

**The War Diaries of Francis James [Whiting](#)
Diary 1
October 30, 1914 to September 11, 1915**

Fall Term 1914: Agricultural College¹ – 2nd Year²

October 30

A reception was held in the girl's residence tonight. We were each given a little booklet and pencil and the idea was to go around and get as many names as possible. After the name gathering, all adjourned to the Aud[itorium], where we were treated to a few songs and some ice cream.³

October 31

Hallowe'en. Went downtown [Winnipeg]. Bought some scribblers, this diary and a few other necessaries. Came home.

November 1

Wrote letters, went to church in the Aud[itorium]. and also downtown.

November 2

Field Day. [F.H.] [Wienecke](#) of our year won the individual championship. Our tug-o-war team also won.⁴ Campaign meeting tonight. I was nominated for Secretary of Athletic Society. Luckily there was no time for a speech.

¹ The Manitoba Agricultural College, established in 1906, was the first such educational institution in Western Canada and only the third in the entire country. The original [agricultural college buildings](#) were located on the outskirts of Winnipeg at 139 Tuxedo Avenue, where the Jewish Community Campus of Winnipeg [2009] is presently located. In 1912 and 1913, [new agriculture buildings](#) were erected 11 kilometres south of the city at what is now the Fort Garry Campus of the University of Manitoba. For additional information on the history of the Manitoba Agricultural College, go to University of Manitoba, [Archives and Special Collections](#).

² Frank was in 2nd Year of a five year agricultural programme leading to a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture. Since it was anticipated that the 2nd Year students would graduate in 1918, 2nd Year was known as the Class of '18. The war prevented many of these young men from achieving this educational goal, although a few of them returned and completed degrees after the war was over.

³ According to the *M.A.C. Gazette*, "Each individual being met, first by the President and Mrs. Black, and then by every member of the Faculty, in turn. The guests were then directed towards the gymnasium, where small autograph albums were distributed, and a delightfully informative interchange of autographs commenced, to give every one ample opportunity in which to meet any or everybody in College....In the course of time – remarkably short, considering the number present – most of the albums becoming full, a general movement took place, with its objective point the Auditorium." University of Manitoba, Archives and Special Collections, *The M.A.C. Gazette*, 1914-1915, v. VIII, No. 1 (November 1914), 19.

⁴ According to the *M.A.C. Gazette*, "Probably the greatest excitement of the day was the Men's Tug of War – first year losing to second year in the first draw; then third year pulling the fifth year over the line, leaving the final between third and second year. [M.L.] 'Dad' [McKenzie](#) coached his eight hard, but could not develop sufficient horsepower to counteract R. N. Stewart's effective and timely directions." University of Manitoba, Archives and Special Collections, *The M.A.C. Gazette*, 1914-1915, v. VIII, No. 1 (November 1914), 28.

November 3

Elections. [H.H.] McIntyre, President of student body.⁵ [H.S.] Fry, President of our year. [J.] Ferg Irwin, President of athletics. My worthy opponent, [J.J.] [Neilsen](#), elected Secretary of athletics. [W.J.] [Parker](#), President of Union Lit. Society, [J.H.] [Ellis](#), secretary.

November 4

Meeting of the Philomathian Literary Society⁶ to elect officers. [R.N.] Stewart, President, [F.] [Laughland](#), Vice president, H.C. [Walker](#), secretary.

November 6

A musical recital was given in the Aud. tonight by Miss Clara Munn, Miss. Hemming, Mrs. Jones Brewer and Mrs. Churchill. It was splendid. The very best of music was rendered in the very best of manners.⁷ Some silly idiots though sitting next to me didn't know any better than to giggle at "Caro Mio Ben"⁸.

November 7

Experimented with photos all afternoon – poor results.

November 8

Wrote a letter to H[ilda]. A. R. in the forenoon. Went and paid Mrs. Jones Brewer a visit tonight with C. Walker,⁹ arranging for violin lessons.

November 13

Received from home \$50.00. Dad has sold the oxen for \$125.00.

⁵ According to the *M.A.C. Gazette*, McIntyre, had an easy time of it. "Mr. MacIntyre [sic], candidate for the Presidency of the Student Body, the first speaker, gave his views straight from the shoulder. His platform, summed up in his own words, was "British fair play," which sentiment was very heartily received by the audience. Mr. [Wm. J.] [Stone](#), his opponent, could not be found, although a well equipped expeditionary force, full of life and daring, started on his trail. It appeared that the much sought gentleman was not in the building." University of Manitoba, Archives and Special Collections, *The M.A.C. Gazette*, 1914-1915, v. VIII, No. 1 (November 1914), 21.

⁶ This was the 2nd Year Literary Society. "Philomathian" means "love of learning." A Philomathian Society was established as early as the eighteenth century in England by intellectuals interested in meeting and discussing political reform. The Philomathian Literary Society at the Manitoba Agricultural College, like Philomathian societies at other universities at the time and later, was a meeting place for students to discuss and debate relevant topics of the day.

⁷ Mrs. Jones-Brewer was on Violin, Miss Clara Munn on Pianoforte, and Miss Kate Hemming vocal. The news item in the *Gazette* did not list "Caro Mio Ben" among the items that received the "greatest ovations," an omission that probably would not have pleased Frank. University of Manitoba, Archives and Special Collections, *The M.A.C. Gazette*, 1914-1915, v. VIII, No. 1 (November 1914), 22.

⁸ "Caro Mio Ben," an Italian aria about anguished love, was written by Giuseppe Giordani (or maybe Tommaso Giordani), in the late 1700s. Hear it by [Andrea Doig](#), [Cecilia Bartoli](#), or [Luciano Pavarotti](#), and judge what Frank's response tells us about his musical preferences and character.

⁹ This was Harold C. Walker of Hargrave, Manitoba, who was a friend of Frank's.

November 14

Went downtown. Bought a whole bunch of necessaries.

November 15

Took a violin lesson this afternoon under Mrs. [Jones] Brewer.

November 18

Appointed on a debate next week at our Lit. Decided on subject to be military compulsion for Canada.¹⁰ Our side is [W.E.] [Watson](#), [Wieneke](#)¹¹ and myself – Affirm. Neg. is [Harry] Beaumont, [James] Blair and [Chas. G.] [Bell](#).

November 23

Went downtown to fix up Taylor's storm windows. He had them already fixed up. Took kids to picture show.

November 25

Debate came off tonight. Our side lost thanks, very likely, to me.

November 26

Received a letter from home.¹² Alice Walker getting married on Dec. 2. A letter from Bert Wood. Basketball match between Westminster and Man. Agris. We lost. The Westminster team exhibit some of the prettiest teamwork I ever witnessed.

November 29 [28]

Football match down on the Toba grounds between the Agris and Meds. We won 5-2. This game is the deciding one in the intercollegiate series. Our boys won the shield.¹³

¹⁰ The issue of "Military compulsion," or conscription, was of great interest to the young men at the Manitoba Agricultural College because Canada was officially at war. In November 1914, the Canadian Army was made up of volunteers, but the possibility of compulsory military service in the future was a matter of discussion across the country. Indeed, the debate heated up after the Battle of Vimy Ridge in April 1917, when there were insufficient volunteers to replace the losses on the front lines. The Military Service Act of July 1917 imposed conscription on Canada over the opposition of Quebec, and it created a new breach between English and French Canada that still festers. By August 1918, there were 12,000 conscripts in Europe and 47,000 in total were sent overseas. For more information on the subject, see Cindy Dives, "[Forced Military Service: Why Did Canada Use Conscription in the First World War?](#)"

¹¹ Either Frank H. or Ray H. Wieneke, who were both 2nd Year Agricultural students from Stoney Mountain, Manitoba.

¹² Home was a farm at Wolfe, Saskatchewan, south of North Battleford and west of Saskatoon.

¹³ According to the *Gazette* article on the game, "On November 28 the Student Body 'en semble' at the 'Toba football grounds, witnessed the victory over the Medicals that gained the shield for the 'Ags' aggressive eleven ... Almost the whole student body as well as faculty were on the side lines, divided into four groups or squads; one squad for each of the sides and ends. The yell and songs were rendered consecutively, round and round the field, making the noise of the opposition sound somewhat singular. Along with the successful organization of the 'rooting,' a very commendable feature was the 'finish' and prestige added to the singing and yell by our 'sopranos' of the Home Economics. The players are unanimous that there is nothing like the 'full chorus' as a sideline source of incentive to victory. This game was an excellent illustration of the possibilities of good organization, as the teamwork of both players and supporters was easily the best the city has seen for a long time." University of Manitoba, Archives and Special Collections, *The M.A.C. Gazette*, 1914-1915, v. VIII, No. 2 (December 1914), 32.

December 1 [3]

Violin lesson. Banquet in dining room in honour of Athletic Association.¹⁴

December 4

Debate between our year and fourth year. We won. Our men were [R.N.] Stewart and [H.E.] Wood, theirs were [R.O.] [Hughes](#) and [E.C.] Myers. After the debate all of our year adjourned to the committee room where we sang songs, took pictures and ate apples and nuts until bedtime.¹⁵



"We Won" (Wood & Stewart, Debaters)
'18 'Ensemble' And 'Bun Feed', Dec. 4 – 14.

December 5

[Prof. M.C.] Herner has put on a practical course in poultry fattening for us second year men. Every night and morning we have to go lollipopping¹⁶ down to his poultry plant to

¹⁴ The detailed account of the event that appeared in the *Gazette* indicated that the "Football Banquet" occurred on Thursday, December 3, and was attended by "every person in college who was in a sufficiently good state of preservation and health to attend." University of Manitoba, Archives and Special Collections, *The M.A.C. Gazette*, 1914-1915, v. VIII, No. 2 (December 1914), 28-29.

¹⁵ The subject of the debate was "Resolved, That the United States should enter the European War upon the side of Great Britain and France." Second Year argued the negative and won. According to the *Gazette*, "All speeches were of a high order, but special praise is due Mr. Stewart, who, though a new platform man possesses all the ear-marks of a seasoned debater. During a brief wait at the close of the debate – though on account of the intense excitement over the result it seemed quite long – the chairman ably discussed the speeches and speakers, while the judges came to their final decision. This being at length arrived at, it was announced in favour of the negative by a small majority of points, much to the satisfaction of the '18 Class. Long after the usual time for retiring, distant sounds of revelry indicated a class celebration somewhere in the building." University of Manitoba, Archives and Special Collections, *The M.A.C. Gazette*, 1914-1915, v. VIII, No. 3 (January 1915), 27.

¹⁶ The slang verb "lollipop" has a number of meanings, none of which fit here. From the context, it appears that Frank viewed the trip down there as a waste of time, or perhaps juvenile.

feed our confounded hens.¹⁷

December 6

Sunday. I am spending so much time studying these days that I am downright brain-weary.¹⁸ I started to write letters but it is too much. Had to give it up.

