (1844-1885)

Louis Riel's father was a Métis and his mother was from one of the original white families in the Red River Settlement. Originally destined for the priesthood, Riel became a politician and led the Métis and francophone settlers in the Red River Rebellion of 1869-70. The provisional government he helped to set up negotiated Manitoba's entry into confederation. Riel went into exile, despite being elected to the Canadian government. He returned to Saskatchewan to lead the Northwest Rebellion in 1884-5.



The first problems facing the new government of Canada involved its expansion to the west. The prairies – under the jurisdiction of the Hudson's Bay Company – had been settled by both

French- and English-speaking people. In 1969, the Canadian government purchased Rupert's Land – originally the drainage region of Hudson's Bay, named after Prince Rupert of the Rhine one of the first governors of the Hudson's Bay Company, but in 1821 extended to the Pacific Coast. When the new government set about surveying the new land, the Métis and French-speaking settlers were concerned they would be evicted from their lands. They formed a provisional government which negotiated with the Canadian government. During this period, the provisional government executed the pro-Canadian Thomas Scott for treason. This would later return to haunt Riel. Negotiations ended in the formation of the province of Manitoba in 1870. British Columbia joined in 1871, Saskatchewan and Alberta in 1905.



This is from Dorothy Livesay's radio play about Louis Riel. The dream is a variation on the Biblical story of Jacob and the Angel from Genesis 32; 24-30

And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.
And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.
And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.
And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob.
And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.
And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there.
And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.

Perhaps the Angel that Riel wrestles is Canada.

In the beginning of Riel's dream Riel is dominant, but as the dream continues, the outcome reverses:

Then cried out in my pity: "Lord, forgive."
And as I stooped, he was a-sudden over me
his feathers fire, his body like a blade
and I it was who bruised and streaming lay
and woke up knocking at my breast and bone...
a lonely man, but truth unfettering me!
Here on this earth to fight for freedom's light,
here in this flowered land to end the hate.

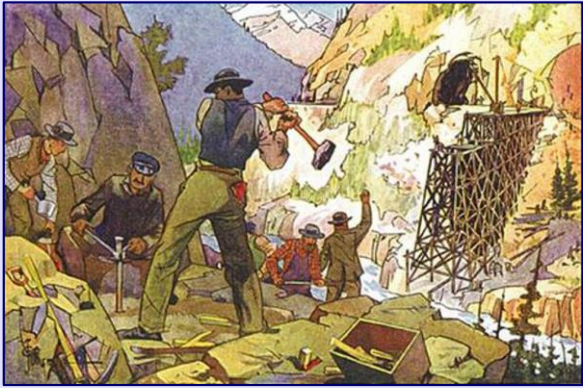


The Northwest Rebellion was suppressed, Riel was arrested and indicted for high treason. The trial was held in Regina with a jury composed of six English-speaking Protestant men. Riel refused to allow a plea of insanity: "Life, without the dignity of an intelligent being, is not worth having." The jury found him guilty. Requests for an appeal were denied. The Prime Minister John A. MacDonald is quoted as saying, "He shall die though every dog in Quebec bark in his favour." Riel was hanged on the 16 November, 1885.

Several people have noted that the feelings against Riel were as much based on the fact that he had ordered the execution of Thomas Scott as on the actual Northwest Rebellion.

Riel had thought that the government would not be able to defeat a rebellion so far away from its Eastern cities. However, he failed to recognize the effect of the new railway, which allowed troops to be rapidly dispatched to quell the rebellion.

**Canadian
Railroad
Trilogy**

An illustration showing several men in work clothes and hats working on a railroad track. One man in the foreground is using a hammer on a spike. In the background, there are steep, rocky mountains and a tall wooden structure, possibly a bridge or a tower. The scene is set in a rugged, mountainous landscape.

We are the navvies who work upon the railway
Swingin' our hammers in the bright blazin' sun
Layin' down track and buildin' the bridges
Bendin' our old backs 'til the railroad is done

E. J. Dinsmore
1920s?

One of the great epic stories of the new Dominion of Canada was the building of the Canadian Pacific Railroad. The people of British Columbia had demanded this as a condition for entering into the Dominion of Canada (as opposed to joining the United States) in 1871. Canada promised to build the railroad within 10 years. The first spike was driven in 1881 in Bonfield, Ontario (near North Bay), and the last spike in 1885 in Vancouver.


E. J. Dinsmore was an American illustrator, about which little is known. I believe the illustration is from Maclean's magazine.

The song the Canadian Railroad Trilogy was written by Gordon Lightfoot (1938-) in 1967. It has three sections. In the first, it describes the country and the decision to build the railroad. The song builds up steam like a locomotive until

Open 'er heart let the life blood flow
Gotta get on our way 'cause we're movin' too slow
Get on our way 'cause we're movin' too slow.

Then there is a slow middle section about those who worked on the railroad. Then the locomotive resumes in triumph:

Oh the song of the future has been sung
All the battles have been won
O'er the mountain tops we stand
All the world at our command
We have opened up the soil
With our teardrops and our toil

	<p>Isabella Valancy Crawford (1846-1887)</p> <p>Born in Ireland Crawford came to Canada as a child. Her father practiced medicine in various parts of rural Southern Ontario. After the death of her father, Crawford moved to Toronto, where she tried to support herself, her mother and her sister by writing. Her most important poem is <i>Malcom's Katie</i> which tells a story of how two suitors vied for the love of Kate, the daughter of Malcom, a rich settler: Max, a true pioneer who worked to clear the land, and Alfred, who tried to exploit the work of others.</p>
<p>sketch by Isaac Bickerstaff</p>	

Crawford died in poverty and was buried in Peterborough. Her poetry was influenced by English Victorian verse, particularly by Tennyson. The characters of her epic poem *Malcom's Katie* is often considered as representing the different kinds of people who immigrated to Canada. As was common in those days, a woman was known by the name of her father or husband.

Readers have two completely different responses to *Malcom's Katie*. Northrop Frye thought that Crawford possessed a remarkably mythopoeic imagination and portrayed in her epic poem all the forces at play in the formation of Canada. Louis Dudek thought that the poem is a highly adorned but completely unrealistic story.

