

# Remembrance Day, 1944

Service of the Armed Forces  
and Citizens

VANCOUVER, CANADA



*"Those whose sacrifices this Cenotaph commemorates were among the men who, at call of King and Country, left all that was dear, endured hardship, faced danger, and finally passed out of the sight of men by the path of duty, giving their own lives that others might live in freedom. Let those who come after see to it that their names be not forgotten".*

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SERVICE OF THE ARMED FORCES AND CITIZENS  
THE CENOTAPH, VICTORY SQUARE

Vancouver, Canada  
November 11th, 1944

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## THE ADDRESS:

(R. Rowe Holland, Esq., late R.N.V.R.,  
Chairman, Board of Park Commissioners)

We are assembled together around this monument of eternal granite to do solemn homage to our honoured dead. We come here, not alone to pay tribute, but also to gain for ourselves an increased devotion to the cause for which they gave the last full measure of their sacrifice, and to renew our high resolve that they shall not have died in vain.

For a quarter of a century, we have made this pilgrimage, and, while life lasts, each year we shall come again, and when we have gone, our children will come, and our children's children throughout the years, for there is no sorrow like unto our sorrow.

A few more moments will pass and then the toll of that famous bell, "Big Ben", seven thousand miles away in gallant England, will be the signal to us for silence, and the thousands gathered here will stand without sound or motion. We shall not stand alone. In a common respect to our brave departed we shall stand with all Canada from sea to sea; with the tens of thousands listening on the distant air; with those beyond the hills in the far towns and villages of British Columbia; with those afloat in the ships of His Majesty's Royal Canadian, and Merchant Navy on the Pacific deep; with those who lie with their wounds in our hospitals; with those good women who sit in the quietness of their homes and are waiting; with those whose grief we share as they mourn, and with the rich and the poor within the sound of my voice and beyond; we shall stand



as part of a vast community offering its affectionate and reverent tribute.

As the fleeting seconds pass, think, if you please, of the challenging words of the poet,

"Blow out, you bugles, over the rich Dead!  
There's none of these so lonely and poor of old,  
But, dying, has made us rarer gifts than gold.  
These laid the world away; poured out the red  
Sweet wine of youth; gave up the years to be  
Of work and joy, and that unhopèd serene,  
That men call age; and those who would have been,  
Their sons; they gave, their immortality."

"Their bodies are buried in peace,  
but their name liveth for evermore."

We are gathered around this empty tomb we call "The Cenotaph" not alone in solemn and sacred homage to those who lie in the silent cities of the dead, but also to salute the valiant living. Silently we solemnly proclaim our admiration for our sailors who dare the foe on the storm-tossed seas; our love and solicitude for those who, far from home, are engaged in the bitter, bloody work on the battlefields. And our wonder at the gallantry of those few knight-errants of the air to whom so many owe so much. To all we hasten with assurance that we of their homeland will not falter nor fail.

Carved in the grey granite of the Cenotaph before you are the words from "Lamentations" in the Holy Bible,

"IS IT NOTHING TO YOU,  
ALL YE THAT PASS BY!"

Our presence here is our answer; yes, it is something; it is much; it is all.

And so, in rain or sunshine, all less beloved and lesser duties notwithstanding, for one day each year, this day, REMEMBRANCE DAY, we cease from toil, and in the evening and in the morning we remember them.

Throughout our great Dominion, on this day and at this hour, Canadians gather around their memorial monuments for fond remembrances, for re-inspirations and for re-dedications to the great truths for which our heroic dead gave their lives; for which our armed forces are fighting, and for principles to which

it is our intention to adhere through the grim days until victory and peace are attained. These principles are so simple and so easily defined that we unconsciously assimilate them into our homes, our schools and our churches. We know them; we love them, and would prefer death than that they should be lost; for to us they encompass all which makes life worth living.

The British Commonwealth of Nations is the greatest structure for political good the world has ever known. It is a galaxy of peace-loving lands upon which the sun never sets. It constitutes the most remarkable example of all ages of how peoples with goodwill, inspired by a common ideal, can and have worked together; speaking with a unified voice in the councils of mankind. It was created by the courage, the vision, the adventurous spirit and the energy of generations of forefathers throughout centuries; men and women of our own blood and bone; who dared the unknown to open the vacant wilderness and pathless seas. Their blood stains every soil, and their bodies lie beneath every wave. We will not allow so priceless a possession of humanity to be imperilled.