December 7

Violin lesson. Practising seconds to a piece. Miss [Phyllis] Stansfield, first.¹⁹

[December 11]

[Although Frank made no mention of the "Second Inter-Class Debate" on December 11, it is likely that he was among the "very large turnout" at this event, "in spite of the nearness of examinations." According to the *MAC Gazette*, it was "one of the most interesting inter-class debates in the annals of the College." no doubt because of the timeliness of its subject, "Resolved, That the franchise be extended to women." Ironically, the affirmative was represented by Messrs. E.C. [Ramsay](#) and L.V. Robson, 5th Year Agriculture, and the negative by Misses A. Cuthbert and M. Rathwell of the Home Economics Department.

[The Agriculture students, all of them men, had taken their seats along with the young women of the Normal School, whose presence apparently had a "harmonious effect and broke the monotony of the seating arrangements." This tranquil beginning was not to last. As Prof. C.H. Lee took the chair and called the debaters to the platform, the "girls of the M.A.C" made a sudden and raucous entrance,

uniformly decked out in "middy blouses," marching with military precision, singing inspiring songs fitting to the occasion, waving pennants and gaily decorated placards, and taking their seats within a space enclosed with strange and fearsome appearing instruments of their profession.

¹⁷ The busy Prof. Herner also taught a night class on poultry that appeared to have been received by the public with more enthusiasm than Frank, the agriculture student, could muster! "The Night Lectures in Poultry given by Prof Herner are proving even more popular than was anticipated. Seventy-two in all have registered for this course. The number enrolled and the regularity of those attending proves these lectures to be just what was needed at this time. It is interesting to note the variety of occupations represented among those taking this course. The following is the order in which they appear on the Registrar's book: Stenographer, machinist, traveller, printer, clerk, draftsman, farmer, grocer, customs clerk, chef, nurse, tinsmith, carpenter, bricklayer, bookkeeper, musician, etc." University of Manitoba, Archives and Special Collections, *The M.A.C. Gazette*, 1914-1915, v. VIII, No. 2 (December 1914), 40.

¹⁸ "Christmas Examinations begin on Saturday, December 19th, and will be all over on Tuesday afternoon, December 22nd. They have been put on a day earlier than usual this year in order to let students get home in time for Christmas." University of Manitoba, Archives and Special Collections, *The M.A.C. Gazette*, 1914-1915, v. VIII, No. 2 (December 1914), 40.

¹⁹ The musical duet, in this instance, involved a musical selection that was written for two different parts of equal importance. It might be likened to a musical conversation with Miss Phyllis Stansfield, 1st year student in Home Economics, playing the first or *primo* part and Frank playing the second or *secondo* part. Mrs. Jones-Brewer joined them in the performance at a "Patriotic Concert" on January 12.

This was followed by “an interchange of class songs between the rival classes,” which “afforded amusement to the audience,” and inspired the speakers. It was a fitting beginning followed by “splendid speeches” in “one of the best fought debates” of the college’s history, the “happy knack,” in particular, “possessed by Miss Rathwell of accentuating her points with subtle humor appealed to her hearers in an especially marked degree.”

When the debate was over and the judges were making their final decision, “Miss E. Shipley and C. Boughton rendered a pianoforte duet, and Miss Burnett, of the Normal School, a vocal selection, both of which were heartily encored.” The judges, Miss L.R. Brown and Messrs. R.A. [Cunningham](#) and E.J. Trott, decided in favour of the affirmative, in spite of the evident debating ability of Miss Rathwell. The event had been “the first mixed debate” at the college, and was such “a great success” that the Gazette “looked forward with a keen degree of interest to more of a like nature in the years to come.”²⁰ Certainly it wasn’t to become common practice immediately. Indeed, there was enough entrenched resistance in the short run to this revolutionary innovation that women were excluded at the third Inter-class debate on January 9 between First and Third Year Agriculture. As Frank’s diary revealed, the “Girls ... raised an awful row” about that!]

December 14

Violin lesson.

December 17

A letter from home. Rye grass shipped. Letter from Rennies. Got rye grass. Say it is dirtier than they bought from²¹. Getting ready for exams.

December 20

Exams started. Chem, Physics and Soils. Went down to town. Saw Rennies. They are going to get seed cleaned²² at my expense. Got \$75 on account.

December 22 [21]

Four more exams. Standing them pretty good. Getting on fair.

“Ill fares the land, hastening ills a prey
Where wealth accumulates and men decay.”²³

²⁰ University of Manitoba, Archives and Special Collections, *The M.A.C. Gazette*, 1914-1915, v. VIII, No. 3 (January 1915), 27.

²¹ Frank had sold “rye grass” seed to Rennie’s, a grain company in Winnipeg with its head office in Toronto. The shipment was “dirtier,” meaning it had more weed seeds in it, than the sample Frank had sent earlier to the company. Since the price offered to him had been based on the sample, Rennie’s wanted restitution.

²² Rennie’s used a seed cleaner to remove the weed seeds from the rye, and charged Frank for this service.

²³ This quotation was from Oliver Goldsmith’s “The Deserted Village” (1770). See [Wikipedia.org](#) and [English.upenn.edu](#). Frank did not explain why he interjected this quotation here. It refers to the negative impact on society when wealth combines with moral decline.

December 23 [22]

Four more today. Did not get on quite so well. Doubtful about History of Breeds and Poultry. Through exams tonight. Oh, what a relief! Went skating in the moonlight. Very cold.

December 24

Came downtown after dinner. Sent money for Hunter Wells and Thomas Bell.²⁴ Bought a few little things. Took Vinnie home and stayed all night.²⁵



The Beaumont family farm.

December 25

Left Taylors and met Harry [Beaumont] at the station, bought a ticket for Franklin,²⁶ came on down with him. Arrived at his home in the afternoon. Christmas Eve! If there is

²⁴ This reference is not clear. Perhaps he sent money to a couple of creditors.

²⁵ Frank never explained his relationship with Vinnie Taylor, a young woman whose family Frank mentioned a number of times.

²⁶ Franklin was a village between Neepawa and Minnedosa, Manitoba, and the rail station closest [11 km] to the Beaumont farm.

one place more than another where a man should be on Christmas Eve that place is home! If I can afford it I am going home next Christmas Eve.²⁷

December 26

Spent the day eating, sleeping, reading and fiddling.

December 27

Ditto.

December 28

Went to church.²⁸

December 29 & 30

Loafed. Went to party at a neighbour's.

December 31

Left Beaumont's. Came down to Franklin with Dick [\[Beaumont\]](#).²⁹ Came on to Winnipeg. Had a kind of party in the Girl's Residence. All the Profs had disappeared and we had to amuse ourselves as best we might.³⁰

1915

January 1

Started in on my essay "Voltaire" from Parker's "Seats of the Mighty".³¹ New Years dinner a tame affair compared with last year.³²

²⁷ At Christmas, there *is* usually no place like your own home, but Frank's family was at Wolfe, Saskatchewan, a distance too far to travel at that time of year.

²⁸ The Beaumonts attended Anglican services at Holy Trinity Church, which was 1.6 km north of their farm in the Edna District.

²⁹ Dick Beaumont was Harry's older brother. He emigrated from England in 1905 to work as a farm labourer for his Storey relatives in the Edna District, east of Minnedosa, Manitoba. He purchased what became the family farm in 1908 at about the time his brother Harry and sister Alice arrived from the "Old Country."

³⁰ "To those whose homes were at such distance as to prevent their returning for the vacation, the week spent in the familiar halls was filled with a succession of enjoyable events. The larger number of the fair sex than usual added to the pleasantness of the holiday season. Contests in basketball and baseball in the Gym, were full of amusing excitement. General gatherings in the reception rooms on either side of the residence, particularly on Christmas Night and New Year's Eve, were the scenes of many of the old-fashioned Christmas games. On the latter occasion two visitors, Miss Hughes and Mr. Thomas introduced by Mr. R.O. [Hughes](#), aided materially in making the event pleasant. We are indebted to Miss Edna Moore and Miss Carpenter for imported delicacies to satisfy that eternal inner man, and to Miss McKee for liquid refreshment in the form of cocoa, enabling us to toast the New Year in royal style, as the midnight whistles ushered in the youthful 1915." University of Manitoba, Archives and Special Collections, *The M.A.C. Gazette*, 1914-1915, v. VIII, No. 3 (January 1915), 30-31.

³¹ For the entire text of *Seats of the Mighty* and information on its Canadian-born author, Gilbert Parker, go to [The Literature Network](#). [Voltaire](#), the subject of Frank's essay, was an 18th Century French philosopher and social reformer.

³² Frank's comparison may have been accurate. He had been absent for most of the festivities during the Christmas holiday season of 1914-1915, but those of the previous year had certainly been outstanding. See "Christmas at the M.A.C." University of Manitoba, Archives and Special Collections, *The M.A.C. Gazette*, 1913-1914, v. VII, No. 4, [month] p. 257-260.

January 2

Went downtown and saw Rennies about that seed. They had not got it cleaned.

January 4

All the fellows back today and registered.

January 5

Started work again. Paid in \$20 on my fees. Took a violin lesson. Mrs. J. B. [Jones Brewer] getting me into a piece to play at a concert in the Aud.

January 6

[A.] McWilliams from our year on nominating committee for President. Wanted to put [H.] Beaumont and I in but I talked him out of it.

January 7

Campaign meeting tonight. [Roy A.] [Arnott](#) vs. [F.] [Laughland](#) for President of our year.

January 8

Arnott in as President.

January 11 [9]

Interclass debate between 1st and 3rd year. First year won. Girls not allowed in because of press of work. They raised an awful row outside though. I don't suppose their study period was of much benefit to them.³³ I played my little piece.³⁴ It seemed to go down well.³⁵ Violin lesson.

³³ The "girls" were undoubtedly the First and Second Year women in Home Economics, who had been such a "presence" at the Second Inter-class debate on December 11. Home Economics had been taught at the college since 1910, even though no degrees were conferred until 1918. These young women, who were beginning to see themselves as a force within the university and the larger community, saw their exclusion as an opportunity to make a point about women's rights, an issue that was being hotly debated in political circles in Manitoba at the time. [Nellie McClung](#) and the Political Equality League had been campaigning since 1912 for women's rights, specifically the right to vote in provincial elections. This would be achieved in January 1916 when Manitoba women became the first in Canada to get the vote, but in January 1915 the matter was still unresolved. Undoubtedly, the young college women saw this as an opportunity to make their own statement. Like so many others at the time, Frank was unimpressed. The "press of work" was justification for the exclusion, and raising "an awful row" only wasted a valuable study period.

³⁴ Frank's performance, probably of the piece mentioned January 5, went unreported in the Gazette, but mention was made of the "solo" by Miss Phyllis Stansfield.