The imagery tends toward the excessive:

The Land had put his ruddy gauntlet on,
Of harvest gold, to dash in Famine's face.
And like a vintage wain, deep dy'd with juice,
The great moon falter'd up the ripe, blue sky,
Drawn by silver stars — like oxen white
And horn'd with rays of light. Down the rich land
Malcolm's small valleys, fill'd with grain, lip-high,
Lay round a lonely hill that fac'd the moon,
And caught the wine-kiss of its ruddy light.

The full text is available at

<http://www.canadianpoetry.ca/confederation/Crawford/index.htm>



Some of the feeling for the idyllic land of Malcom's Katie can be found in the paintings of Homer Watson (1855-1936). He was born in Doon, near Kitchener, and most of his paintings portray the surrounding countryside. The settlers in that area were established farmers and the land was rich and peaceful.

Homer Watson, *On the Grand River at Doon*, 1880

William Wilfred Campbell (1858-1918)

Born in Berlin, Ontario (now Kitchener), he studied to be an Anglican minister, but left the ministry in 1891 to become a civil servant in Ottawa. He was the oldest of a group (Campbell, Carman, Lampman, Roberts and Scott) that later became later known as the Confederation Poets. These tried to give voice to a 'nationalism in search of a nation' (Malcom Ross). They were mainly landscape poets, trying to find some insight into the human spirit in their new land. They adapted the forms of earlier English poets to their new-world subjects.



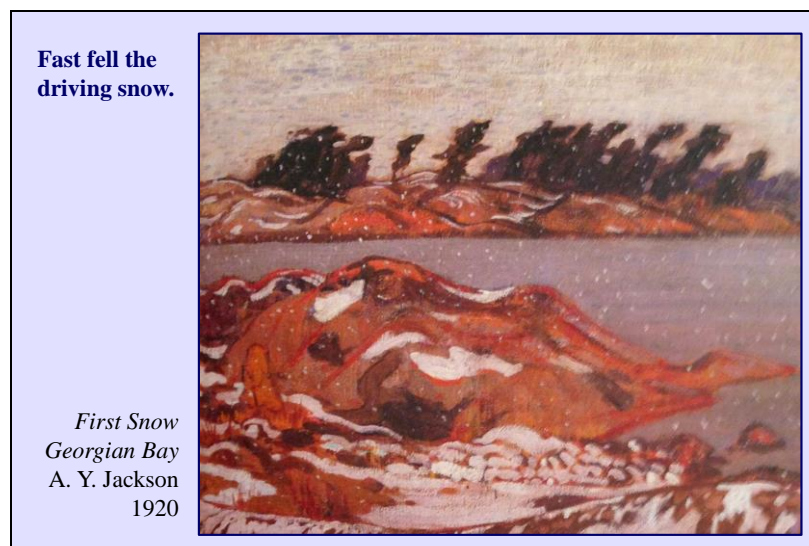
The oldest of the Confederation Poets, Campbell described the beauty and the power of the Canadian landscape.



Michael Hermiston Video presentation of *Indian Summer* is by Michael Hermiston

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XrPe5IYtIJs>

Background music is J S Bach Prelude in C major from the Well Tempered Klavier (BWV 846).



Probably nowhere else in the world has such distinct seasons as does Canada.
The Jackson painting illustrates how Canadian autumn changes into winter with the first snow.

For weeks and weeks the autumn world stood still,
Clothed in the shadow of a smoky haze;
The fields were dead, the wind had lost its will,
And all the lands were hushed by wood and hill,
In those grey, withered days.

...

That night I felt the winter in my veins,
A joyous tremor of the icy glow;
And woke to hear the north's wild vibrant strains,
While far and wide, by withered woods and plains,
Fast fell the driving snow.




Ice sheets piled up by the waves against the shore of Lake Superior. Photograph by Tony Rogers, 2008. Near the shore the ice sheets pile up while further out in the lake the waves and surf still pound.

This illustrates the poem *The Winter Lakes* by W. W. Campbell

Lonely hidden bays, moon-lit, ice-rimmed, winding,
 Fringed by forests and crags, haunted by shadowy shores;
Hushed from the outward strife, where the mighty surf is grinding
 Death and hate on the rocks, as sandward and landward it roars.

Campbell does not sugar-coat the fact. Winter is hard!




Bliss Carman (1861-1929)

Born in Fredericton, New Brunswick, to a United Empire Loyalist family, he studied at Harvard, where he was instructed by George Santayana in esthetics and by Francis Child, an expert in the ballad form. He became a writer and shared his time between Canada and the United States. His poetry derives its forms and subjects from the English Romantics and the American Transcendentalists. His most famous poem is *Low Tide on the Grand Pré*. Watching the ebbing tide in the Bay of Fundy, he addresses an absent companion, remembering their shared experiences of wonder.

The Transcendentalists were a group of American writers, centered around Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. They rejected the values of modern industrial society and sought to regain a true sense of man and his relation to the universe through solitary communion with nature. Though they did not fully acknowledge their debt, they were returning to the values of their country's indigenous peoples. Nevertheless they did protest against slavery and against the actions of their government against the native peoples.

Grand Pré Historic Site



The Grand Pré region of Nova Scotia was settled by the French in the late 17th century. They called their colony Acadia after the Greek Arcadia (idyllic place). During the French and Indian War the British (1754-63) expelled the Acadians, forcibly deporting them to France or the Thirteen Colonies. Many escaped and went to Louisiana, becoming Cajuns. Longfellow's 1847 poem *Evangeline* tells of this "Great Upheaval."

