

the Watermark

Canada's Online Masonic Stamp Newsletter



Slow Start to the Fall Season

Sometimes life just gets in the way and you're to do list goes out the window. I have been trying to put this issue together for a couple of months but other pressing concerns in my life have prevented me from doing so. I hope you all had a great summer and are busy with lodge activities and such.

Sometimes you get a little down because things are not the way they should be and you consider packing it in and moving onto something else. After 32 years in the Craft and having moved my family over a dozen times you get a little weary. Especially when it comes to lodge and coming to grips the fact that procedures, practices etc. vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, and visiting different lodges can be plenty of fun and interesting but affiliating with another lodge is not always a pleasant experience, if things are not the same as you are used to. I had decided to pack it in and instead of writhing this column I was going to prepare my request for a demit.

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Laura Secord

On June 20th 2013 Canada post released a second stamp honouring Laura Secord (1775-1868) the heroine of the War of 1812. Obviously she was not a Freemason but her father and husband were. So were most of the principal players in her story.



1992 Scott # 1434

Born in the community of Great Barrington, Massachusetts Laura Ingersoll's father Thomas Ingersoll (1749–1812) was a successful hat maker who served in the American revolutionary army and after the war he was made a magistrate. Following the Shay's Rebellion, Major Ingersoll became disillusioned the republic because of the way Loyalists were being persecuted and the poor economic climate and heavy taxation. After meeting with the Mohawk leader and Freemason Chief Joseph Brant who encouraged him to move he along with four friends travelled to Upper Canada (Ontario) and they petitioned Freemason Lord John Graves Simcoe the Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada for a land grant. Simcoe granted them a grant of 66,000 acres on the condition that they populate the land with forty families within seven years. In 1795 the Ingersoll's moved to Upper Canada and he operated a tavern in Queenston while the land was being cleared and roads built in the settlement. The Ingersoll's tavern rented one of their rooms to the local Masonic Lodges and after a lodge meeting Thomas introduced James Secord a new member of the lodge to his daughter Laura. Shortly thereafter the two were married, and set up home in Queenston and by 1810 the couple had five children.

When the United States declared war on Britain on June 18th 1812, James Secord served in the 1st Lincoln Militia under the command of Sir

Isaac Brock. In October 1812 at the battle of Queenston Heights, Brock was killed and James Secord was severely wounded. Hearing of his plight Laura

Secord rushed to his side and legend has it she successfully pleaded for his life when three American soldiers were about to beat him to death with their gunstocks. On May 27th 1813 Fort George was captured and the much of the Niagara region was then controlled by the Americans who then billeted their soldiers in the homes of the locals including the Secord's. On the evening of June 21st Laura Secord overheard the soldiers discussing plans for an ambush of the British troops led by Freemason Lieutenant James FitzGibbon (1780 - 1863) at Beaver Dams. After discussing what she overheard with her husband he recognized the seriousness of the ambush and because he was still recovering from his wounds she agreed to warn FitzGibbon. Early the next morning she lead her cow through the American picket line and when she was clear of the sentries she abandoned the animal and proceeded inland cross-country to reduce the likelihood of encountering an American patrol. Her perilous route took her twenty miles instead of the twelve-mile road from the Niagara River in what was then virgin wilderness with a huge swamp infested with rattlesnakes and wolves.

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She later wrote :

"I left early in the morning and walked 19 miles over a rough and difficult part of the country, when I came upon a field in the neighbourhood of Beaver Dam. By this time, daylight had left me. Here I found all the Indians encamped. By moonlight the scene was terrifying. Upon advancing to the Indians they all arose and with some yells said woman, which made me tremble. I cannot express the awful feelings it gave me, but I did not lose my presence of mind, I was determined to persevere. I went up to one of the chiefs and made him understand that I had great news for (Lieutenant) Fitz Gibbon and that he must let me pass to his camp, or that he and his party would all be taken. The chief consented to accompany me to Fitz Gibbon's station, where I had an interview with him. I then told him what I had come for, and what I had heard, that the Americans intended to make an attack on the troops

under his command, and would from their superior numbers capture them all."

By the time she had reached FitzGibbon, she was exhausted, her clothing was in tatters and she had lost both of her shoes.