³⁵ This is how the Gazette reported the event. "The Third Inter-Class Debate. What proved to be one of the most interesting debates in Inter-class debating circles this season took place in the Auditorium on Jan. 9th. The subject, 'Resolved that war is justifiable,' was debated upon the First and Third Years. Messrs. W. A. Kennedy and E. A. Baragar represented the affirmative, while Messrs. F. [Belway](#) and G. H. Henderson upheld the negative. The First Year showed their warlike spirit by marching into the auditorium to music supplied by their local talent. With heads erect and shoulders back they presented a very formidable appearance, but one could notice traces of disappointment in their faces when they realized that ladies were very conspicuous by their absence. W. H. Hicks took the chair and the meeting was opened with a violin solo rendered by Miss Stansfield. The chairman then called the debaters to the platform, and after the rival classes had given vent to their feelings in the form of some well composed class songs, the struggle started. Mr. Henderson opened the debate for the negative and he and his colleague, Mr. Belway, delivered strong and effective speeches. The majority of their arguments were centred around the present war. They pointed out the injustice of its cause and the devastating effect it was having on the nations

January 12

Grand concert tonight.³⁶ The university orchestra came up and rendered some splendid selections. Our trio went well.³⁷ The chorus items were nothing extra.³⁸

January 13

Harry [Beaumont] elected President of the Philo. Lit. [Geo.] [Davey](#), Secretary. I am on the committee.

January 14

Went downtown and straightened up with Rennies. There was 170 pounds of rough stuff cleaned out and the cost of labour was \$14.80. It figured out about 5 cents a pound for the uncleaned seed.

January 19

Sent \$40 to N.M. Co. Paid board up to end of January. Violin lesson.

January 26

Had a complimentary ticket given me to a concert downtown. Took it in. It went well. All the members of choir were invited. Most went.

January 28 [27]

Interclass debate. First and second years. We lost. [J.H.] [Ellis](#) and [H.H.] [Blackhall](#) against [W.E.] [Bacon](#) and [N.E.] Chapman on theirs.³⁹

involved. The debate for the affirmative was opened by Mr. Kennedy. He and Mr. Baragar put forth arguments that were hard to answer. They laid much stress on the fact that war had been the means of spreading Christianity, and also that international disputes could not be satisfactorily settled by arbitration. All the speakers are to be complimented upon the masterly way in which they dealt with their respective subjects, and we hope to hear them again at some future time. The judges gave a majority decision in favour of the affirmative." University of Manitoba, Archives and Special Collections, *The M.A.C. Gazette*, 1914-1915, v. VIII, No. 4 (February 1915), 43-44.

³⁶ "Patriotic Concert. On January 12th a highly successful Patriotic Concert was given. The Students' Choral Class sang for the first time in public and made a very good beginning. A violin trio was well played and Miss [Phyllis] Stansfield showed exceptional talent in the violin solo. Mr. Cunningham sang "Stand by the Union Jack," and a male quartette was well rendered. In addition to the local talent we were glad to welcome from the city Mrs. E. M. Counsell, whose beautiful voice was heard to advantage in the new patriotic song by the Rev. Dean Coombes and Mrs. Jones-Brewer. Mr. Langille gave a spirited rendering of "The Englishman's Home" Mrs. Spencer Wiggan charmed us with her recitations and Miss C. Otto, a young pupil of Miss Hemming, delighted the audience by her vocal assistance; also the University Orchestra, under the direction of Mr. Roland, played splendidly, both rhythm and the tone being admirable. University of Manitoba, Archives and Special Collections, *The M.A.C. Gazette*, 1914-1915, v. VIII, No. 4 (February 1915), 41.

³⁷ The trio probably included Mrs. Jones-Brewer in addition to Phyllis Stansfield and Frank, who had been practising since at least December 7.

³⁸ Evidently Frank was not impressed by the quality of the singing, but in its defence, the choir was still relatively inexperienced.

³⁹ "Second vs. First Year Debate. On Wednesday, January 27th, the Second and First Year debating teams met as scheduled to thresh out the old problem, "Resolved, that capital punishment should be abolished in Canada." Promptly at 8 o'clock the audience assembled in a somewhat "martial manner." The chair was ably filled by Mr. Lohr, president of the Pioneer Literary Society, who after a short introductory speech called the speakers to the platform. Some very excellent arguments, delivered with good force, were forthcoming and the result was a win for the First Year. The speakers were Messrs. Ellis and Blackhall of the Second Year, who upheld the affirmative, and Messrs.

February 3

Taking a course in cooking open to second year men. Given by the “normal” girls⁴⁰ in the cooking lab after four on Wednesdays. I made graham muffins and gave myself a tummy ache.

February 4

Theatre night. I suddenly thought I would take a girl to the show so I phoned down to Vinnie and got her to come. Went downtown on the 5 o'clock car, took Vinnie home and stayed for supper. Went on to the Walker. The play “The Bankrupt”⁴¹ was staged by the University Drama Club and the music was furnished by the U. orchestra. All the colleges were represented and made such a chorus of yells, songs and the array of college colours as I ever saw. The play was well acted and everyone had a good time. I stayed at Taylor's overnight and went home in the morning.

February 5

Intercollegiate debate between our fellows and [Wesley] at [Wesley College Convocation Hall]. We won. [W.H.] Hicks and [H.H.] McIntyre for our side.⁴² I did not attend.

[Bacon](#) and Chapman of the First year, who spoke on the negative. Class songs were rendered and a few “stunts” successfully carried off. Special mention should be made of the “flag incident” successfully carried out by the First Year. Solos by Miss Meecham and Miss Lloyd were a very pleasant addition to the debate and were deeply appreciated. The judges were Messrs. Jackson, [Dennison](#) and Shearer.” University of Manitoba, Archives and Special Collections, *The M.A.C. Gazette*, 1914-1915, v. VIII, No. 4 (February 1915), 45.

⁴⁰ The “normal” girls were the young women enrolled in the normal course for the training of teachers of home economics, which began in September, 1914. It was open to “all young women, holding first or second class professional [teaching] certificates.” They also had to have “successfully completed a collegiate or high school course in general chemistry” because of its importance in home economics. The course included “the study of foods and cooking, hygiene, home nursing, sanitation, sewing, house furnishings, general home management and the methods of presenting these subjects to pupils in public schools and colleges.” University of Manitoba, Archives and Special Collections, *The M.A.C. Gazette*, 1913-1914, v. VII, No. 1 (month), 42.

⁴¹ This play was probably one of “Three Dramas” by Norwegian writer Bjornstjerne Bjornson published between 1874 and 1877. See [Gutenberg.org](#) and [Wikipedia.org](#).

⁴² .“Intercollegiate Debate. Agricultural vs. Wesley [now University of Winnipeg]. On Friday evening, February 5th, 1915, the M.A.C. students, with equal representation from the Home Economics Department, wended their way down to Wesley College Convocation Hall. Speculation was rife as to what the outcome of the debate would be, but on every hand confidence was expressed in the ability of our doughty champions of last year's debate with North Dakota. Prof. Melvin of Wesley College presided. The subject for debate was: “Resolved, that co-operative credit banks afford the best system yet devised of financing the agricultural industry of Canada. Messrs. Dyson and Nuttal of Wesley supported the resolution, while our representatives – Messrs. McIntyre and Hicks – upheld the negative with such skill that the majority of the judges decided in their favour. The Wesleyans built up quite a formidable case in support of the resolution. Their strongest arguments were the enumeration of countries in which this system of co-operative banking has been in successful operation and suggestions as to how it might be adapted to our conditions here in Canada. To McIntyre fell the task of destroying the arguments of the affirmative, which task he accomplished to the satisfaction of all. He contended that this system of co-operative credit banking would not operate successfully in Canada for many reasons, chief of which were: the sparsity [sic] of population, its unsettled state, the differences of religion and nationality, and the fact that its unlimited liability was dangerous, there not being sufficient well-to-do people to assume the responsibility. He concluded his arguments by citing instances of failures of central co-operative credit banks in Germany – the site of its most successful operation. Adopting a different policy, Hicks showed that better systems of banking could be devised and were even now in operation in New Zealand and Australia, countries whose social conditions are almost parallel to those of Canada. He proved that his system was economical, efficient and adaptable. As previously stated, the judges decided in favour of the negative and in consequence Agricultural is now in the finals for another championship. The debate closed with the jubilant M.A.C.



1st Year VS. 2nd, Debate, Jan. 27, '15.
Freshies – Won, But we had a 'Feed' Blackhall & Ellis, for 2nd.

February 6

Sat. In accord with the rural problems we are studying, the sociology class went down and inspected the workings of the Associated Charities of the city.⁴³ We first went to the Bible House which seems to be the headquarters and were there addressed by various speakers on the different phases of the work. One man spoke of the Milk Depot where they give out milk to sick babies among the poorer classes. Another told us what they did for the homeless men, and another what they did for the destitute families. They explained the working of the "Confidential Exchange" between the various charities for the prevention of fraud, etc.⁴⁴ After the addresses we visited the place where the down-and-outs were working out the price of their day's keep, 45 cents. From there we went to the Coffee-House and were shown all over the building. The meals here only cost 10 cents each, and are suitable for a working man. Beds cost 20, 15, 10 cents according to the age of the sheets.⁴⁵ From here we went to the Milk Depot where a very pleasant

yell and God Save the King." University of Manitoba, Archives and Special Collections, *The M.A.C. Gazette*, 1914-1915, v. VIII, No. 4 (February 1915), 45-46.

⁴³ The Associated Charities of the City of Winnipeg, a forerunner of today's United Way, was formed in 1910 and incorporated in 1912.

⁴⁴ The Confidential Exchange was designed to prevent individuals from collecting from more than one agency fraudulently; in other words, getting more than their share of limited resources, so that there was little or nothing left for other needy people. Then, as now, social assistance could be abused by individuals who did not want to work or take responsibility for their families, but this was not generally the case. In most instances, it was low wages and poor living conditions that created the need for social assistance rather than the tendency of the poor to defraud the system. It has also been argued that another motivation for the Confidential Exchange was that the more affluent and established citizens of the southern part of the city perceived the largely immigrant population of North Winnipeg with suspicion. For more information on that hypothesis, see Jim Silver, "[Lord Selkirk Park Housing Development: History, Comparative Context, Prospects](#)," 7-8.

⁴⁵ It would be interesting to calculate whether this level of assistance was more or less than the level of assistance available today to people through Welfare Services. [The Bank of Canada Inflation Calculator](#) can provide some

nurse initiated us into some of the mystery surrounding the feeding of babies. After this we visited some of the foreign residences where they herd together like cattle. Came home on the five o'clock car. Sent an ad to the Guide re grass seed and speltz (spelt).⁴⁶

February 16

Convention Week. Seed Grain Fair in Aud. building. Sent in samples of grass seed (10 cents), speltz (\$1) and Banner oats (90 cents).⁴⁷ Two periods off this morning, took in the addresses in the Seed Grower's Ass[ociation]. Meeting.

February 17

Visitors galore! I helped guide a few around to see the sights. Banquet tonight in honour of the delegates. I took Miss Oliver – very nice girl. Speeches very dry. We talked most of the time.