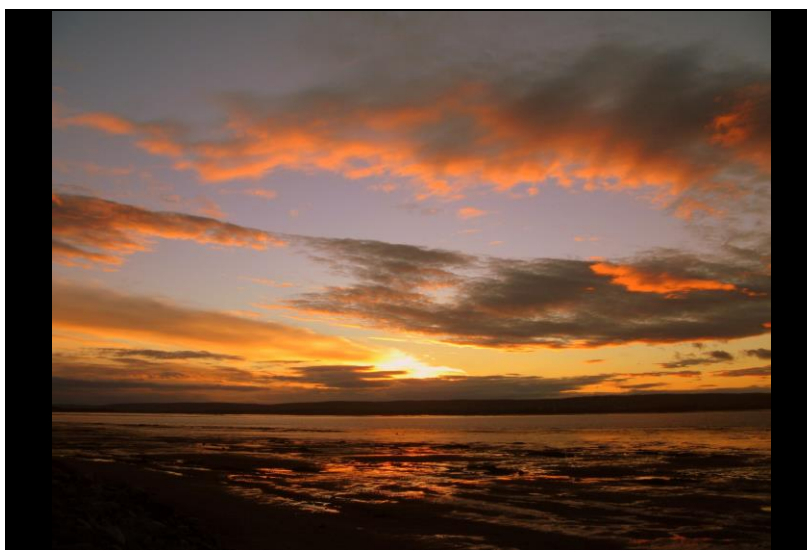
Grand Pré means "large meadow." This is the area of Nova Scotia first settled by the French. On the left is the Memorial Church (built in 1922). In the distance is Cape Blomidon which juts out into the Bay of Fundy.

Although the song *Un Canadien errant* was written about the expulsion of French Canadians from Quebec after the Patriote wars in 1837, it has often been used to refer to the Acadian expulsion – often with the title changed to *Un Acadien errant*.



Photograph of the view from near Wolfville in Grand Pré country is by Brett Lockwood, 2012. In the foreground are the tide flats; in the distance is Blomidon peak which juts out into the Minas Basin of the Bay of Fundy

<https://ocanadablog.com/2012/11/20/visit-to-wolfville-nova-scotia-and-surrounding-area/>



Photograph of Evangeline Beach at sunset.

The sun goes down, and over all
These barren reaches by the tide
Such unelusive glories fall,
I almost dream they yet will bide
Until the coming of the tide.

...

The night has fallen, and the tide . . .
Now and again comes drifting home,
Across these aching barrens wide,
A sigh like driven wind or foam:
In grief the flood is bursting home.

The poem is similar in many ways to Wordsworth's "Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey" (1798). In both poem's the author speaks to someone who is not there but who shared an earlier experience of the place. In Wordsworth's poem he was speaking to his sister; no one is sure to whom Carman was speaking (perhaps a quondam lover?). Both poems remark on the inevitable flow of time and the intimations of mortality. Both find comfort in the experience of natural beauty which can sometimes make time appear to stop:

So all desire and all regret,
And fear and memory, were naught;
The keen delight our hands had caught;
Morrow and yesterday were naught.

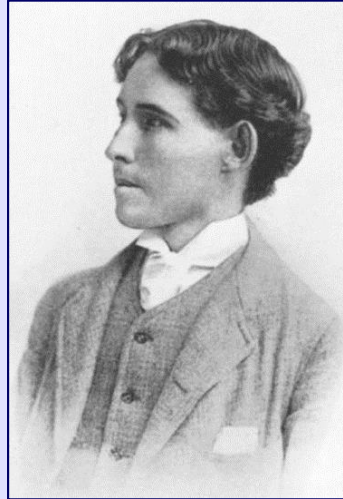
Carman does not quite reach the same levels as Wordsworth

For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.

But his poem is nonetheless significant, bringing a true sense of the sublime to the New World.

**Archibald Lampman
(1861-1899)**

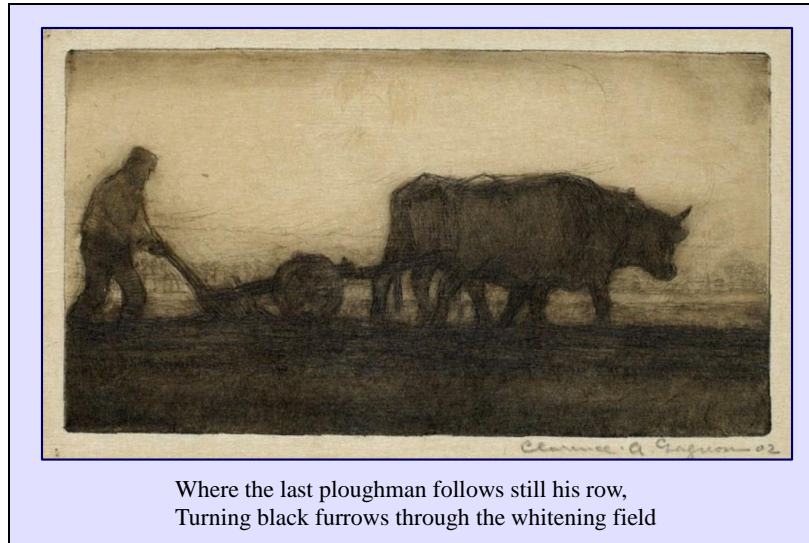
Born in Morpeth, near Chatham, Ontario, he studied at Trinity College in Toronto. A childhood bout of rheumatic fever left him with a life-long weak heart. He taught briefly, and then worked as a clerk in the Post Office Department in Ottawa. Much influenced by William Wordsworth and by Matthew Arnold, he sought for the sublime in the landscapes of Canada. He is often considered the “Canadian Keats.”



This clip is taken from the National Film Board's 1961 movie *Morning on the Lièvre*. The movie was directed by David Bairstow and the recitation of Lampman's poems was by George Whalley.
https://www.nfb.ca/film/morning_on_the_lievre/

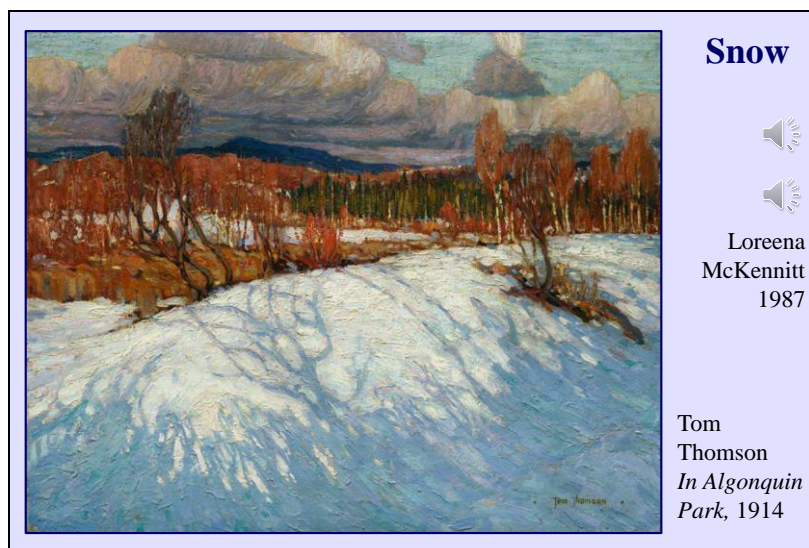
Rivière du Lièvre (river of the hare) is a river that flows south from the highlands of the Canadian Shield ending in the Ottawa River just east of the city of Ottawa.