And over this great commonwealth of men—white, black, red and brown — flies our flag, the Union Jack, the beloved emblem which assures to all who shelter beneath its folds, regardless of colour, race or creed, their personal safety and freedom. The Empire over which it flies was created by our deeds; and it finds place in our prayers. It is governed by great hearts, with the patience of strength and the power of justice.

A foul brood of reckless men whose concepts of right and wrong are akin to those of the gorilla, conceived their vain-glorious and loathsome ambition to sweep away our Empire; to deprive us of all we have built with so much care and sacrifice; to seize its tangible treasures for themselves, and to substitute for our freedom to speak and to live and to worship which all our varied peoples so fully enjoy, their own villainous doctrines with the concentration camp or death for those who disagree. We thank our Heavenly Father they have failed, and now await their doom.

This day we do homage to the memory of those who gave their lives for victory in the first Great War, and who, dying, threw to their sons the torch of Flanders Fields that they too, might not break faith; we do homage to those without whose heroism we, who the stern minister of fate has decreed must



stay at home, would not now live in comfort and safety; we are here to honor those who face the white anger of the North Atlantic gale; those who flaunt the holocaust of flame on the invasion beaches; those to whom death in the darkness of night would be a welcome relief from the filth of the chilling mud of Flanders; we are here to honour those who are giving all that men can give; even life itself, for their fellows.

The inspiring motto of our airmen is "per ardua ad astra"; "through hardship to the stars"; "through adversity to immortality". It is symbolic of all our armed services. To them be the honour and the glory. May God preserve them, and take them to Himself.

## The Cenotaph

The war memorial in Vancouver is a grey granite obelisk, thirty feet high, at the foot of a gentle slope in a small park, Victory Square, nine-tenths of an acre of green lawn, ornamental trees and flower beds. Victory Square is bounded by Hastings Street, a busy principal thoroughfare, Cambie, Pender and Hamilton streets, and due to its central location and keystone shape, has been styled the keystone of Vancouver, now, 1944, a metropolis ten miles wide by five deep, of 400,000 people. The Cenotaph was erected by public subscription in 1924, is of Nelson Island granite engraved with suitable inscriptions, and is kept continuously banked high with wreaths of flowers, and adorned with national flags.

The monument has three, not four sides; one side faces Hastings street, the others Pender and Hamilton streets, and was designed thus by Major G. L. Thornton Sharp, architect, town planner, and park commissioner, to conform to the triangular shape of the park. It is so placed that, when approached from the east it appears in the distance centrally at the end of busy Hastings Street. The granite was supplied by the Vancouver Granite Co., Ltd.; and the erecting contractors were Messrs. Stewart and Wylie; Mr. Stewart died from the effects of an accident whilst preparing the memorial. The Vancouver War Memorial Committee of twenty-four, of which twelve represented the Canadian Club of Vancouver, and twelve the Civic War Memorial Committee, the whole under the chairmanship of F. W. Rounsefell, Esq., pioneer, and with J. R. V. Dunlop, Esq., of the Canadian Club, as honorary secretary, were the public-spirited sponsors. The Cenotaph cost \$10,666.00.

The engraved inscriptions are:

Facing Hastings Street: "Their name liveth for evermore", and, within a stone laurel wreath, "1914-1918".

Facing Hamilton Street: "Is it nothing to you".

Facing Pender Street: "All ye that pass by".

The first, commencing "Their name" is from Ecclesiasticus, 44th chapter, 14th verse, and the second, commencing "Is it nothing", from Lamentations, chapter 1, verse 12. The word,



"cenotaph" is derived from the Greek, "kenos", empty, and "taphos", a tomb, and means a tomb in memory of one buried elsewhere, i.e., an empty tomb.

The ornamentations on the stone include one long sword and two wreaths, one of laurels, the other of poppies; both entwined with maple leaves. A stone replica of the steel helmet, as used in the war of 1914-1918, adorns three corner buttresses. A larger wreath of laurels surrounds the numerals "1914-1918" at the base of the front. Slots in a receptacle of three bronze maple leaves hold the staffs of the Union Jack, the White and Canadian Ensigns, always flying, which are placed there by the Canadian Legion, British Empire Service League, and renewed four times each year.