James FitzGibbon

FitzGibbon reacted immediately and placed

the Green Tigers along with their Mohawk allies on high alert. He then split his small force into two scouting parties, to locate the advancing enemy, and lay a trap for the attackers. On the morning of June 24th Mohawk scouts located the 700-man column and shortly thereafter a squad of 80 – 120 warriors surrounded them and cut off the road in front of and behind the Americans.

The surprise attack launched from the cover of the Beachwood forest devastated the Americans who in vain fired musket volleys and cannon shot into the woods in an effort to keep the Mohawks from overwhelming them. FitzGibbon and his squad of men followed the sound of the battle and arrived on the scene to find a stalemate between the two forces who by then had run low on ammunition. FitzGibbon then approached the Americans under a flag of truce, and boldly demanded the surrender of Colonel Boerstler and his entire force. He advised them that were more British soldiers on the way, along with another party of Mohawks and that once the additional warriors joined the fight, he would not be able to control them, and a massacre likely result. During the meeting it came to light that Colonel Boerstler and his second in command were both Freemasons and FitzGibbon assured them of his Masonic protection as prisoners of war and that many of the Mohawk warriors were Freemasons as well and would honour the promise of Masonic protection of all his troops.

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1998 Scott #1740

Charles Mortram Sternberg (1885–1981)

No published study of Canadian dinosaurs is possible today without citing one or another of Sternberg's papers."

Equipped with only a high school degree Sternberg, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada became one of the world's most celebrated paleontologists' publishing 47 papers on fossil vertebrates, primarily dinosaurs, many of which were based on his own discoveries. He is credited with discovering or classifying the *Pachyrhinosaurus* ("thick-nosed lizard"), *Brachylophosaurus* "short-crested lizard", *Parksosaurus* ("William Parks lizard") and *Edmontonia* (after the Edmonton Formation). In 1936 he and his son Ray installed permanent metal quarry markers in 112 dinosaur quarries within the area that would become Alberta's Dinosaur Provincial Park. He was a member of Civil Service Lodge No. 148 in Ottawa.

Historians have often wondered why Colonel Boerstler surrendered his 700 troops, but the honourable assurance of Masonic protection was likely a huge part of his rational. The battle of the Beaver Dams was a major setback for the Americans and was followed by continuous pressure from the British guerilla warfare attacks on the American positions. That resulted in American forces being harassed and pushed back to Fort George.

As a reward for his services at the Beaver Dams, FitzGibbon was promoted to Captain and would eventually become a leading figure in Upper Canadian politics. The Secord's did not fair as well.

Laura Secord's heroic trek was not recorded in the official dispatch from the battlefield that day, and she seldom talked of her exploits so she never received a military pension. In 1827, Captain FitzGibbon made an effort to correct the oversight and wrote an official account of the Battle, outlining her contribution, and to urge the government to award her a pension as a veteran of the battle Beaver Dams.



Secord in 1865

"I do hereby Certify that on the 22d. day of June 1813, Mrs. Secord, Wife of James Secord, Esqr. then of St. David's, came to me at the Beaver Dam after Sun Set, having come from her house at St. David's by a circuitous route a distance of twelve miles, and informed me that her Husband had learnt from an American officer the preceding night that a Detachment from the American Army then in Fort George would be sent out on the following morning (the 23d.) for the purpose of Surprising and capturing a Detachment of the 49th Regt. then at Beaver Dam under my Command. In Consequence of this information, I placed the Indians under Norton together with my own Detachment in a Situation to intercept the American Detachment and we occupied it during the night of the 22d. – but the Enemy did not come until the morning of the 24th when his Detachment was captured. Colonel Boerstler, their commander, in a conversation with me confirmed fully the information communicated to me by Mrs. Secord and accounted for the attempt not having been made on the 23rd. as at first intended."

His letter did no good and Secord was refused any compensation.

James eventually recovered from his war wounds but died of a stroke on February 22nd 1841 leaving Laura destitute.