In the clip we hear the poems
A Dawn on the Lièvre
After Mist
Morning on the Lièvre



In the poem *In November*, Lampman watches the evening snow as a farmer slowly ploughs his field.

It is illustrated by the 1902 Etching *Oxen Ploughing* by Clarence Gagnon (1881-1942), which gives the same kind of evening feeling as the Lampman poem. Gagnon was a Quebec artist. He is famous for his paintings of the Quebec landscape and for his illustrations to the 1913 book *Maria Chapdelaine* by Laurence Hémon. He was also highly skilled at etching.



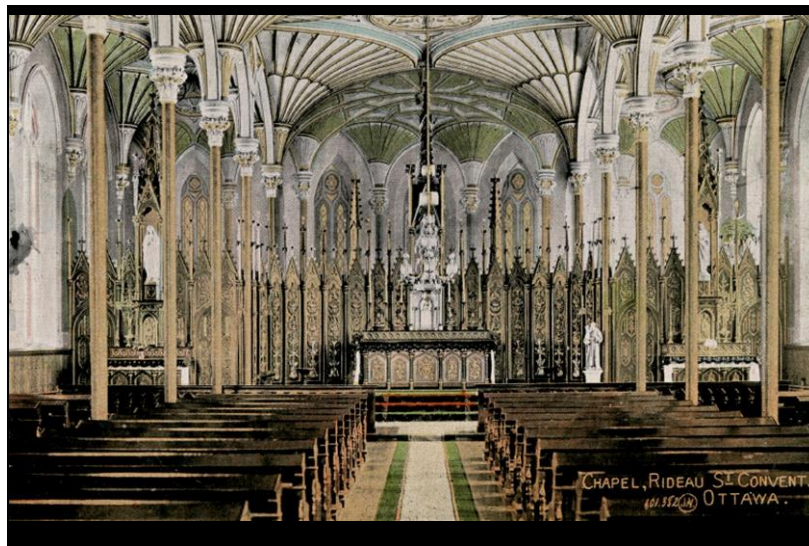
Lampman's poem *Snow* has been set to music by Loreena McKennitt.

White are the far-off plains, and white
The fading forests grow;
The wind dies out along the height,
And denser still the snow,

A gathering weight on roof and tree,
Falls down scarce audibly.

...

The evening deepens, and the gray
Folds closer earth and sky;
The world seems shrouded far away;
Its noises sleep, and I,
As secret as yon buried stream,
Plod dumbly on, and dream.

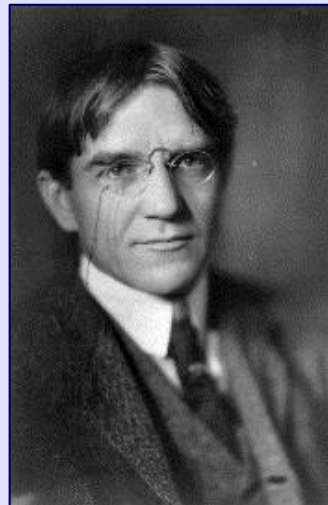


Conflict between Roman Catholic and Protestant Christianity lasted throughout the early history of Canada. Lampman's poem *To an Ultra Protestant* points to the differences between the two world views and finds them both wanting.

Why rage and fret thee; only let them be:
The monkish rod, the sacerdotal pall,
Council and convent, Pope and Cardinal,
The black priest and his holy wizardry.
Nay dread them not, for thought and liberty
Spread ever faster than the foe can smite,
And these shall vanish as the starless night
Before a morning mightier than the sea.
But what of thee and thine? That battle cry?
Those forms and dogmas that thou rear'st so high?
Those blasts of doctrine and those vials of wrath?
Thy hell for most and heaven for the few?

That narrow, joyless and ungenerous path?
What then of these? Ah, they shall vanish too!

The illustration shows a postcard of the Rideau Street Chapel of the Convent of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Ottawa (1888, Architect Georges Bouillon) now reconstructed in the National Gallery of Canada. Its gentle excess contrasts with the harsh austerity of protestant churches.

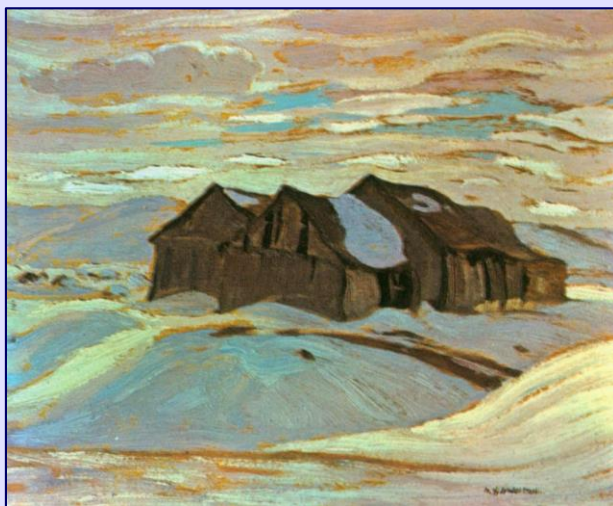


Charles G. D. Roberts
(1860-1943)

Born in New Brunswick, the first cousin of Bliss Carman, he was educated at the University of New Brunswick. He worked as a teacher, college professor, soldier, magazine editor and man of letters. He was quite prolific, writing several novels and many books of short stories as well as twelve volumes of poems. His nature sonnets look at “the vital relationships between external nature and the ‘deep heart of man.’”