February 18

Old Student's Day. Quite a number of the old boys came back, among them Scott,⁴⁸ Hird Storey, Vic [Thompson](#), [E.R.] [Bewell](#), Paul F. Bredt and quite a number of minor celebrities. Another banquet. I didn't take a girl. Left before the thing was ended. Had a rotten time. Got to a table where there was only Prof. Jackson and a few old timers I didn't know. Basketball game after the feed. Jack Hamilton, [J.H.] [Ellis](#), Hird Storey, Fred [Forsythe](#) and myself sat up and talked until 1 o'clock.

information on inflation since 1914, but it is only one of the variables that has to be considered. This would make an interesting project for someone interested in the social history of poverty at different points in Canada's history.

⁴⁶ The *Grain Growers' Guide* was established in June 1908 by the Grain Growers Grain Company (renamed United Grain Growers in 1917) and became known as the *Country Guide* in 1928. See University of Manitoba, [Archives of United Grain Growers Ltd.](#) Frank was probably advertising to sell grass seed and "speltz" as he did later (see entry on April 5). [Spelt](#) was an alternative feed grain to oats and barley.

⁴⁷ Agricultural fairs usually include competitions centred on some aspect of farm production, and in this particularly instance, the Grain Fair was focused on seed grains. Evidently, Frank had entered samples of seed that he had grown on his farm in Saskatchewan. The price he included was probably the sale price at the time. The rules for such competitions today are much the same as they were a hundred years ago, as demonstrated by the [fall fair booklet](#) of the New Liskeard, Ontario, Agricultural Society. The prizes are still modest as well!

⁴⁸ This may have been James F. Scott of Portage La Prairie, who had completed 1st Year Agriculture the previous year with Frank.



(L to R). Harry Beaumont, unidentified, Frank Whiting, unidentified, Hird Storey

February 19

Public speaking contest tonight. [W.R.] Barker won the medal on a speech on Patriotism.⁴⁹

February 21

Tonight Forbes Robertson is playing "Hamlet" downtown on his farewell tour.⁵⁰ Miss Williams and I went down to take it in but owing to the fact that we did not arrive there until an hour and a half before the play commenced we were unable to get seats, so we went on the Dominion and took in "Overnight".

February 23

Second year got leave to go down to hear the debate in the Legislature so of course Mac [Alex MacWilliam] and I skipped off to see "Hamlet" at the matinee, but again we were too late to even get a rush seat as was also Prof. Sproule who we met outside and who remarked that he thought we were going to the Legislature. After taking in "Starland" we ambled round to the Parliament Building where I saw my friend Sir Roblin⁵¹ and all his colleague's reading the papers while Mr. ... of Deloraine delivered a very scathing address on the extravagance of the government's expenditures. We stayed for quite a while and took the 5 o'clock car home.

⁴⁹ For insights concerning views and attitudes in 1915, see Barker's winning speech, "*Patriotism*" that won the Public Speaking Cup and Medal in 1915. University of Manitoba, Archives and Special Collections, *The M.A.C. Gazette*, 1914-1915, v. VIII, No. 5 (March 1915), 4-7).

⁵⁰ Forbes Robertson was a famous Shakespearean actor who was among a large number of well known actors of the time who appeared at the [Walker Theatre](#).

⁵¹ [Sir Rodmond Palen Roblin](#) was the Premier of Manitoba at this time, and no "friend" of Frank, whose humorous observation about the reading of newspapers provides a glimpse of his sentiments on the premier and his colleagues.

February 28

On the mat for being out after eleven. I gave them my opinion of the way they look after their job and the lack of discretion exercised. They did not appreciate my plain speaking.⁵²

March 1

Dramatic Society presented two well rendered little acts, "Bardell vrs. Pickwick"⁵³ and "The Girl and the Undergraduate".⁵⁴

March 2

Lit. meeting. Reported my stewardship on the matter of the class pins they had entrusted me with. The motion was put that the thing be laid over for a year. Carried.

March 5

Finish Intercollegiate debate between Agris and Varsity. We lost.⁵⁵

March 6

Took the 11 o'clock car downtown and took up my stand outside the Walker. There was about two hundred ahead of me, but I managed to get a good seat. The play was splendid. "Hamlet" played by Forbes Robertson. My only regret was that I was unable to study it as well as I had Julius Caesar – which, by the way I received 96 marks upon in the term exam – the highest in the year.

March 12

Went downtown this afternoon. Half day off. Went to John Deere people to try to locate the number of the ploughshare on that old gang plough of mine. (John Deer plowshare – either Y41 or No 31)⁵⁶ They advised me to send down the old share either to them or

⁵² The rules governing the residence were strict. Students were allowed to be out one evening during the week, as long as they signed the student register before leaving the building. However, if they wished to be out for a second evening, they had to have special permission from the President or from the Dean of Residence. Moreover, they had to be in before 11:00 p.m., when it was "lights out" throughout the building. Frank was already a young man in his early twenties, an independent farmer in his own right, who demonstrated more than once by his own conduct that he considered rules general guidelines rather than fixed requirements. Under those circumstances, it is not surprising that he found the reprimand irritating.

⁵³ The play was an adaptation of Charles Dickens' *Pickwick Papers*. For more information, see [Note 3](#) in George B. Bryan and Wolfgang Mieder "As Sam Weller said, when finding himself on the Stage': Wellerisms in Dramatizations of Charles Dickens Pickwick Papers".

⁵⁴ The Gazette wrote a complimentary account of the event. University of Manitoba, Archives and Special Collections, *The M.A.C. Gazette*, 1914-1915, v. VIII, No. 5 (March 1915), 40-41.

⁵⁵ "The subject chosen for debate was 'Resolved that the attitude assumed by the United States Government in the present war is in the best interests of the American people.'" The Affirmative was upheld by Mr. T. McMillan and Miss M. Robb of Varsity, while the negative was supported by Messrs. W. R. Barker and F. G. Barnes of M.A.C." University of Manitoba, Archives and Special Collections, *The M.A.C. Gazette*, 1914-1915, v. VIII, No. 5 (March 1915), 43-44. On page 13 of the same *Gazette*, it states, "Friday, March 5. Final debate between Varsity – the day Hicks renounced his views on woman suffrage."

⁵⁶ A [gang plough](#) was a type of plough used to work farmland. Plough shares were the blades that cut furrows in the soil prior to planting. They had to be replaced when broken on stones that littered the fields across the prairies.

Saskatoon. I went to Haug Bros. and Nellerhoe about that old Rock Island sulky⁵⁷ I bought of[f] Hal Mauret. He said they kept repairs for it, but they don't. Bought a grammar and inorganic chemistry book at Eaton's. I intend to do a little swotting⁵⁸ next summer.

March 13

Stock judging competition. Started in at 9 o'clock. Judged two classes each of horses, cattle, sheep and pigs, fifteen minutes to each class.⁵⁹ All the afternoon we – (second, third & fourth years) – sat in the pavilion waiting our turns to go up and give oral reasons for our placing. It was a grueling inquisition in some cases.

George Jones,⁶⁰ the bounder,⁶¹ I used to think he was a decent head, but his manner while cross-examining me gave me an entirely different picture of him. No gentleman! Managed to get off in time to catch the 5 o'clock car and went downtown and had supper with Mrs. Brewer, Miss Stan[s]field also went. [Chas. G.] [Marshall](#) and [W.E.] [Watson](#) dropped in later and some more friends – musical ones – and we had a very pleasant evening. Took the eleven car home.

March 14

Some of the results are appearing. Mine are away down. I always go to pieces on exams. My average was about 60%. [R.C.] [Trimble](#) of the third won the cup and one gold medal. Parkie won two.⁶²

March 17

We held the last meeting of the Literary Society tonight. Very good debate put up. MacWilliams and [Chas. G.] [Kennedy](#) were the leaders. Kennedy won. I have been appointed a member of the New Student committee for next year. Harry [Beaumont] is convener of the Social Service work. He wanted me on his committee but as it is not fair to the rest for one fellow to hog all the jobs he appointed Mac [Alex MacWilliam] and [Frank] [Daw](#) from our year.

⁵⁷ A [sulky](#) is a light two-wheeled carriage designed for one or two persons. The one to which Frank referred was probably manufactured at Rock Island, Illinois.

⁵⁸ A British slang term of the time, derived from "sweat," meaning to study or work hard, especially in reference to the concentrated study of serious students.

⁵⁹ The ability to judge the merits of superior livestock was one of the requirements for graduation from the Manitoba Agricultural College.

⁶⁰ George Jones, B.S.A (1913), was an award-winning judge, who was connected at the time with the Manitoba Department of Agriculture.

⁶¹ "Bounder" was British slang and meant a "morally reprehensible person," or in modern slang, a jerk.

⁶² According to the college calendar, F.F. Parkinson, Roland, Manitoba won the Loudon Hardware Specialty Co. 2nd place prize.

March 19

Held a "Gazette"⁶³ meeting in the Aud. [W.R.] Leslie appointed Editor next year. Later, officers were elected for the orchestra. Fourth year [J.H.] [Hudson](#) is president, Pres. Black Honorary Pres., [J.K.] Graham secretary, Miss Stan[s]field vice-pres., [J.A.] [Gibson](#) and [R.M.] [Billington](#) on the committee.

March 20

The whole year took the 9 o'clock car downtown and took in the Grain Exchange⁶⁴ and the inspection offices. Later, I went to the Walker Theatre and saw Annette Kellerman⁶⁵ play in "Neptune's Daughter"⁶⁶. It was fine. I met H.C. [Walker](#) and fourth year [Wm. R.] Roberts and the three of us went round to Mrs. Jones-Brewer's for supper. Miss Mansfield and our old matron Miss Spackman were there. Later a number of fellows from the Army Medical Corps came in and we had a very enjoyable evening. Walker and I are thinking of accepting their invitation to go again tomorrow night.

March 21

Exam on Marketing. Pretty fair.

March 22-26

Two other exams during the week. Swotting pretty hard. Been appointed by New Student Committee to meet new students at the station next fall and give them instructions into the mysteries of luggage checks and street cars, etc.

March 27

Went to church. Baccalaureate sermon. Mrs. Salisbury gave us a splendid little talk on the "one way journey of life".

March 28

Into it with a vengeance now. Four of 'em today. Pretty fair. Think I passed.

March 29

Four more. Chemistry, Physics, Bact. And Botany. Rather harder. Doubtful of Chemistry. Very catchy paper.

⁶³ The *Gazette*, containing news items important to M.A.C. faculty and students, was published in five monthly issues from November to March.

⁶⁴ The [Grain Exchange](#) was the centre for the buying and selling of grain in Western Canada at that time.

⁶⁵ [Annette Kellerman](#) was an Australian professional swimmer and aquatic film star of the day.

⁶⁶ "[Neptune's Daughter](#)" was a fantasy-adventure silent film, a copy of which still exists at the [Australian National Film & Sound Archive](#), National Collection.

