



# THE Argylls



## CASE FOR SUPPORT

### THE 91ST REGIMENT CANADIAN HIGHLANDERS MEMORIAL

*“Who in the path of duty died for the cause  
of humanity in the Great War 1914-1918”*

#### WHAT IS THE 91ST REGIMENT CANADIAN HIGHLANDERS?

Kilts and bagpipes are merely the distinctive symbols of a tradition rooted in Canadian military history for over 200 years – the Highland regiment. Since Confederation, the Highland Regiment has been most closely identified with the militia. In 1856, a Highland Rifle Company – forerunner of the present regiment – was formed in Hamilton.

Between 1880 and the First World War, as part of this heightened self-consciousness by Scots-Canadians and a rising interest in militarism generally, several kilted regiments were raised in cities across Canada. The “idea” for a full Highland regiment in Hamilton “first took shape among the members of the St Andrew’s Society [of which James Chisholm was the long-time treasurer] and the Sons of Scotland [of which he was also a member].” Late in 1902, meetings were held, and prominent members of the city’s Highland-Canadian community were asked to “take hold of the matter.” James Chisholm and his partner, William Logie (a captain in the 13th Regiment), took a leading, perhaps predominant, role in organizing locally and lobbying Ottawa.

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Image of the memorial on James Street North in 1921

With the support of local Scottish organizations and clan societies, a deputation was sent to Ottawa to deliver a petition to the Minister of Militia and Defence. As a result of broad community support and effective political organization, the Regiment was formed on 13 September 1903 and gazetted three days later as the 91st Regiment Canadian Highlanders.

In 1909, the 91st moved into its new quarters, the large addition to the armouries at 200 James Street North. During the First World War, the federal government ignored the existing militia units and mobilized numbered battalions. Thus, the Regiment acted as a recruiting depot, providing 145 officers and 5,207 men of other ranks for service in the numbered battalions of

the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF), especially the 16th and 19th, and the 173rd Highlanders. It perpetuates the 19th and the 173rd. The latter was broken up for reinforcements, the former, commanded successively by Hamiltonians from the 91st. All told, the 19th and the various machine-gun companies and the 3rd Machine Gun Battalion lost 1,374 soldiers; over three times that number were wounded. The Regiment was less than two decades old, and already a significant part of its history had been written in the blood of young Canadians.

#### POST-WAR REMEMBRANCE AND COMMEMORATION – “TO THE GLORIOUS MEMORY”

In the aftermath of the war, Canadians and governments at all levels ruminated about the appropriateness and need for memorials that recognized the scale of sacrifice. Hamilton was no exception. Approximately 1,700 Hamiltonians died in the First World War. The first 100 veterans returned to the city in late January 1919 and were greeted with a huge reception. City Planner Noulan Cauchon had developed a grandiose proposal that would have transformed Hamilton from the lower city to the Mountain. Discussions about the range and type of memorial were debated publicly throughout 1920. The city held a plebiscite in January 1921. The municipal response was more modest in the end. Various organizations had plans for the “noble commemoration of Hamilton’s heroic dead.” The government settled the debate over the militia’s future in 1920. The pre-war militia units remained and perpetuated the numbered battalions of the

Canadian Expeditionary Force. The 91st would remain one of Hamilton’s regiments.

THE 91ST MEMORIAL

The 91st raised funds to erect a monument to those “who in the path of duty died for the cause of humanity in the Great War.” There are no extant documents outlining their process, organization, concept, motive, and rationale.

The 91st chose Hamiltonians to design and build what the *Hamilton Spectator* called a “massive stone tablet ... adjoining the main gateway on the outer wall of the armoury.” An English-born local architect, Stanley Fryer, designed it.



Current image of the memorial on James Street North

He was a veteran who was badly wounded at the Somme, serving with the artillery. He returned to Hamilton in January 1919, one of the first 100 who came back to Hamilton; with his partner, he reopened his architectural office at 72 James Street North in April 1921. He was also a lieutenant in C Company of the 91st. Fryer had an artistic bent. He produced “marvellous” evocative illustrations for the history of the 4th Brigade, published in 1929. This flair was evident in his elegant design for the tablet.

The Ritchie Cut Stone Company built the monument. It was established in Hamilton in 1889 by George Ritchie, a Scot from Aberdeen. For the first 20 years of its existence, the company cut all fine stone by hand. It had provided the stone for the fountain in Gage Park and the Stoney Creek Battlefield Monument.

After incorporation in 1912, the firm had a mill in Hamilton with stone-cutting machinery. The company promoted its stone for “a grandeur, a refinement, and a sense of permanence which cannot be obtained by the use of any other material.” In its 1949 catalogue, the company intertwined the foremost quality of its stone -- permanence -- with Canadian nationality. “Canada has become a great nation, and will be a greater one. So her monumental buildings must more and more reflect the greatness and permanence of our country.” “Natural stone,” it declared, “is, indeed, the Symbol of Permanence.”

The memorial was “erected by the officers and men.” They wanted the site for the tablet to be public; hence, its street location rather than inside

the armoury. The idea of permanence suffuses the selection of a material. Such a sacrifice, in the name of duty, should not be forgotten.



The Argyll Pipes & Drums are leading the battalion out of the armouries. The 91st Memorial is in the background, in the centre left.


THE UNVEILING – SUNDAY, 19 JUNE 1921

On the afternoon of 19 June, with an estimated 350 on parade, the 91st unveiled the “massive stone tablet.” Maj the Reverend Dr Daniel R. Drummond, the unit’s beloved padre, conducted the service. The Pipes and Drums and the brass band were on the parade. Drummond crafted his remarks to emphasize duty, sacrifice, and the purpose of memorials. He used Ecclesiastes to make his central point on the need for memorials and their relationship to memory. He quoted, “And some there be which have no memorial, who, are perished as though they have never been.” LCol John I McLaren, a former commanding officer of the 91st and the first commanding officer of the 19th Battalion, unveiled the monument with Wally Stewart, the young son of LCol Walter Wilson Stewart, the architect of the New Armouries we moved into in 1909, and a 91st officer who was killed at Vimy. Though perished, now, these men had a memorial “to their glorious memory.”

THE CASE FOR SUPPORT

The 91st (later The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada) unveiled this memorial 104 years ago. The *raison d’être* for this memorial is as true today as it was in 1921. It recognizes the concept of duty in civil society, its terrible cost, and the need for communities and societies to remember and acknowledge such service and sacrifice. With the ongoing revitalization of Hamilton’s core and the renaissance of James Street North, there is a compelling case for the refurbishment of this public memorial.

Built for permanence, it has suffered the effects of long age and exposure to the elements. The Argyll Regimental Foundation considers this object a priority. Restoration (installing lead copper flashing, heritage cleaning, heritage repointing, some restoration of worn areas), and the addition of illumination to enhance its visibility at night, and a plaque explaining its significance to the public will cost **\$50,000**. The donor’s generosity will be recognized on the plaque.



91st Canadian Highlanders cap badge