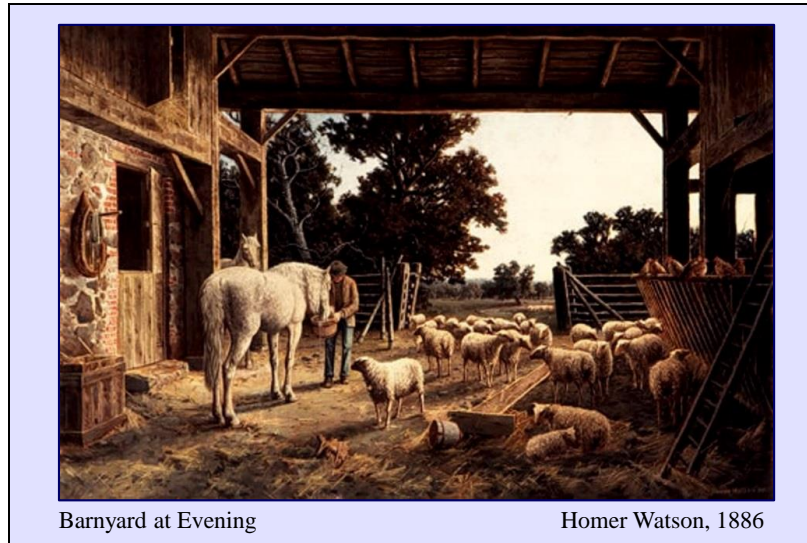
Photograph 1904

Roberts became one of the first Canadians to make his living by writing. His long literary career made him in the eyes of some the “Father of Canadian Poetry.”



A. Y. Jackson
Barns, 1926

Barns are an archetypal part of the Canadian landscape. They store food for the future, provide shelter against the storm, and give a sense of community.



Barnyard at Evening

Homer Watson, 1886

In an Old Barn

Tons upon tons the brown-green fragrant hay
 O'erbrims the mows beyond the time-warped eaves,
 Up to the rafters where the spider weaves,
 Though few flies wander his secluded way.
 Through a high chink one lonely golden ray,
 Wherein the dust is dancing, slants unstirred.
 In the dry hush some rustlings light are heard,
 Of winter-hidden mice at furtive play.

William Wilfred Campbell satirized the way in which his colleagues (particularly Roberts) produced so many meaningless sonnets on the beauties of the natural world and the pleasant joys of country life. This is taken from his article in the *Toronto Globe* in the column *At the Mermaid Inn*, which had been a weekly part of newspaper (The column ceased after this particular article!)

We notice that the term, "quality" is used to-day in connection with our current minor verse. And, while I would object to it as an unfair and misleading expression as applied to true poetry, yet it comes in very handy as a sort of apology for the kind of pseudo-poetry that is marking these times, and which, in the absence of real poetic imagination and creative ability, has taken to pensive musings and landscape painting in words. The real critic when he meets this article, which is as easy for some men to make as it is to whittle a stick, he passes it over with the slight mention it merits. But there is another class of critic, who, bearing the same relation to true criticism that this kind of verse-maker does to poetry, and stumbling up against a sort of poetical miracle of this kind, he is dumbfounded. Of course, it is a sonnet and is possibly called—

AT EVEN.

I sit me moanless in the sombre fields,
 The cows come with large udders down the dusk,
 One cudless, the other chewing of a husk,
 Her eye askance, for that athwart her heels,
 Flee-haunted and rib-cavernous, there steals

The yelping farmer-dog. An old hen sits
And blinks her eyes. (Now I must rack my wits
To find a rhyme, while all this landscape reels.)
Yes! I forgot the sky. The stars are out,
There being no clouds; and then the pensive maid!
Of course she comes with tin-pail up the lane.
Mosquitoes hum and June bugs are about.
(That line hath "quality" of loftiest grade.)
And I have eased my soul of its sweet pain.

—John Pensive Bangs, in *The Great Too-Too Magazine* for July.

The critic stumbles, I repeat, on this remarkable effusion, and this is what he remarks:
"This is verse of a high poetic quality. It is Millet-like in its terse realism. Mr. Bangs is not one of your common flabgasters in rhyme. He is a monk in literature, and wears the hair-shirt of realism. Mark his delicate touches, his firm hand. No laying on with a white-wash brush for him. Oh! It is rare; it is restful.

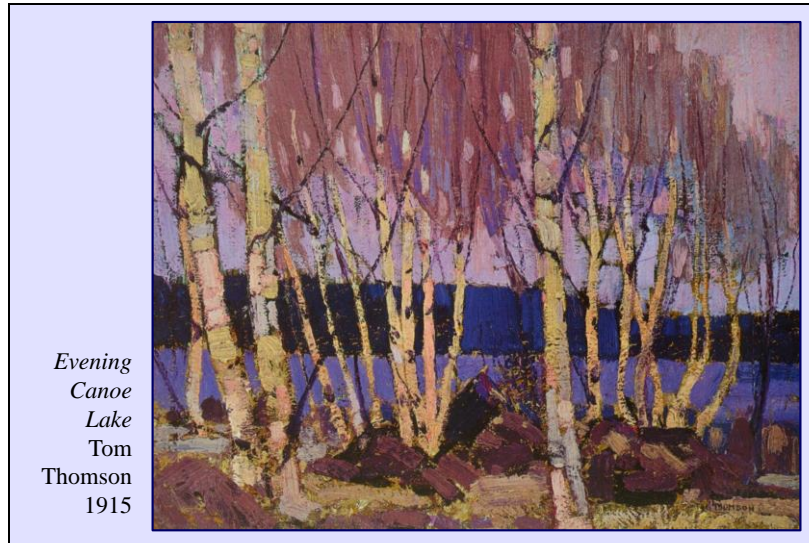
http://www.canadianpoetry.ca/confederation/mermaid_inn/july_1_1893.htm

Frederick George Scott (1861-1944)

Born in Montreal, Scott studied theology at King's College in London, and became an Anglican priest in Quebec City. During World War I he enlisted and served as a chaplain in the Canadian Army. One of his sons was killed in the war. Another son was the poet Frances R. Scott (1899-1985).