March 30

Four more. Very good papers. Am standing it pretty well. No brain fag⁶⁷ yet. Rather wild time tonight. Freshies talking of ducking the executive. Nothing doing. Got Bob Milne to give me a little lecture on binder knotters⁶⁸.

April 1

Three more exams. All good ones. Bade goodbye to all the boys and came downtown singing songs and giving the college yells all the way. I am sorry to leave the old Col. In many ways. I feel that I am saying goodbye forever to many of my chums. They are figuring on going to the war and perhaps I will go too. Yet who knows. We have all of us been taking military drill and are prepared to make the break at any time if needed.⁶⁹ Bought a few presents for the folks and took Vinnie home. Stayed for tea. They wanted me to stay a couple of days but I was anxious to get home so I came on down to the station and took the eleven-forty train tonight. [H.B.] [Josephson](#) and I took a sleeper between us. He slept alright but I couldn't.

April 2

The two Misses Helgason were on the train, also Miss [H. T.] Evans. We had a jolly time as far as they went – Foam Lake. Josephson got off at Kandahar. Miss Evans got off at Saskatoon and [S.E.] [Fox](#) and I came the rest of the way alone. The kid⁷⁰ was at the station to meet me with the team and democrat⁷¹. Nearly spring here. Some have started harrowing.⁷² Home again.

⁶⁷ "brain fag" meant exhaustion of the brain from heavy mental toil.

⁶⁸ The [binder](#) was a farm implement invented by William Deering that cut grain and bound it with twine into sheaves using a "knotter" that was invented by John Appleby in 1858. The sheaves were then placed upright in conical stooks to dry for a few days before they were picked up on horse-drawn racks and taken to a threshing machine, which separated the grain from the chaff (rest of the grain stock).

⁶⁹ This was Frank's first reference to World War I, which had started eight months earlier in June 1914 after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo. Military drill had been instituted at Toronto, McGill and Queen's, and arrangements were already underway with the Militia Department of Canada to allow these students to serve together in university companies. The University of Manitoba was also involved and had over four hundred drilling twice a week in 1914-1915. At the Manitoba Agricultural College, drill was "conducted by Major Ketchen, of the Lord Strathcona Horse, on Thursday afternoons from one o'clock to five thirty." The students were grouped in "three divisions – each division to drill for one hour and a half." Drill was compulsory for first year students because it was "important training" and "splendid physical exercise as well." Senior students were also encouraged to attend. However, it was emphasised that military drill did not obligate students to enter military service. That was "purely a matter of personal choice" as "Canada wants nothing but voluntary service." However, there was pressure to do so. As the *Gazette* pointed out, it was at the universities and colleges where one could "find the highest type of Canadian manhood - -men who are capable of thinking for themselves; men who recognize Canada's responsibility in this war, and know what she is fighting for; men who will give their services, if need be, not from any spirit of adventure, but because they have learned that individual freedom depends on national freedom." University of Manitoba, Archives and Special Collections, *The M.A.C. Gazette*, 1914-1915, v. VIII, No. 1, December 1914, 2.

⁷⁰ Frank's younger brother, Walter Whiting.

⁷¹ Frank was referring here to a team of horses pulling a "democrat", which was a wagon with two seats at the front.

⁷² Harrowing refers here to the action of a farm implement called a harrow, which breaks up and levels the soil in order to uproot weeds, aerate the soil and cover planted seeds of grain.

April 3

Went up to Phillips this morning. He has bought a 100 bushels of oats. Gave me on account \$52. Went down to Traynor. Received cheque from Jim Braithwaite for \$70. Dad has [\$]420 more for me in the house.⁷³ Figure on going up to Wilkie on Monday to see about getting two or three oxen.

April 4

Binghams came today. Writing letters tonight.

April 5

Kid and I went up to Wilkie today. No decent oxen in Wilkie so bought a horse from McKinnon for \$165 - \$140 cash, balance in 30 days. Horse poor in front legs, otherwise good. Hauling rock all week off my summer fallow land. Most people have started harrowing and seeding. Land very wet this spring. Started wheat seeding about the 10th, finished by 21st. Hauled rye grass to Landis for Frank Bingham to try and sell. Advertising the rest – 1000 bushels in [the Grain Growers'] Guide.

April 22

Sold August Henne the black ox for \$100, also 20 bushels of oats at 80 cents and 10 bushels of speltz for \$9.

April 24

Tried to find a horse. None satisfactory. Folks went down to Neals. I stayed home. Heard from Mervin that Jim Bryson had four oxen for sale. Wrote him.

April 25

Wrote to H. B. [Harry Beaumont]. Big battle raging around Ypres.⁷⁴

April 26

Bought a horse from Allan [Bell](#) - \$160. \$100 cash, rest soon as possible. Dad sowing speltz and Prelude.⁷⁵ His colt laid up with lump on shoulder and sprained foot. Big prairie fire north four miles. Rained in afternoon.

April 28

Dad sowing my Banner oats on summer fallow.⁷⁶ Thinking of enlisting.

May 4

Miss Petit paid us a visit and stayed overnight. I wrote to President [Murray](#) at

⁷³ Frank made \$542 that day, probably most of it from grain sales.

⁷⁴ This was the [Second Battle of Ypres](#), when poison gas was first used by the Germans on Canadian troops, who managed to hold on to their positions in spite of this new weapon of war.

⁷⁵ Prelude is a high protein, early maturing variety of hard spring wheat developed in Canada in 1913. See [Prairie Garden Seeds](#) for information on Prelude and other types of wheat.

⁷⁶ Summer fallow is land that is tilled for a summer to remove weeds and accumulate moisture, then seeded for a grain crop the following spring.

Saskatoon re enlisting in the University Corps.⁷⁷ Dad seeded oats and rye grass on S.W. 25 on my place. Plowing Dad's piece north of the pasture.

May 10

Received word from Saskatoon to write to recruiting officer, Montreal. Sick with grippe.⁷⁸

May 15

Sent for Dr. McDonald. Says trouble is in bowels.

May 17

Slightly better.

May 18

Received word from Montreal – wrote Pres. Murray for particulars.

May 19

Getting around a little.

May 23

Received word from Pres. Murray to go down to Saskatoon tomorrow as four or five fellows are leaving the early part of the week. Went to church and bade goodbye to everyone in sight. Went over and did the same to Doris Pettit. Met her sister Ora. Ora seems quieter than Doris. She gave me back the book "Marcus Aurelius"⁷⁹ she had borrowed.

May 24

This morning I said goodbye to Mother and the others and came down to Saskatoon. She cut me a fern leaf and a carnation and put them in my buttonhole. This was harder than anything else. She thinks so much of her plants. I tried to wear it, but after I was in the train I had to take them out. I put them in a volume of Shakespeare I have brought. I dreaded this morning much more than I dreaded the Germans. Funny thing, but I have a feeling that equals the thought that if I get home again sound in wind and limb I shall be very much surprised. Went to the Armoury and saw the recruiting officer. He thinks I'll pass OK, but the doctor could not be found so I will call tomorrow. Loafed all day.

⁷⁷ The "University Corps" was made up of six companies known officially as "[University Companies](#) Reinforcing PPCLI," because they were to act as reinforcement to the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, which had sustained heavy losses at the [2nd Battle of Ypres](#) in April-May 1915. Company recruits came from universities all over Canada, but since their mobilization centre was McGill University, they were often called the "McGill Companies." See Jeffery Williams, *Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry: 1914-1984 Seventy Years Service*, 2nd ed. (London: Leo Cooper in association with Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd., 1985), 15.

⁷⁸ Grippe is an old word meaning influenza or simply flu.

⁷⁹ [Marcus Aurelius](#) [called 'the wise'], was a Roman Emperor, who ruled from 161 until his death in 180. His work *Meditations* "is still revered as a literary monument to a government of service and duty."

Met [A.L.] Blackstock in the station wearing the same old hat. Neither [C.R.] [Hopper](#) nor [R.A.] [Cunningham](#) have enlisted yet. It seems to me that those fellows who talked the most about enlisting are doing the least. Drifted into a Salvation Army barracks and listened to the testimonies.⁸⁰ After, met Allan [Bell](#) on the street corner. He has enlisted and has been under an operation for ruptures.⁸¹ He walked part way back to my diggings at the Union Hotel with me. Feel very strained tonight.

May 25

Loafed around all day. Sworn in at the city hall.⁸² Met Fred Lamb. Billy Curtis joined at Battleford, now at Sewel. [[Camp Hughes](#)]⁸³ Went up to the University and looked at the experimental plots. Met Prof John [Bracken](#) who explained and pointed out a number of interesting things. I was surprised they had such good buildings down there. In some ways the place is even better than the M.A.C. [Manitoba Agricultural College]. Later met Charlie Holmes.

May 26

Rained nearly all day. Loafed around.

May 27

Thursday. Left Saskatoon at noon in company with three others named [W.J.] [Mitchell](#), [Robt. C.M.] [Fergus](#) and [A.A.] [Johnston](#)⁸⁴. Fergus in charge – used to be a sergeant. Started training in the smoker⁸⁵ – ju-jitsu resistance exercise.

May 28

Winnipeg this morning. Said howdy to Vinnie, wrote a letter to mother in Y.M.C.A. Went down to M.A.C. and said goodbye. Only two of our men joined – [Lt. Ed. A.] Blake and [W.N.] [Forbes](#). None in University company. Those potatoes of mine I sent to be tested at Indian Head Exp. Farm two years ago came out sixth in a bunch of twenty-three.⁸⁶ Bade goodbye to Miss Spackman, she gave me a couple of pairs of socks. She is still

⁸⁰ "Testimonies" were personal accounts by Salvationists of the benefits of accepting Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour.

⁸¹ Ruptures or hernias were often the result of the back-breaking labour typical of farm life at the time.

⁸² For the information taken by the recruiting officer on May 25, see Francis James Whiting's [Attestation Papers](#) that paved the way for his entry into the 2nd University Company.

⁸³ This is a reference to Camp Sewell, founded in 1910, and located about 10 k. north of CFB Shilo in Western Manitoba.

⁸⁴ Wm. Joseph Mitchell, Robert Chalmers Morrison Fergus, and Ardell Alfred Johnston were all members of the 2nd University Company, PPCLI.

⁸⁵ They were on the train. The smoker was a train compartment where cigarette smoking was permitted.

⁸⁶ The Indian Head Experimental Farm was established in 1886 at Indian Head, Saskatchewan, to promote Western Canadian agriculture nationally and internationally in part to attract settlers to the prairies. It also conducted research to improve farm practices, animal husbandry, and plant yields. Frank's potatoes were probably entered into an exhibition sponsored by the experimental station to locate high yielding varieties (in this case potatoes) that could be recommended for general use or used in plant breeding to further improve the variety.

working away at the Red Cross. Went around to Mrs. [Jones] Brewers for supper. Came down to Taylor's and stayed the night.