The Cenotaph was unveiled by His Worship W. R. Owen, Mayor of Vancouver, in the presence of an assemblage of 25,000 persons, naval, military and civilian, and including the Old Contemptibles, 7th British Columbia, 29th Vancouver, 72nd Seaforths, 2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles, 47th New Westminster, and 102nd North British Columbian Battalions, C.E.F., and others, on Sunday, 27th April, 1924. It was dedicated by Hon. Major the Rev. Cecil C. Owen, M.B.E., V.D., D.D., chaplain of the 29th (Vancouver) Battalion, C.E.F.,

"To the Glory of God, and in thankful remembrance of those who served their King and Country overseas in the cause of truth, righteousness and freedom".

The 124th Psalm was read by Hon. Lt.-Col. the Rev. G. O. Fallis, C.B.E., E.D., D.D., of the Methodist Church, and the music included "O Canada" (Buchan); "O God, Our Help in Ages Past"; "Lochaber No More" (bagpipes); "For All the Saints"; "Last Post" and "God Save the King". The first wreath, being the tribute of the Corporation and Citizens of Vancouver, was reverently placed by Mrs. W. R. Owen, wife of His Worship the Mayor.

In his valedictory address, Major the Rev. Mr. Owen said:

"Those whose sacrifices this Cenotaph commemorates, were among the men who, at call of King and Country, left all that was dear, endured hardship, faced danger, and finally passed out of the sight of men by the path of duty, giving their own lives that others might live in freedom. Let those who come after see to it that their names be not forgotten".

## Victory Square

Since the dawn of time until sixty years ago, Victory Square lay hidden beneath the dense forest towering from two to three hundred feet to the heavens; the sun had never penetrated to its silent glades; it was the habitat of bear, wolf, cougar and deer. Captain George Vancouver, R.N., and his men were the first Europeans to see it—in the distance—as, in two small boats, they passed in and out of Burrard Inlet, 13th June, 1792.

A trickling stream from the hill above, shown in the Royal Engineer survey notes, 1863, the first survey of our city, ran down to the boulder-strewn shore of our harbour, and on its primeval bank, now Water Street, beneath the overhanging boughs, a pioneer woman, Mrs. John Scales, who had come to British Columbia with the Royal Engineers on the "Thames City" in 1859, heated her washing water in a vessel placed on a rude fireplace of stones and iron bars built for her by her young son, John Henry Scales. He is the earliest settler of Vancouver now living. Later, about 1870, in the hollow below, the forest was cleared away to provide a site for the historic village of Granville, or "Gastown", and on the forest edge of one corner of that clearing, the tall dead bole of an immense tree, grey and decaying with age, stood as a natural monument upon the precise spot where now stands our own man-made monument of stone. In 1884, Mr. L. A. Hamilton, whose name is perpetuated in Hamilton Street adjoining, and upon whom in 1938 the Freedom of Vancouver was conferred, applied his artistic talents to his own enjoyment and our benefit, and has left us his portrayal on canvas of the narrow sinuous trail in the forest, now Victory Square. A few days later, in his capacity as Canadian Pacific Railway Land Commissioner, and with simple ceremony, Mr. Hamilton drove a survey stake with a nail in the top at the southwest corner of Hamilton and Hastings streets, and, with his surveyors, commenced to lay down in the dense undergrowth, the street system of Vancouver. The "C.P.R. Townsite" of 480 acres, now downtown Vancouver, was conveyed by the Provincial Government to the railway, 13th February, 1886, but nine-tenths of one acre was reserved and marked "Government Square". It is now Victory Square, and, most appropriately and in concordance with



the sentiments of that famous slogan of the second World War, "V for Victory", its shape is that of a V.

In the same month, February, 1886, the axemen commenced to fell the forest at Victory Square, and Messrs. Boyd and Clendenning, the contractors, received as their reward twenty-six dollars per acre for felling the trees, and an extra two dollars per acre for lopping off the larger branches. For four months, Victory Square lay beneath a covering of forest debris drying in the sun; it was twenty feet thick. "The Fire", the great fire of 13th June, 1886, which destroyed the first Vancouver, swept as a blast of flame through this tinderous "slashing", and in a few minutes nought remained save the bare black earth. Clearing operations followed, and when, at noon or at eventide, the clearing gangs ceased from labor, pioneer shoppers on the board walks of Cordova and Water streets below, stopped to listen to the blasting explosions or watch the stumps flying through the air. The deep mud of the dirt trail, now Hastings street, did not permit, in the following winter, the passage of wheeled vehicles, and, in January, 1887, a road of wood planks, twenty-four feet wide, was made to enable our pioneers to reach their few early cottages and offices "up the hill" beyond. And pioneer women dipped pure clear water—before the water pipes were laid—from a shallow well—on Victory Square.