F. G. Scott was known as the poet of the Laurentians. One might fault him for his unswerving love of the British Empire, but one cannot doubt his bravery to enlist at the age of 53.



F. G. Scott's poem on the *Unnamed Lake* highlights the joy of being out alone in nature. This is the essence of the later paintings of Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven.

No echoes of the world afar
Disturb it night or day,
But sun and shadow, moon and star,
Pass and repass for aye.

'Twas in the grey of early dawn,
When first the lake we spied,
And fragments of a cloud were drawn
Half down the mountain side.

Along the shore a heron flew,
And from a speck on high,
That hovered in the deepening blue,
We heard the fish-hawk's cry.

Among the cloud-capt solitudes,
No sound the silence broke,
Save when, in whispers down the woods,
The guardian mountains spoke.

Through tangled brush and dewy brake,
Returning whence we came,
We passed in silence, and the lake
We left without a name.

The poet and his companions did not name the lake – as though it was a place that was too beautiful to name.

An unavoidable fact is that the lake most certainly had a name – given to it by the indigenous people. However, these people were almost completely invisible in these poems.

One of the Confederation poets – Duncan Campbell Scott (1862-1947) – did write about the indigenous people. He became head of the Department of Indian Affairs. We shall consider his work in a later session.

**Robert W. Service
(1874-1958)**

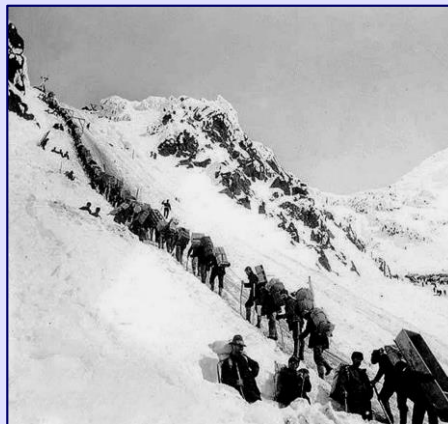


Born in Lancashire, he emigrated to North America in 1894. After traveling around, he obtained a job with the Bank of Commerce in British Columbia, who posted him to the Yukon in 1904. He published *Songs of a Sourdough* (also known as *The Spell of the Yukon*) in 1907. This book contained his most famous ballads: *The Shooting of Dan McGrew* and *The Cremation Sam McGee*. Though he later professed to loathe these poems, they made him rich and famous. He served in World War I as a Red Cross driver. After the war he lived mainly in France and wrote novels rather than poetry.

Some people consider the poetry of Robert Service as inferior doggerel telling trivial stories. I find his verse rhythmic and exciting. I am happy to surrender myself to the melodrama. Service is very similar to Kipling in his control of sound and story. Kipling was also criticized, but even T. S. Eliot recognized his poetic genius. The kind of poetry written by Kipling and Service developed into country-western songs, cowboy poetry, and even rap.

**Klondike Gold
Rush (1896-1905)**

Spurred by reports of gold some 100,000 men from various parts of North America traveled to the Yukon Territory. The journey through the mountain passes was arduous, taking up to two years. Less than half those who set out made it to Dawson City, and most arrived to find that every claim had already been staked. The city itself was a centre for banking, drinking and prostitution.



Chilkoot Pass, 1898

The Gold Rush in the Klondike involved many desperate men. Yet for most of them the effort and the danger came to naught.

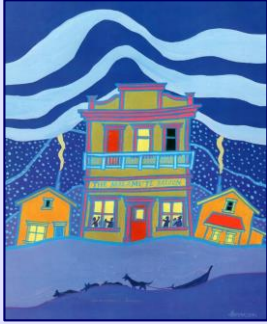

The main way to the Yukon was the Chilkoot trail which went from Dyea on the coast up about 1000 meters over a mountain pass into Canada. Each prospector had to take with him about 1000 kg of supplies – food and clothing to last a year as well as mining equipment. Without these supplies they could be turned back from the Canadian border. The photograph shows the final ascent to the pass. Niches were cut into the snow on the side of the trail to allow the climbers to rest. Getting supplies to the top required multiple climbs.

A good sense of this trek is available in the novel *The Man from the Creeks* (1998) by the Canadian poet and novelist Robert Kroetsch. This imagines a backstory for the events in the poem *The Shooting of Dan McGrew*.

The Shooting of Dan McGrew

Hank Snow, 1968

A bunch of the boys were whooping it up in the Malamute saloon;
 The kid that handles the music-box was hitting a jag-time tune;
 Back of the bar, in a solo game, sat Dangerous Dan McGrew,
 And watching his luck was his light-o'-love, the lady that's known as Lou.

Illustrations by Ted Harrison, 1988. Harrison was born in England in 1926 and emigrated to Canada in the 1950s. He lived in the Yukon from 1968 to 1993.

The form of *The Shooting of Dan McGrew* appears unusual on first look. The long lines seem unprecedented. However, they basically represent the age-old ballad form. Ballads were written with four-line stanzas. The lines alternated between tetrameter and trimeter (four and three stresses). The rhythm was mainly iambic but could be irregular. Anapests (o o /) are common – they give the rhythm a lilt. The second and fourth lines rhymed. All that service has done is join the second line to the first and the fourth line to the third. The first two lines could thus be represented in ballad form:

A bunch of the boys were whooping it up	o / o o / o / o o /
In the Malamute saloon;	o o / o / o /
The kid that handles the music-box	o / o / o o / o /
Was hitting a jag-time tune;	o / o o / o /

Music for a Shooting

So the stranger stumbles across the room, and flops down there like a fool.
In a buckskin shirt that was glazed with dirt he sat, and I saw him sway;
Then he clutched the keys with his talon hands - my God! but that man
could play.



And hunger not of the belly kind, that's banished with bacon and beans,
But the gnawing hunger of lonely men for a home and all that it means;



Then on a sudden the music changed, so soft that you scarce could hear;
But you felt that your life had been looted clean of all that it once held dear;



The music almost died away. . . then it burst like a pent-up flood;
And it seemed to say, "Repay, repay", and my eyes were blind with blood.