May 29

Left Winnipeg this morning. Three other troop trains right behind us going to Montreal with troops for England. Taking pictures all down through New Ontario. Splendid scenery. Arrived in Port Arthur tonight, watched the moon rise over Lake Superior with the lights of the shipping showing up well on the lake.

May 31

Arrived in Montreal this morning. Reported at barracks.⁸⁷ Sent to hospital on account of sore swelling that had developed on my neck on the way. Entered hospital at 5 o'clock. Several McGill fellows here. Doctor examined me tonight and says trouble is an abscess.

June 1

No breakfast or dinner today. Operation at 2 o'clock. Queer sensation being under ether.⁸⁸ Came out without making any trouble or noise.

June 2

Very painful night. Neck very sore.

June 3

Bandages taken off and changed. A large tube was inserted into the hole. It was taken out leaving a hole big enough to put two fingers in.

June 10

The food here is very poor, scarce and dirty – also cold. The nurses though are nice with the exception of one. She resembles an icicle with red hair although it is very pretty hair. The fellows in the next ward nearly all have syphilis or some other venereal disease; they mix up with us to quite an extent and the authorities must know it, but little or no attempt is made to segregate them.⁸⁹

June 14

Doctor told me this morning that I could get out on Saturday owing to the fact that I was a soldier and therefore liable to get drunk, but that otherwise I was fit enough to go out

⁸⁷ The mobilization centre was the Students Union Building at McGill University in Montreal. See Jeffery Williams, *Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry: 1914-1984 Seventy Years Service*, 2nd ed. (London: Leo Cooper in association with Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd., 1985), 15.

⁸⁸ Ether is an anaesthetic now rarely used in North America and Europe because it is volatile and slow acting; however, because it is cheap and easily administered, it is still used in third world countries.

⁸⁹ The subject of venereal disease was not something generally discussed outside a hospital in 1915, so Frank may not have known exactly how it was transferred from one person to another. In addition, he may have felt a moral revulsion against anyone who had the disease.

now. I sat down and wrote a letter to Capt. [George C.] [McDonald](#)⁹⁰ telling him the facts.

June 15

Doctor told me I could go out tomorrow.

June 16

[Prof. Herbert Jennings] [Rose](#),⁹¹ a private in the unit and a Rhodes Scholar,⁹² came down this morning and fetched me out. We walked up to the barracks. Got rest of my equipment. In the afternoon I took my uniform to the tailor to be fitted. Loafed around. Slept with the rest in a large hall on the third floor of the building they call McGill Union⁹³. Place used as a club-room of the McGill students. Fitted up just fine.

June 17

First order of the day – physical drill for half an hour or so. Roll blankets and breakfast. After breakfast, kit inspection. Then parade on the campus before college buildings. (I tried to get leave to go down and see Hilda but owing to the fact that I had to have \$50 to get into the States, I could not get it.) Parade again. Squad drill. Very hot, very tired, had to go in at 3:30.

June 18

Stood it all right today.

June 19

On fatigue duty⁹⁴ in forenoon with [A.K.] Zaffe [Zapfe](#) – an ex-bank manager or something of the sort. Being Saturday had half a day off. [W.J.] [Mitchell](#) and I went down to Lachine, but didn't see the rapids. We did not have time to go all the way.

June 20

Sunday. Church parade in the forenoon.⁹⁵ Went out to Cartiersville with [V.S.] [Ferguson](#)⁹⁶ and [C.W.] [Hooper](#). Saw considerable scenery and had supper in a delightful little nook of a tea garden. The best meal I have eaten in many a long day.

⁹⁰ Captain [McDonald](#) was the commanding officer of the 2nd McGill University Company.

⁹¹ Go to Wikipedia, for more information on H. J. [Rose](#).

⁹² The [Rhodes Scholarship](#) is an international award for study at Oxford University in England and selection is based on academic achievement and character. Prof. Herbert Jennings Rose, an Ontario-born recipient of this scholarship survived the war and went on to a productive academic career in Great Britain.

⁹³ The [Student Union Building](#) was McGill's COTC (Canadian Officers' Training Corps) in World War I, and its upstairs hall was even used as a range for target practice.

⁹⁴ Fatigue duty was anything of a non-military nature that could be assigned a soldier.

⁹⁵ During World War I, church parades were held on Sunday and involved a march either to a church for the Roman Catholics or in the absence of a church to an open area for the Protestants, followed by a non-denominational service, usually about a half hour long, that included a couple of hymns, a reading from the Bible, prayers, and a short address by a chaplain.

June 21-27

Drill, parades, etc. Getting on OK. Writing lots of letters and postcards these days. Had my photo taken and sent a bunch home. Today packed up and got things ready for sailing tomorrow. Sent off my will to the bank at Landis. Went up the mountain on the inclined railway⁹⁷ with [Mitchell](#) and his friends.

June 28

No drill today. Paraded at nine and again at two but was shortly dismissed. Went downtown and bought an ensignette⁹⁸ to replace the one stolen from my grip while I was away at hospital. Fell in at 7 PM in full marching order with all our worldly possessions on our backs. Nearly all the boys had someone there to say goodbye to them. It was a touching scene. I was glad in a way that I had no one there. I took a couple of time exposures on the chance they might turn out alright. We were marched down to the docks and there embarked aboard the "Northland".⁹⁹ There are about 1800 men going over on her besides ammunition so we should make a very choice plum for the submarines.¹⁰⁰ Almost every branch of the service is represented from every part of Canada. I am sharing a tiny stateroom¹⁰¹ with a man named [Angus A.] McDonald [\[MacDonald\]](#) from Regina. He has a commission but lacks an appointment yet; is a storekeeper.¹⁰² Should say he was a fine fellow. These are second class bunks and are much more comfortable than I expected.

June 29

Left Montreal at daybreak. Passed some great scenery all day. Stopped at Quebec for an hour or so and took on another bunch from some where. Took a couple of pictures of Quebec. Day very dull. Pictures very doubtful.

June 30

Passed Gaspé Bay today but if I had not been told I would certainly not have recognized it from my vivid description in last winter's essay on the sailing of the first Canadian contingent. Raining nearly all day. Left sight of land in afternoon.

⁹⁶ This was Vernon Stewart Ferguson, an Arts student at the University of Manitoba, when he enlisted in the 2nd University Co. at Winnipeg on 3 June 1915. Frank may have met him earlier.

⁹⁷ An inclined or [funicular railway](#) known as the Mountain Park Railway was located on the slopes of Mount Royal in Montreal from 1884 until 1918.

⁹⁸ A type of camera.

⁹⁹ For a photograph of the *Northland*, also known at times as *S.S. Minnesota (III)* and *Zeeland*, go [here](#).

¹⁰⁰ German submarines caused havoc until 1917, when the Royal Navy realised it had to provide greater protection for transatlantic shipping.

¹⁰¹ A stateroom is a berth or cabin on a ship.

¹⁰² [MacDonald](#), father to two small children, was killed at the Battle of Sanctuary Wood.

July 1

Dull and foggy at time all day. Passed south of Newfoundland but did not see it. Out of sight of land all day. They give us physical drill on the officer's deck twice a day for about an hour each time. There is about 58 guards posted at about 58 different parts of the vessel, keeping guard over stairways, engine rooms and other articles of value that marauding soldiers might do away with.

July 2

Inoculated again.¹⁰³ Getting into the ground swell.¹⁰⁴ Quite a few of the boys sick.

July 3

Have heard by wireless that we have been sunk by submarines.¹⁰⁵ The danger of submarines is undoubtedly great as this vessel has taken over 5 or 6 loads of troops already and is well marked by the enemy. Very foggy all day. Missed physical drill today owing to sore arm.

July 4

Sunday. Clear weather at last. A whole school of porpoises played around the ship most of the day.¹⁰⁶ Took several pictures of them.

July 5

Clear again. More porpoises and some very interesting boxing and wrestling matches.

In touch with the convoys.¹⁰⁷ Expect to be in port Thursday or Friday. Had last drill this afternoon but things progressed so slowly that if we are torpedoed I see no earthly hope of getting the boats off in time to do any good. Painted the ship's funnels black and white instead of red and brown.

July 6

Account ourselves in the danger zone. All lights out by eight forty-five. A three-masted schooner passed us this afternoon hull down¹⁰⁸ and another sailing vessel to the north. A steamship is just visible on the horizon now at twilight. Cannot make her out. All our company was vaccinated today. A school of whales about three hundred yards off.

¹⁰³ This inoculation was for Typhoid Fever and was followed by vaccination on July 6.

¹⁰⁴ A ground swell is characterised by an increased swelling or rolling of the sea that is caused by a distant storm or earthquake.

¹⁰⁵ Evidently, allied troop ships were being attacked and sunk by German submarines.

¹⁰⁶ For an explanation of this phenomenon, see "[Dolphins surf for fun.](#)"

¹⁰⁷ Frank was referring to British Naval protection, although the British Admiralty did not officially adopt a [naval convoy system](#) until May 1917, when the devastation caused by German submarines became too great to ignore any longer.

¹⁰⁸ The term "hull down" was a nautical term describing a ship that was so far away that only its superstructure was visible.

July 7

Caught cold. Sighted 2 or 3 more steamers.

July 8 12 a.m.

Expecting to sight land any time now. Convoy has not yet come up. 2:50 PM. The convoy has just come up. Two destroyers.¹⁰⁹ Passed quite a number of vessels this afternoon. At dusk the course was changed from due east to straight north. Every precaution has been taken to safeguard us from submarines. The boats have been lowered down to the promenade deck, every man sees to it that his life belt is within reach and all lights are out by 8:45 PM. All port holes must be closed by 7.

July 9, 6 a.m.

England at last! As far as one can see the sea is dotted with fishing craft and destroyers. We just passed the Eddystone Lighthouse¹¹⁰ and on the port bow like a low grey cloud we see the coast as the mist clears. Cast anchor in Plymouth Harbour¹¹¹ 7 a.m. Passed HMS *Impregnable* fairly covered with Britain's young sailors who are training there – and such cheering!¹¹² I guess we made a sight too, fairly covering our vessel with khaki. The place seems peaceful enough as far as noise is concerned, but she bristles with forts and submarines, torpedo-boat and destroyers pass and re-pass right along. Entrained at 2 PM and passed through just the homeliest, Englishest scenery ever grown. Everybody that waved a hand at the train received a rare ovation from the occupants. Saw a dirigible¹¹³ over London, also several airships circling round like great hawks. Arrived at Shorncliffe¹¹⁴ very sleepy after midnight. Marched out to the camp about a mile from town.¹¹⁵ There are about 35,000 men in training here, some under canvas and others quartered in corrugated iron sheds. We are stationed in the latter. The first night we slept on the bare boards as our blankets were not unpacked.

¹⁰⁹ The convoy consisted of two destroyers of the Royal Navy, which were more than a match for a submarine.