Nearly forty years later the widowed, 85-year old Laura Secord was presented to the Freemason Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII), during his 1860 visit to Canada, She told him the story of her exploits and concluded by stating *"I am now a very old woman – a widow many years. A few short years even if I should so long live will see me no more upon this earth. I feel that it will be gratifying to my family and a pleasure to myself that your Royal Parent the Queen should know that the services which I performed were truly loyal and that no gain or hope of reward influenced me in doing what I did. I request that your Royal Highness will be pleased to convey to your Royal Parent Her Majesty the Queen the name of one who in the hour of trial and danger – as well as my departed husband who fought and bled on Queenston Heights in the ever memorable battle of 13th Oct. 1812 – stood ever ready and willing to defend this Country against every invasion come what might"*.

Upon his return to England the Prince sent her £100 gold. Sadly this was the only official recognition and financial reward that she received during her lifetime. Laura Secord died in 1868 at the age of 93 and was buried next to her husband in the Drummond Hill Cemetery in Niagara Falls.

New from Italy



I recently received three new cachets' and two post cards from our brother Massimo Morgantini of the Grand Oriente D'Italia.

These can be purchased by contacting him at:

filatelia.massonica@grandeoriente.it

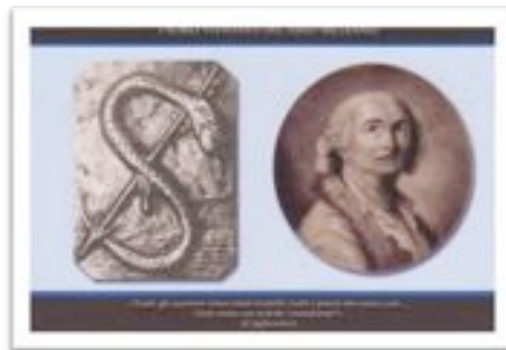
Or by writing to:

Massimo Morgantini

AIFM-Grande Oriente d' Italia

Via San Pancrazio 8

00152 Roma - Italia



New Souvenir Sheet from Israel

Brother Joseph Samuel Daniel contacted me recently to advise that the Israel Philatelic Services of the Israel Postal Authority released a special limited edition souvenir sheet on October 20th 2013. The sheet is in recognition of the 60th anniversary of the Grand Lodge of the State of Israel.

The Souvenir Sheet will be made available to brethren in Israel, and will be delivered to permanent subscribers of the Israel Philatelic Services, at a cost.

The Souvenir Sheets are serially numbered, No. 1 being presented to the Grand Master MWBro. Avi Barnes.

Brethren can also obtain the Souvenir Sheet directly from the Grand Treasurer of the Grand Lodge of the State of Israel for \$30.00 US each to cover the cost of issue and delivery.

Payment can be made by cheque in favour of " **The Grand Lodge** " or by bank transfer to the account of The Grand Lodge of the State of Israel **Account Name : The Grand Lodge** Bank Hapoalim, Asia House Branch, Tel Avi Bank No. : 12 - Branch No. : 567 - Account No. 230201



If you have a Masonic philatelic release that you would like to have featured in the Watermark, you can send me a sample and we would be happy to include it and forward it to the hundred of readers we have around the world.



A Mountie In Flanders

Another Remembrance Day is nearly here. I penned this article a few years ago after a business trip took me to Belgium. It has little to do with Freemasonry other than to remind us all of the millions who died in WWI many of whom were Freemasons.

The green fields of Flanders no longer bear visible signs of war or poppies. However, daily reminders of the horrors of the First World War still exist. The Flemish countryside of southwest Belgium is picturesque on this drizzly October day as our police car winds its way down narrow roads traveling towards the town of Ieper (Ypres) and the A Flanders Fields Museum®. Our guide explains that Ieper (pronounced eep-er) was completely destroyed in WWI and was painstakingly rebuilt the way it originally was.

This far away land is full of history for Canadians. This is the land where over 16,000 Canadians are buried having died in a series of futile battles in a prolonged stalemate with the German Army. Our guide, a Belgian police officer, explained that his grandfather lived in the trenches for four years after the Germans destroyed his home and that this land for many years after the war was a large graveyard strewn with rubble. The picturesque local towns were finally rebuilt after many years of debate about leaving this a field of death, as it was, a perpetual reminder of the horror and ravages of a war so long ago.

Forty-five years before my birth, both my great grandfather, and my grandfather lived and fought in the trenches near here. My father while stationed in Germany with the RCAF brought me here as a little boy over thirty-five years ago to see first hand where so many Canadians fought and died. Nearly 100 years after WWI, I returned to this hallowed ground, a guest of the Belgium Police to see first hand the land of John McCrea's Flanders Fields.