In 1889 the Provincial Government commenced the erection of a monumental Court House of stone wherein were contained the first high courts of justice, and later, October, 1891, additions were made to accommodate the first land registry and registry of births and deaths. The eminent of Vancouver once banqueted in the old Court House, and so well that they forgot to turn the lights out when they went home, and the janitor spent the night sound asleep under a table.

The maple trees, symbolic of Canada, surrounding Victory Square, were planted the following year by A. E. Beck, Esq., K.C., at that time a Court House official. The saplings came from the Dominion Experimental Farm at Agassiz, B. C., and cost him one dollar each. Next, one national holiday, the good Queen's Birthday, fierce argument ensued. Someone brought Mr. Beck a Canadian ensign, and wanted it flown over the Court House, but he was obdurate. He would fly the flag of Canada, the Union Jack, and none other, so they yielded, generously brought him a Union Jack, and he raised that proud banner to the breeze.

Then in 1900, during the South African War, 1899-1902, our citizens enjoyed the wildest night Vancouver had ever known; they were celebrating the Relief of Mafeking. To add to the jubilation they built a big bonfire of packing cases and ought else combustible they could collect, in the middle of Hastings street and Cambie, and burned a wide hole in the new wood block pavement; the street superintendent was not at all pleased. The following year, 28th September, 1901, Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York, afterwards King George V and Queen Mary, visited Vancouver, and were formally welcomed at a brilliant military ceremony by Lieut.-Col. His Worship T. O. Townley, Mayor of Vancouver, upon the exact spot on which the Cenotaph stands. In 1910, the Young Men's Christian Association, in an endeavor to raise \$525,000 to erect a new Y.M.C.A. building (now the Ritz Apartments, Georgia Street West) put up a huge clock face, 25 feet wide, marked with figures to emblazon to passers-by a daily report of the progress of the money collecting campaign. By 1912 the new Court House on Georgia Street was complete and occupied; the old one was demolished, and for several years, "Court House Square" lay as a desolate untidy waste in the centre of a busy city.

During the years 1916-1917 of the first World War, a recruiting marquee, or very large tent, covered the site of the Cenotaph. Thousands of gallant young British Columbians entered the marquee to volunteer for service overseas in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, and, as they swore allegiance, stood upon the very earth which now supports the memorial to those among them who never returned. Then in 1917, a huge sprawling shed of wood, covering half the square, and called the "Evangelistic Tabernacle", was constructed as a temporary accommodation for the crowds attending the religious revival meetings held in it.

Varied opinions were expressed by almost everyone as to the best use to which the vacant area, from which the old Court House had been removed, could be put. In December, 1914, the Canadian Club of Vancouver petitioned the Provincial Government to set aside "Old Court House Square" for eventual use for some form of war memorial. In April, 1915, after long preparation, the Vancouver Civic Centre Authority completed a comprehensive printed report, illustrated with designs—the result of a competition between thirty-one contestants—of an elaborate scheme of building construction, including a City Hall and civic centre of several blocks, with Victory Square as the grand



approach. On January 17th, 1917, the City Council of Vancouver made formal application to the Provincial Government for a lease, and on March 12th, 1918, the lease was granted for ninety-nine years at an annual rental of one dollar.

During the summer of 1918, returned soldiers with experience at the front line, constructed a sham battle area, complete with sandbagged parapets, gun emplacements, barbed wire entanglements, and sinuous trenches, and honeycombed Victory Square with all sorts of mysterious underground dug-outs. The soldiers charged a small sum to see the mimic military works and used the money to aid widows, orphans and dependents of their fellows overseas. The sham "Front Line" was still in position when, at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month, 11th November, 1918, the first Armistice Day came, and the first Great War was over. Nine days later, Alderman Joseph Hoskin, in City Council assembled, suggested that the name of Union street be changed to Victory street. His meritorious suggestion was adopted, but varied to apply to the vacant nameless square.