¹¹⁰ [Eddystone lighthouse](#) is 14 km southwest of Rame Head along the southwest coast of England. Rame Head is about 5 km from Plymouth Sound

¹¹¹ [Plymouth Sound](#) is a bay on the southwest coast of England used by ships of the Royal Navy.

¹¹² Plymouth was the location of the [Royal Navy Training Ships](#).

¹¹³ The [dirigible](#) was a sausage-like air ship, the most famous being the Zeppelin, which was used by the Germans in raids over England from 1914 (with the peak in 1915) until 1918, when it was abandoned as ineffective. As Frank expressed no concern about the dirigible he saw, it was probably the SS (Sea Scout), which was introduced by the Royal Navy in February 1915 for scouting, mine clearance and submarine attacks. Later in his diary, Frank mentioned observation balloons over the battlefield at the front.

¹¹⁴ Frank had travelled by train about 449 km east of Plymouth on the *southwest* coast to Shorncliffe, a military training centre was just outside of Folkstone in Kent on the *southeast* coast of England.

¹¹⁵ The training camp was at St. Martin's Plain at Shorncliffe, England.



St. Martin's Plain Shorncliffe
Military Training Camp

July 10

Went for a walk before breakfast. Some scenery! Fixed things up all day such as bedding, rifle, etc. Learned from Lt. [G. C.] [McDonald](#) that we are to stay together as a distinct unit as reinforcements for the PPCLI, retaining our officers and non-coms¹¹⁶. Paraded at 6 PM and taken down to Folkstone, then dismissed and we “took in” as much of the town as wasn’t out of bounds, which wasn’t much. Back to camp by 10 PM. Am broke.

July 11

Sunday. Church Parade at 8:30 this morning. It was a pleasant sight to see the different regiments file out from the various camps with their regimental bands ahead. Wrote a letter home. Went for a walk this afternoon alone. Went to St. Martin’s church this evening.¹¹⁷

July 12

¹¹⁶ The references here are to *commissioned* officers who were commissioned by the government to take command of an army unit. “Non-coms” were the [non-commissioned officers](#), including sergeants, corporals, and warrant officers, who received their authority from commissioned officers.

¹¹⁷ For an image of St. Martin’s Church, go [here](#).

Started to work this morning, am taking bayonet drill and squad drill.¹¹⁸ In the afternoon went for a route march among the hills to the east. Travelled about 7 miles. The food here can hardly be expected to keep a man in good working condition. For butter we have margarine and the bread, though sweet, is made of the lowest grade of flour, being very dark and heavy. Dinner¹¹⁹ is the best meal, when we receive a large plateful of meat and potatoes and peas or beans. No pudding or pie of any kind. Supper is bread, margarine and fruit, such as applesauce. The latter very limited.

July 13

Besides bayonet and squad drill this morning we were given a lecture on rifle sighting¹²⁰ by some old josser,¹²¹ I don't know his name. He knew his subject alright though. Went for a long route march this afternoon. About halfway we were halted and made to dig a trench. (We had to carry a pick and shovel in addition to our rifle and other junk.) We stayed there digging for about two hours, when we were marched home (not that)¹²² to camp. We arrived there about 8, very tired and hungry. A little rice with raisins was added to our bread and jam tonight.

July 14

Pay day at last! Paid 7 pounds.¹²³ Went out and tried to get a penny bun, but no one had the change. The irony of fate. I went hungry to bed with \$35 in my pocket.

July 15

Could not buy anything until this afternoon. Went for a route march up on the hills. Dug and finished some trenches we had been working on. Took along a lunch and had supper out there. Afterwards stayed until 10:30 or thereabouts doing night manoeuvres. The idea was to relieve the men in the trenches without the enemy knowing what was going on. Camp again by 1 o'clock AM.

July 16

Everything today was more or less upset by the fact that we are to be inspected tomorrow by Borden and Sam Hughes.¹²⁴ Spent all the afternoon rehearsing our little

¹¹⁸ A drill was instruction for new recruits usually by a non-commissioned officer or [drill sergeant](#). In this instance, Frank was being given training on the use of the bayonet and the function of a [squad](#), which was a small military unit, smaller than a platoon, consisting of 8-14 men and led by a non-commissioned officer.

¹¹⁹ "Dinner," as described here by Frank, was the noon meal.

¹²⁰ [Rifle Sighting](#) involved training in the use of a rifle, which was necessary instruction because many of the raw recruits were unfamiliar with guns.

¹²¹ A josser was an English slang term often used in reference to an older man, one perceived as past his prime. Frank perceived the instructor as a josser, but he acknowledged that looks were deceiving. The man knew what he was doing.

¹²² Frank's comment indicated that his idea of "home" was certainly not the camp.

¹²³ Frank was paid in British pounds, which would have been roughly equivalent to \$14.00 Canadian dollars at the time. Later, when he went to France, he was paid in francs.

¹²⁴ Sir Robert Borden was the Prime Minister of Canada at the time, and Sir Sam Hughes, the controversial Canadian Minister of Militia and Defense.

stunts on the main parade ground. Rained hard this evening but went down to Shorncliffe and bought a few things, among them a plate of fish and taters. First Universities left for France tonight.

July 17

Inspection pulled off OK. Very impressive, but I felt bored to death. Went downtown after noon and strolled around. Drifted into a dinky little place for “tea”. Called for a pair of kippers. They were certainly good after 12 years abstinence.¹²⁵

July 18

Wrote letters to Hilda R., Harry B[eaumont]. and home. Went for a walk into the “Warrens”¹²⁶. Great scenery.

July 19

This afternoon went for a route march round by Hythe.¹²⁷

July 20

Went for a route march up around the Hangar.¹²⁸ Stopped to rest halfway up the hill when the 29th [49th?] passed. Among them I recognized Wilfred Barker.¹²⁹ He is camped on the same plain here and in D Company. Night maneouvers. Camp again about midnight.

July 21

No route march this afternoon. Walked two or three miles and sat down and was lectured on advance and rear guards.¹³⁰ Received compound letter from home containing letter from [H.E.] Wood, McWilliams, Hilda and the folks at home. Had a chat with Wilf [Barker](#) tonight.

¹²⁵ Kippers are smoked herring that are now usually a breakfast food, but in 1915 they were more commonly served at high tea or supper. Since Frank had not tasted them for twelve years, he must have emigrated to Canada in 1903.

¹²⁶ [The Warren](#) was an area of scrubland noted for its flowers and butterflies below the chalk cliffs along the coast near Shorncliffe. The [Folkstone Warren Halt Railway Station](#) was there when Frank visited the “Warrens” in July, but it was buried in a landslide in December 1915 and not rebuilt until 1919.

¹²⁷ Hythe was the location of the rifle range, a little over 4 km west of Shorncliffe, where St. Martin’s Plain was located.

¹²⁸ The reference suggests an aircraft hangar. C.D. [Richardson](#), 4th University Company, P.P.C.L.I, [wrote](#) from St. Martin’s Plain on 1 February 1916 that, “The airships flying around here are almost as numerous as automobiles. There are biplanes, monoplanes, dirigibles and all the rest.”

¹²⁹ On February 19, Frank mentioned Wilfred R. Barker, whose speech on patriotism won the medal for public speaking at M.A.C. in 1915. However, the Wilfred Barker mentioned here was a farmer from Traynor, Saskatchewan, near Wolfe, where Frank had his farm.

¹³⁰ Advance guards led the frontline troops, guarding them from ambushes and connecting up with and pursuing the enemy. Rear guards protected withdrawing troops by engaging the enemy to delay its forward advance.

July 22

Rained this afternoon. Instead of a route march and night work we were lectured by the O.C.[Officer Commanding] on life in the trenches. I was on fire picket duty¹³¹ tonight.

July 23

Taken for a short march and there lectured on methods of attack by an army division upon a strong position held by the enemy. Wrote letters to Mac [A. MacWilliam] and [H.E.] Wood.

July 24

Kit inspection¹³² this morning.

July 25

Sunday. Our company is put on Battalion duty for a full week starting today. I was going to spend the weekend at Ramsgate but all leave is stopped.¹³³ [M.] [Dutton](#) and I were sent down on fatigue duty to Shorncliffe station. The corporal in charge, not having any work for us to do, turned us off for the day soon after getting down there. Went to Dover¹³⁴ in the afternoon along with Murchison [V.K. [Marginson](#)], [W.C.] [Overs](#) and [P.H.] [Budds](#). The latter was picked up by "Jane" shortly after arriving in Dover.¹³⁵ The rest of us went up to the castle¹³⁶ and looked around there. Back in good time.

July 26

Reported at the station at 9 as directed but no transport wagons were forthcoming so we loafed all day. The idea occurred to me today of getting transferred to the Veterinary Corps,¹³⁷ so after we were dismissed this afternoon I went down to the V.C. headquarter to investigate. I interviewed Capt. [W.T.] [Rodgers](#) and he said he would certainly take me, all being clear on my record book.

July 27

Fatigue force increased to 6. Worked as hard as we did yesterday.

¹³¹ A picket is a soldier's watch or guard duty. In this case, Frank had to watch during the night to ensure that possible fires were detected early. Soldiers were also assigned night pickets in a forward position on the front lines to warn of enemy activity. In such cases, more than one soldier was usually involved and rotated every three or four hours to ensure that the man on watch was alert.

¹³² A kit inspection was a review of the equipment that a soldier was to carry with him into the war zone. It included anything from cooking and eating utensils to ground sheets and periscopes.

¹³³ Ramsgate was a seaside town in East Kent about 40 km north-east of Shorncliffe. Frank's Uncle Ernie Yeo and his family lived there.

¹³⁴ Dover was about 13 km east of Shorncliffe along the English Channel

¹³⁵ "Jane" was probably a prostitute, of which there were many in areas frequented by soldiers during World War 1, indeed in any war.

¹³⁶ The reference here was to [Dover Castle](#), a defensive site dating back to Roman times.

¹³⁷ The Veterinary Corps provided medical care to horses and mules, the pack animals used on the front lines during World War I.

July 30 [31]

All this week we have done but very little. Occasionally we unload a car of cases but we didn't actually work more than a couple of hours daily. At noon today I managed to get a weekend pass and went down to Ramsgate. I looked up Uncle Ernie's place. They were sure glad to see me and gave me a splendid time.

July 31 [August 1]

Went to church a couple of times and was very much looked at. Met a lot of old friends of Mother's among them Mrs. Rowe, Mrs. Packer, Miss Cox, Misses May, the Drink family, a family of Richfords, all the Mundy family. Mrs. Richford was Miss Cowel before she was married. I am writing down all these names and details before I forget them so as to include them in my next letter home. Didn't I just have a whale of a time there? Girls! Girls! Girls! And didn't they make a fuss of Willie? There are very few Canadians go down there so the place isn't spoiled. Ramsgate is the happy hunting ground of all unmarried men.¹³⁸

August 2

Back to work again. Very long route march this afternoon. Pay parade¹³⁹ tonight.