Scherzo 1 B minor, Frederic Chopin, 1832

One of the questions raised by Service's poem is the nature of the music played by the man from the creeks.

It could have been just some improvisation. But perhaps it was some wildly romantic virtuoso piece like Chopin's first scherzo.



And the stranger turned, and his eyes they burned in a most peculiar way;
In a buckskin shirt that was glazed with dirt he sat, and I saw him sway;
Then his lips went in in a kind of grin, and he spoke, and his voice was calm,
And "Boys," says he, "you don't know me, and none of you care a damn;
But I want to state, and my words are straight, and I'll bet my poke they're true,
That one of you is a hound of hell. . . and that one is Dan McGrew."

recited by Robert Service in 1958



This recitation is by Robert Service at the age of 84.

The full poem (and also The Cremation of Sam McGee) are available at:

<https://www.donnaward.net/robert-service-reads-the-cremation-of-sam-mcgee-the-shooting-of-dan-mcgrew/4/1272/resources.php>



*The Northern Lights have seen queer sights,
But the queerest they ever did see
Was that night on the marge of Lake Lebarge
I cremated Sam McGee.*

recited by Robert Service



Lake Laberge, January, 2018, Mariko Ishikawa



Now Sam McGee was from
Tennessee, where the cotton
blooms and blows.
Why he left his home in the
South to roam 'round the
Pole, God only knows.
He was always cold, but the land
of gold seemed to hold
him like a spell;
Though he'd often say in his
homely way that "he'd
sooner live in hell."

Johnny Cash



Some planks I tore from the
cabin floor, and I lit the
boiler fire;
Some coal I found that was
lying around, and I heaped
the fuel higher;
The flames just soared, and
the furnace roared—
such a blaze you seldom see;
And I burrowed a hole in the
glowing coal, and I stuffed
in Sam McGee.



Robert Service





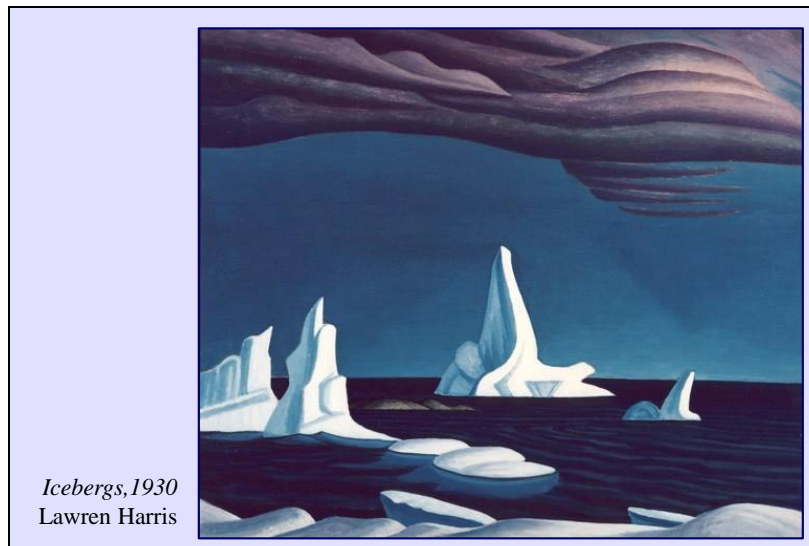
The North is an essential part of Canada's identity. We have followed the stories of the Yukon. The next story deals with the icebergs that calve from the glaciers in Greenland and Northern Canada and float down into the North Atlantic.



Print by Willy Stöwer 1912

In the early hours of April 15, 1912, the largest ship afloat struck an iceberg and sank in the North Atlantic Ocean about 700 nautical miles east of Halifax. Of the 2200 passengers and crew 1500 died.

The Titanic was assumed unsinkable. The calamity pointed to human hubris, and served as a premonition of greater catastrophes to come.



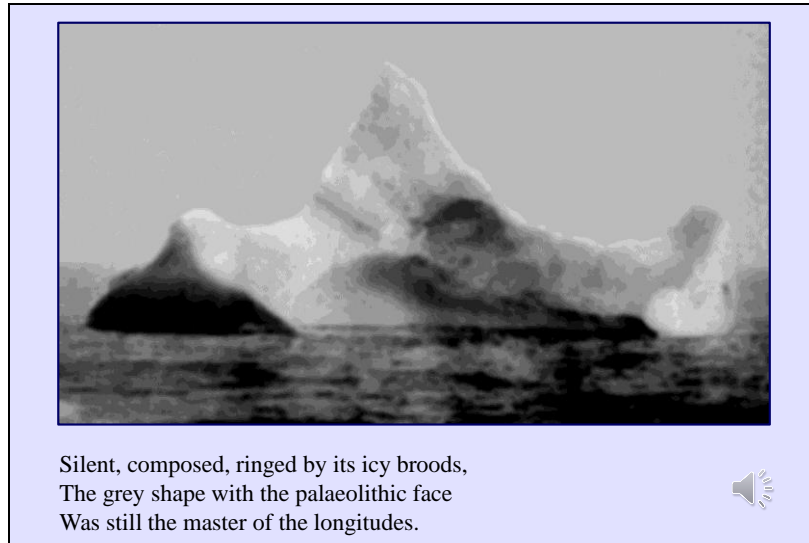
In 1935 E. J. Pratt wrote a long poem about the sinking of the Titanic. He described the iceberg:

Calved from a glacier near Godhaven coast,
It left the fiord for the sea—a host
Of white flotillas gathering in its wake,
And joined by fragments from a Behring floe,
Had circumnavigated it to make
It centre of an archipelago.
Its lateral motion on the Davis Strait
Was casual and indeterminate,
And each advance to southward was as blind
As each recession to the north.

Godhavn is on the west coast of Greenland on Baffin Bay.

I am not sure what Pratt means by the Behring floe. The Bering sea is in the western arctic. He could just mean the arctic sea ice.

The Davis Strait is between Greenland and Baffin Island, separating Baffin Bay to the north and the Labrador Sea to the south.