Nearly every Canadian is familiar with the immortal words of the Canadian surgeon, Colonel John McCrea's poignant poem that are also precious words to the residents of Ieper and many other nations. I have heard the poem recited more times than I can remember. But, like most Canadians I had a vague idea where Flanders Fields was and I assumed it was one big field full of poppies.



I was quite surprised to discover that the Flanders Fields of John McCrae's poem was not one location but an entire region! Strange place names like 'Ypres' and 'Passchendaele' were actual communities where people lived, loved and died.

The Flanders Fields Museum is in the rebuilt Cloth Hall, originally built between 1260 and 1304, which along with the entire town of Ieper was reduced to rubble in four years of war. This somber museum is a combination of traditional materials and interactive exhibits which succeed in explaining the war and the effects it had on the Belgian countryside. There we learned how King Albert the 1st of Belgium ordered the canal locks to be opened to prevent the German Army breaking through, towards Dunkirk and Calais in France. This resulted in flooding the low countryside thereby halting the advance of the Germans and forcing them to transfer the offensive to the area around Ypres. This tactic created a prolonged stalemate in the area that lasted for several years and subsequently lead to the land and nearly everything on it being demolished by prolonged artillery.

After touring the museum we walked down the street to the Menin Gate. Here the names of 56,000 soldiers of the British Empire who were killed in the battles in and around Ypres and whose resting place is unknown are engraved on the walls of the gate (another 34,888 names are recorded at the nearby memorial at Tyne Cot in Passchendaele). Names of young men long since forgotten by most of the empire, but not by the people of Ieper who at 8pm every single night since World War One (excepting the Second World War when the community was occupied by the Germans) remember the dead by the playing of the Last Post by buglers in the massive memorial.

Reviewing the names of the fallen, I was dumbfounded by the size of the memorial and the approximately 56,000 of names of the dead carved into every wall both inside and out of this massive structure. When I searched out the names of Canadians, I discovered that nearly 12% (6900) of the memorial was comprised of names of Canadian soldiers from every region of the country. Until now I had not appreciated the sacrifice my country had made in this bloody, useless war. Canada proportionally had sacrificed more of her sons (60,661) in World War One than any other country in the empire and shared in the near extinction of an entire generation of young men!

Our time was running short and on our return trip to the coast we stopped at the Canadian Memorial which was located at a cross road in the tiny village of St. Juliaan. I stared up at the 35 foot high towering and imposing monument of a Canadian soldier atop the column. The soldier emerging from the stone waist up, with his head bowed and his eyes staring mournfully towards the ground immediately makes direct eye contact with all who approach the memorial. Attached to the column was a brass plaque inscribed upon "***This column marks the battlefield where 18,000 Canadians on the British left withstood the first gas attacks the 22 April 1915 2000 fell and are buried nearby***". I was overcome with emotion, and could not look into the statues eyes without feeling his pain and despair over the number of fallen comrades that were buried near this place.



At the base of this massive monument were arrows pointing in different directions to the nearby battlefields 'Passchendaele', 'Ypres', 'Hooge', 'Zonnebeke', 'Langemarck', 'Poelcappelle', 'Boesinghe', where thousands of young Canadians saw intense action and suffered the grisly effects of mustard gas.

As I wandered the grounds of this stately memorial blanketed in light rain thinking of my grandfathers enduring the hardship of living in the mud of the trenches with the rats, artillery and gas. Had they not survived this place I would not be here either. As I meditated upon the sacrifices made in this area, I realized that I had wandered into a small grove of Maple trees and scattered upon the ground all around me were a variety of colours and types of maple leaves. The symbolism of the maples leaves lying on Belgian soil and the variety of colours of the leaves before me made a deep and lasting impression. I gathered up a few leaves and returned to the car and placed them inside a writing pad where later that night, wide awake wrestling with the effects of jet lag and a nine hour time change I composed a poem 'Maple Leaves Upon The Ground' in an effort to try and express the impression this land had made upon me and the feelings for I had for this place.

