

THE LACAC OF BROCKVILLE

1 MAY 1979

Designation Report

Designation Recommendation
and Description for

Brockville
War Memorial

Court House Avenue,
Brockville, Ontario

A. REASONS FOR DESIGNATION
UNDER THE ONTARIO HERITAGE ACT, 1974

The Brockville War Memorial is being recommended for designation for both historical and architectural reasons. The monument was erected in 1924 in memory of those citizens of Brockville who died and also those who served in the armed forces of Canada in the War of 1914-1918. (A subscript was added following the War of 1939-1945.) The granite base and shaft supports a bronze figure of a Canadian Infantryman in battle clothing grasping a rifle with fixed bayonet in his extended left arm while in the act of throwing a hand grenade with his right hand. The monument occupies a central position at the main crossroads of the City.

B. Historical Background:

Many members of the community of Brockville served in various capacities in the armed forces of Canada during the War of 1914-1918 which was known as the Great War. Of these many paid the supreme sacrifice.

The Town Council decided to erect a fitting monument in memory of those who died and in remembrance of those "who shared its dangers".

A committee under the chairmanship of Alderman N. G. Somerville made the necessary arrangements and the monument was unveiled in an impressive ceremony on May 23rd, 1924. Included in the addresses that marked the occasion were the following words spoken by Mr. H. A. Stewart, K.C., M.P.:

"Let me first congratulate the Town Council, the Committee and the citizens of Brockville upon the completion of the Memorial which has just been unveiled. It is appropriate, dignified, characteristic of action, suggests reverence and is altogether worthy and creditable to all concerned. It will prove an inspiration to succeeding generations and will perpetuate the memory of those whom we desire to honour."

After World War II the dates of 1939-1945 were added below the dates 1914-1919 on the front of the Memorial.

c. Description:

The Memorial is located at the lower end of Court House Avenue in the central boulevard facing the intersection of King Street.

It comprises a granite base and shaft with supporting abutments and a bronze figure of an advancing Canadian soldier fully equipped for battle with a rifle with fixed bayonet in the extended left arm while the right arm and hand are in the act of throwing a hand grenade. The sculptor was Nicolas Piroton, a Belgian who had moved to Canada.¹ The figure was cast by the Allis Chalmers Co. of Toronto. The Memorial was built and erected by the McIntosh Granite Co. of Toronto.²

DESCRIPTION cont'd

The whole was designed to stand alone on a spreading granite base, with a side approach of granite slabs. The later additions of first stone posts and chains and later the present red brick walls detract from the original concept.

From the base rises the main shaft which carries on its front the following inscription:

"In honoured memory of the men of Brockville who gave their lives for King and Country in the Great War, and in grateful remembrance of those who shared its dangers.
1914-1919"

Above this base shaft is a plinth for the higher shaft. This plinth carries the inscription: "Their Name Liveth for Evermore " on both the front and rear edges.

The shaft rising to the entablature below the soldier's figure carries on its face the crest of the Municipality and below it the quotation:

"To you from falling hands we throw
The torch, be yours to hold it high,
If ye break faith with us who die,
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders Fields."

On the back of the shaft the quotation appears:

"Greater love hath no man than this: that a man lay down his life for his friends."

On the east and west sides of the shaft are Christian crosses with a memorial wreath against the foot. Against the wreath are piled the pouches, haversacks, bayonet scabbard and steel helmet of a soldier. All of this carved in granite rests on extruded abutments forming part of the base block. On the face of these columns are the battle names in which the men of Brockville served. On the east side the battle names of Paschendale, Amiens, Arras and Cambrai are inscribed; on the west side are the battle names Ypres, Sanctuary Wood, Courcellette and Vimy Ridge.

On the south face of these extruded columns are single upright swords in bas relief.

The whole Memorial is 22 feet, six inches in height and is reported to weigh in the neighbourhood of 100 tons.

REFERENCES:

- 1. Lawrence Hayward, Kingston, Ontario
- 2. RECORDER AND TIMES, May 24, 1924

D. Recommendation:

The Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee recommends that the War Memorial as constructed in 1924 be designated under the Ontario Heritage Act 1974 for historical and architectural reasons, but that this not apply to the present brick surroundings.

Continued maintenance of the Memorial is, of course, recommended.

Some serious consideration should be given to restoring the site to its original dignity and beauty while avoiding the intrusion of circling traffic.