On that memorable first Armistice Day, Victory Square saw not the silent solemnity of its anniversaries which we know. Instead, it was the rallying point which attracted, as a magnet, our citizens in their haste to go somewhere, do something. The war was over, and four years of tension suddenly relaxed found them uncertain; some gave way to rejoicing; others turned to prayer. The sham battle area on Victory Square burst into bedlam; blank bombs from trench mortars exploded with loud bangs; "Very Lights" rocketed high into the darkness, and, like great stars, brilliantly lighted Victory Square below. Towards noon, self-appointed marshals organized a great impromptu procession of citizens and soldiers; with motor cars, pedestrians, bands, bugles and flags all mingled promiscuously together to parade the streets in one vast throng of exultation; it started at Victory Square. For others it was a day of sorrow and of tears. One little girl danced joyfully up and down upon the sidewalk of a quiet street, her sweet voice loudly proclaiming, "Daddy's coming home; Daddy's coming home". Alas, some little girls' Daddies never came.

"Their bodies lie buried in peace,  
But their name liveth for evermore."

A loud whistle sounded above that noise of joyful tumult

on the street, the whistle of a steamer entering Vancouver harbor; few knew its meaning. It was the "Princess Alice" announcing her arrival with one hundred and fifty-seven bodies, snatched from the cold wild seas of the North, all that remained of the passengers and crew of the good ship "Princess Sophia", wrecked on a rock in fierce storm and black night. Of three hundred and forty-three on board not one single soul survived. Some of the more observant in the noisy streets wondered why, on such a day of rejoicing, the flags on the buildings were at half mast.

Soon after the close of the war the Canadian Club renewed their efforts commenced in 1914, and formed a committee to erect a war memorial as soon as possible. Simultaneously a Civic War Memorial Committee was formed, and for four years the two groups worked independently. On February 7th, 1922, Alderman S. J. Crowe, afterwards Senator, introduced a deputation from the Canadian Club to the City Council; they asked for a site for a cenotaph to commemorate fallen soldiers. The Vancouver War Memorial Committee of twenty-four; twelve each from the two old committees, F. W. Rounsefell, Esq., chairman, J. R. V. Dunlop, Esq., Honorary Secretary, was formed. In November, 1923, the Council appropriated \$1,000 for grading the site, and on 8th January, 1924, requested the Board of Parks Commissioners to assume charge of the square as a public park, and on the 27th April that year the Cenotaph was unveiled.

Early next year, 1925, the great Canadian newspaper, the *Vancouver Daily Province*, acquired the old Carter-Cotton Building as their new publication home, and changed its name to the "Province" Building. A chance remark of a visitor to Vancouver, Frederick Southam, Esq., president, Southam Newspapers of Canada, to F. J. Burd, Esq., president of the newspaper, upon the bare untidy appearance of the grounds upon which their offices looked down, was followed by Mr. Southam's offer to make a large contribution to beautify it. W. S. Rawlings, Esq., Superintendent of Parks, designed a landscape of lawns, walks and flower beds; the *Province* very generously donated \$11,500 towards the cost, and Victory Square became an oasis of green sunk in a forest of grey skyscrapers.

Then came that unhappy era, the Great Depression of 1930-1935 when unemployment was the common lot of most of us. On a fine day, from two to three hundred men, idling away the hours, could be seen sitting fretfully on the grass. Finally,



tormented beyond endurance with worry, patience gave way, and, on April 23rd, 1935, civil disturbance resulted in the Mayor of Vancouver reading the Riot Act; mounted police with bludgeons rode over the green sward, and an unruly mob was dispersed.

Since that lamentable occurrence all has been tranquility about the hallowed shrine to our honoured dead. Many veterans of former regiments reverently deposit wreaths on the day of their re-union banquets; all armed forces passing in parade salute with "eyes right" or "left", and some citizens, as they pass unostentatiously raise their hats. Busy traffic noisily hastens by, but on Victory Square all is peace; the pigeons strut, the sparrows twitter, and the sea gulls eagerly await the kindly hand that throws them scraps of food. And, on Remembrance Day each year the people gather, the Nine o'Clock Gun on Brockton Point booms its signal, bowed heads are bared, and for two short minutes all is still again on Victory Square, and more silent than the forest which, for ages, covered it from sight.

*City Archives,  
City Hall, Vancouver,  
1944.*

J. S. MATTHEWS,  
*City Archivist.*