Our next stop was very special to our guide, for his grandfather had labored in the trenches along the Ijser River at 'De Dodengang' the infamous 'Trench of Death' in Diksmuide. This is where the entire Belgian army struggled for nearly four years in the trenches, literally a stone throw away from the Germans who were trenched in on the opposite side of the river. Soldiers lived in these trenches, three days on and three days off under heavy fire, artillery, and gas, with the dead, the dying and the rats. The site, now a memorial, is what is left of a series of sand bagged trenches. The remaining trenches comprise nearly a kilometer in length along the bank of the River Ijser, a fraction of the size of the original trenches that were several miles kilometers in length.



As we traveled across the Belgian countryside, I noticed that the telephone poles in the area were different from poles I had seen elsewhere and asked our guide Rick about their design. The poles are concrete "A" frame style, with a series of large holes running the length of the pole. He explained that the farmers still regularly dig up unexploded bombs from WWI and place the unexploded shells in a hole in the pole. The Belgian Army makes regular patrols of the area and collect the shells and dispose of them. As we were driving along Rick turned up the police radio and then advised us that someone in his neighborhood had just dug up three unexploded bombs on his own street! It was as if the dead in this area can not rest and are busy pushing up the unexploded bombs, until all of the explosives in the area are removed from the ground and the soil made pure again.

As we continued our journey back to the coast our guide insisted we stop in Langemark where one of two German graveyards was located. This dignified and solemn place held the remains of 44,061 German soldiers who died in this area between 1914 -1918. A poignant reminder that it is not just allied soldiers buried in this place, but that there are the sons of parents from many lands who never returned home to their friends and family, but lie buried here in Flanders Fields. I could not help but think about the closing line in John McCrea's poem;

*"If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders Fields."*

The so-called “Great War” did not end all wars as it promised. Only twenty years later, death and destruction rained upon this beautiful land again. Eighty years later war still rages around the world. Though few poppies grow today in Flanders Fields, the dead have kept their promise, they do not sleep and likely will not sleep for a very long time. Meanwhile the ghosts of the dead, now all allies in spirit, continue to push up explosives from the soil in an attempt to purify the ground where they are buried and try to remind the living of the sacrifice they all made so many years ago in a far off land called Flanders Fields.

Maple Leaves Upon The Ground

*Maple leaves upon the ground
Where granite eyes, stare sadly down
Sixteen thousand lie near by
Where larks, still singing fly*

*Granite eyes in downward cast
Provide a testament, to the gas
The craters gone, the grass returned
Historic lessons, never learned*

*Names upon the Menin Gate
Reminders of, the cost of hate
While silver trumpets, each evening sound
Red leaves of maple, fall to the ground*

*Poppies dwelled once, in the fields
Where bombs each day, are still revealed
Restless souls in Belgian soil
Push up explosives, to end their toil*

*From graves the fallen, from far and near
Cry to the visitor, we are still here
The torch we passed so long ago
The path to peace, its intent to show*

*Hope, not death, is the message we still give
From we the dead, to you who live
In Flanders Fields, stone eyes stare down
At maple leaves, on Belgian ground*



October 16th 2002
St. Juliaan Belgium
Larry Burden
Royal Canadian Mounted Police



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Slow Start continued...

But the other I met a man who mistook my S&Q ring for a Shriner's ring and told me that he owed everything he had to men like me. And as his eyes moistened he told me about his daughter who was born with a rare condition that prevented the left side of her body from growing and the same rate as her right side. A battery of doctors said that she would never walk, but a Freemason offered to help him and referred the family to the Canadian Shriner's hospital in Montreal. Not only did he and his family get the much need emotional support the needed, his daughter is now walking. She still has a long way to go but successive surgeries are growing her leg bones and shortening the very large gap in the length of her leg.

I was nearly brought to tears myself; I am not a Shriner because with shift work and transfers I never had the time or the ability to join, but I have always been a big supporter of what the Shrine does for children.

As most of you know Shriners are Freemasons and we all should be proud of the fantastic work they do. Instead of submitting my demit I have decided to stay involved in Freemasonry because this man who believes he owes us, (even though he doesn't) made me realize that he and his daughter and people like them are the reason we exist. With all of the pettiness and squabbling over ritual, position titles etc. that too often smothers a lodge and its real purpose, this man refocused me on what it really means to be a Freemason; it's to be there for each other and lend a helping hand where and when we can.