A photograph of what was likely the iceberg that sank the *Titanic*. This was taken the morning after the sinking by the chief steward of the liner *Prinz Adalbert* a few kilometers south of where the *Titanic* sank. He noted some red paint smeared along the base of the iceberg.



Jean-Paul Riopelle (1923-2202) painted a series of huge iceberg pictures after a visit to Baffin Island.

**Alexis Helmer
(1892-1915)**

Son of a Brigadier-General and graduate of Canada's Royal Military College, Alexis was killed by a shell burst during the Second Battle of Ypres on May 2, 1915. What pieces of his body could be found were collected in burlap sacks and buried in makeshift graveyard, later destroyed.

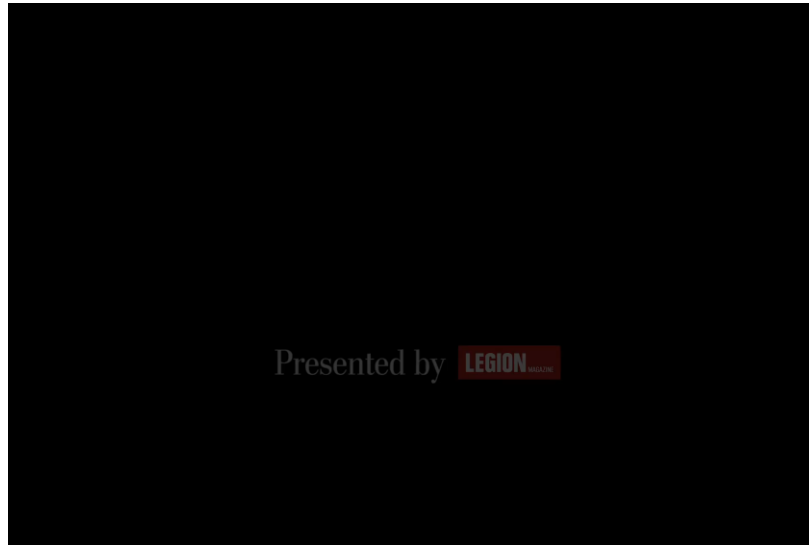


RMC photograph 1912

**John McCrae (1872-1918)**

In 1898, John McCrae graduated in medicine from the University of Toronto. He served in the Boer War, and later became a Professor of Pathology at McGill University. In World War I he enlisted and served with the Canadian Field Artillery. In 1915, he presided over the burial of Alexis Hamer, and wrote *In Flanders Fields* in memory of his lost colleague. In 1918 he fell ill, diagnosed pneumonia, and died of pneumococcal meningitis in a hospital behind the lines.

Some other facts about the life of John McCrae. He considered himself a soldier first and a physician second. John McCrae had studied with Sir William Osler at John Hopkins University. His older brother Thomas McCrae (1870-1935) also studied there, and went on to be a colleague of Osler, continuing to edit his textbook after Osler's death.



Leonard Cohen reciting In Flanders Fields as presented by the Legion magazine, 2016.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cKoJvHcMLfc>



Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red, 2014, Paul Cummins
photograph by Nick Ansell

McCrae's poppies have become the enduring symbol of the soldiers who died in the Great War. In 2014, to mark the centennial of the beginning of World War I, over 800,000 ceramic poppies were placed in the moat of the Tower of London – one for each of the British and Colonial servicemen who died in the war.



Beginning in 1915, the Germans sent Zeppelin airships to bomb London. The raids occurred at night. The illustration shows a Sopwith camel shooting down one of the Zeppelins.

W. W. Campbell wrote a poem *The Avenging Angel* commemorating such an attack

There is borne on my sight, down the spaces of night,
By the engines of evilment sped,
That wonderful, rare,
Vast ship of the air,
Beautiful, ominous, dread.

One instant she floats, most magic of boats,
Illusive, implacable, there;
Throned angel of ill,
On her crystal-built hill,
O'er a people's defenceless despair.

Then sudden, I rise, like a bolt through the skies,
To the very dim roofs of the world;
Till down in the grey,
I see my grim prey,
Like a pallid gold leaf, uncurled.

I hover and swing, until swiftly I spring,
And drop like a falling star;
And again and again,
My death-dealing rain,
Hurl to the deeps afar.

Then I hover and listen, till I see the far glisten

Of a flame-flash blanching the night;
And I know that my hate,
That has lain in wait,
Has won in the grim air-fight.

Then I curve and slant, while my engines pant,
And the wings of my great bird tame;
While the sinister Hun,
In his ill, undone,
Goes out in a blinding flame.



Billy Bishop Goes to War

This musical, written by John Gray in collaboration with the actor Eric Peterson, premiered in 1978. Peterson played 18 different characters to tell the story of Canada's ace fighter pilot during World War I. The play was revived in 1998 and then again in 2009. In the latest version, Peterson played Billy Bishop as an old man reminiscing about long ago rather than as a young pilot remembering what just happened.

However, even in the sky the war was not at all glorious. After the first year or so of war, it became more and more evident that it was terrible. This is illustrated in John Gray's 1978 play about Billy Bishop, Canada's ace fighter pilot. In this he recounts the exploits of Bishop and the British Ace Alfred Ball.

Bishop (1894 -1956) was credited with 72 victories and lived to tell about them. At the time of his death Alfred Ball (1896-1917) was Britain's leading fighter ace credited with 44 victories.



This is a clip from the 1999 film made of the play
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7P-CTp7MCbY>

In the stage directions: The following is performed like a Robert Service poem.

The Ballad of Alfred Ball

He was only eighteen
When he downed his first machine,
And any chance of living through this war was small;
He was nineteen when I met him,
And I never will forget him,
The pilot by the name of Albert Ball.

...

I can't believe
How young we were back then.
One thing's for sure,
We'll never be that young again.
We were daring young men,
With hearts of gold,
And most of us never got old.

Northern Voices: Confederation

*Canadian
Gunners in
the Mud,
Passchendaele*
Alfred Bastien
1917



The end of the war was much harder than its beginning. The mud was everywhere. The idea of glory was long since gone. Canada had indeed come of age. But it was not a cause for celebration.

Alfred Bastien (1873-1955) was a Belgian artist. He served as a war artist with the Canadian Army during the Great War.