August 3

On guard today. Wrote a letter home and received one.

August 4

Day off. I, with Mr. Bonar Law and Redmond, inspected the Canadian troops.¹⁴⁰ Rained like blazes the whole time.

August 5

Went on a route march of 22 miles today, away round by Canterbury¹⁴¹ and back to the trenches up on the hill. Bivouacked¹⁴² out tonight.

August 6

Rained considerable last night, but slept fairly well. Filled the trenches in during the forenoon. Afternoon off. Kids came around and brought things from the village for us. Played baseball all the afternoon. Bivouacked again tonight.

August 7

¹³⁸ Many of the local young men were off to the war, so the competition Frank faced was greatly reduced.

¹³⁹ A pay parade was held when the men received their soldier's pay.

¹⁴⁰ Frank was being facetious, as it was Law and Redmond who were inspecting the Canadian troops. Bonar Law was a Canadian-born British parliamentarian, who served for a brief time as Prime Minister of Great Britain. Redmond was probably John Redmond, another British parliamentarian of Irish background, who supported the war effort.

¹⁴¹ Canterbury was about 26.5 km north of Folkstone.

¹⁴² A bivouac was a military camp, so they camped out that night.

Came back to camp this morning. Warsaw has been abandoned to the Germans.¹⁴³ Muster parade¹⁴⁴ this morning. Off for the rest of the day. Went down to Hythe.

August 8

Sunday. Church parade first thing. Went for a walk on the sea front. Met Don Gilbert and his friend Ritchie. All three went to church.

August 9-13

Shooting at the range at Hythe. I am a fair shot compared with the majority of the



Hythe Rifle Range
Approximately 4 km west of Shorncliffe, England.

fellows in our company. Pay Parade tonight. Received 6 pounds. Handed in a pass for London yesterday.

August 14

Kit inspection this morning. My pass did not go through. Paraded before the captain but he couldn't do anything. I inquired about my transfer but he refused it. [R.W.] Hollingsworth [[Hollingsworth](#)] told me it was because I was too good a shot. I shall have another try before I give up the idea. Pass or no pass, I went to London. I had a narrow escape or two but managed to get through alright. I got off at Cannon St. and took a taxi the rest of the way to avoid collision with MP's at Charing Cross.¹⁴⁵ Aunt Fannie met me

¹⁴³ The Germans captured Warsaw from the Russians on 5 August 1915.

¹⁴⁴ A muster parade was an assembly or gathering of the troops for inspection, orders, or display.

¹⁴⁵ Charing Street is the junction of three major streets at the very centre of London.

at the door. She looks pretty bad. Both Uncle Will and Aunt Fannie look considerably older and stouter since I saw them 12 years ago. After tea they took me around to Ethel's place where Flossie was staying. They have a fine little home there and so happy. The youngsters are great kids. Met Grandma Sexton, aged 81. Slept with Uncle Will.

August 15

Sunday. Went to church in St. Paul's Cathedral. Nice little place, but the congregation were very ill-mannered; they beat it as the collection was being taken up.¹⁴⁶ Investigated the "Tup'n'y tube."¹⁴⁷ Some tube. Went round again to Ethel's and took a photo of the family. Took the girls back to Uncle's and said goodbye to all. Arrived back in camp OK without being missed officially.¹⁴⁸

August 16

Ranges again in forenoon. Reviewed by the Duke of Teck¹⁴⁹ on the Moore parade grounds this afternoon.

August 17

Shooting again. Finished up today. 10 rounds in 45 seconds at 200 yards at silhouette target. Very hard to see owing to bank behind it, but got 8 hits on out of 10 shots. Average was 2.5 hits per man.¹⁵⁰

August 19

Heard today unofficially that I am pretty near if not quite high man in the shooting.

August 20

Understand we are leaving for France Monday the 23rd.

August 21

Got late leave for tonight and beat it down to Ramsgate.

August 22

Stayed until tonight. Went for a swim in the sea before breakfast and a stroll along the front after. Walked nearly up to Broadstairs¹⁵¹ this afternoon. Went to church in evening

¹⁴⁶ [St. Paul's Cathedral](#) is the seat of the Anglican Bishop of London, and it is far from "little."

¹⁴⁷ The "[Two Penny Tube](#)", was a nickname derived from the flat fare and cylindrical tunnels of the underground Central London Railway that was opened in July 1900,

¹⁴⁸ There was less activity at the training camp most weekends, so Frank evidently gambled that his unauthorised trip to London would go undiscovered. However, getting caught was always a possibility, so the penalty must have been sufficiently light for Frank to take the risk. Had he done the same thing at the Front, he would probably have been shot.

¹⁴⁹ Prince Adolphus, [Duke of Teck](#) was a younger brother of Queen Mary, wife George V, the King of England during World War One.

¹⁵⁰ Like many young farmers from the Canadian prairies, Frank had learned how to handle a gun, so the likelihood that he would be transferred to the Veterinary Corps was slim indeed!

¹⁵¹ Broadstairs was about three k. north of Ramsgate.

and said goodbye to all the friends I have met. Got to camp about 10:30. Heard that we are leaving for France in the morning, that I will probably get into trouble for overstaying my leave. Prize first in shooting, my second.

August 23

Was examined by Med[ical] Officer first thing. (Rose at 4.) Received identification disc,¹⁵² clasp knife,¹⁵³ sharpened bayonet¹⁵⁴ and ammunition. Left for Moore plain after brekker¹⁵⁵ and got there about 7. Took the train and landed in Southampton about 2 o'clock. Capt gave me 7 days "defaulters".¹⁵⁶ Took ship *St. Petersburg* for France at sundown. Disembarked some troops at Havre¹⁵⁷ next morning and we came on up the river to Rouen.¹⁵⁸ Our pack is nearly 90 pounds in weight now and we had to carry it up the hill to the camp – about 3 miles. Quartered in tents, 10 men to each.

August 25

On mess orderly duty¹⁵⁹ all day. Am sending home 3 pounds and have assigned \$20 a month.¹⁶⁰

August 26

Sixty of us were sent down to a supply base depot¹⁶¹ by the river in Rouen. I and 2 others volunteered as cooks.

August 27 -28-29

¹⁵² In World War One, Canadian identification discs, or dog tags as they are commonly known, consisted of two discs, one of pressed fibre and the other of metal. They were used to identify dead soldiers on the battlefield. A picture of both Canadian discs can be seen at [Dog Tags through the Years](#).

¹⁵³ The [clasp knife](#) is a folding knife usually with a locking device to prevent it folding back accidentally on the user's fingers.

¹⁵⁴ The bayonet was designed to be attached to a rifle and implied hand-to-hand combat that most soldiers dreaded.

¹⁵⁵ Breakfast.

¹⁵⁶ Seven days of "defaulters" requires explanation. "Pack drill" or "Defaulters' Parade" was a common military punishment in World War I that required the soldier "to walk up and down in full marching order, with rifle, bayonet, ammunition, knapsack, and overcoat" often "at the double, at twice the normal marching pace...for two hours with full equipment." See [World Wide Words](#).

¹⁵⁷ Le Havre was a port at the mouth of the Seine River. It was about 90 km west of Rouen and 334 km west of Armentières near where the Princess Patricia Canadian Light Infantry was located.

¹⁵⁸ [Rouen](#) is a large city in Northern France, formerly the capital of Normandy.

¹⁵⁹ A mess orderly was detailed to carry soldiers their meals to and from the cookhouse. See "[Tommy's Dictionary of the Trenches](#)" at the end of *Over the Top* by Arthur Guy Empey for a humorous glossary defining this and many other World War I terms from the common soldier's point of view.

¹⁶⁰ Like many soldiers, Frank sent part of his army wages of \$1.10 a day home to Canada, either to his family or to his own account.

¹⁶¹ A supply base camp was where supplies and reinforcements were transferred to the front lines.

Came back to camp at noon. Wrote letters home.

August 30

Very easy day. On orders that we proceed to the front tomorrow.

August 31

Got hair cut short all over. Left Rouen this afternoon. Passed through the prettiest country. Very comfortable in our little carriage.

September 1

Slept very well last night. Arrived at a small village with a name like Stronburg [Steenwerck] or something like that. Marched to the camp where the First Universities are.¹⁶² Can hear the firing going on a short distance away. We are about an hour and a half march from the trenches. Billeted¹⁶³ in canvas shelters – 25 per shelter. Packed in like sardines.

September 2

Issued our smoke helmets¹⁶⁴ today. Expecting gas attack. Aeroplanes in all directions. Can see them fired at. Germans are on three sides of us forming a horseshoe of

trenches with Armentieres¹⁶⁵ at the toe-caulk¹⁶⁶. Tonight a very heavy bombardment is in progress up Ypres way about 8 miles. Can see the flares all along the line. Our rest camp is well within range of the German guns if only they knew just where we are.

September 3

Rained all day. Bombardment still heavy up the line.

September 4

Wrote letters. Received one from home. We were notified today to prepare for a fatigue tonight until 1 o'clock in the morning. Led out at 7 o'clock, marched past Armentieres to a barn some five miles from here and a few hundred yards from the trenches. The mud was fearful all the way and when we arrived we were pretty nearly all in. Rested for a while and marched back to camp. Supposed to have gone up to dig trenches but I

¹⁶² The camp was somewhere near Nieppe, which was 4.3 km east of Steenwerck. The exact location was indicated in the PPCLI War Diary, [September 1](#), which reads as follows, "Rest camp at Petit Moulin Farm. Received large reinforcement of 244 other ranks 28 old men returned 216 new draft composed of university men chiefly. Weather damp. Battalion strength today 944 the largest since January."

¹⁶³ Billets were lodgings for military personnel, and in many instances during World War I they were in the private homes of civilians living near the war zone.

¹⁶⁴ "[Smoke helmets](#)" was another name for Gas masks in World War One.

¹⁶⁵ [Armentières](#), which was almost totally destroyed in World War I, was right on the border between France and Belgium

¹⁶⁶ Frank used the horseshoe, with which he was undoubtedly familiar, to describe the general shape of the trenches. Armentieres was located at the round "head," or "toe-caulk" in this instance, of the u-shaped line of trenches.

suppose the orders were changed. All very thankful. We passed by a spot where an officer pretty high up and 6 of his staff were killed with a shell during the day.

September 5

Sunday. Church parade today with rifles, ammunition and smoke helmets. Heavy bombardment again tonight. Watched aeroplane dodge shrapnel several times today. This evening walked down to Nieppe¹⁶⁷ with [M.L.] [Hancock](#). Passed by place where explosion occurred last fall killing a number of our men and civilians.

September 6

Half an hours drill this morning. Practised attacking and taking a trench. This evening went up to repair some trenches near an old chateau.¹⁶⁸ Must have been a very fine old place at one time, but badly knocked about now. Couldn't find out what period it was but it had a moat and the regulation drawbridge so I guess it is two or three hundred years old at least. There was a very nice orchard in close proximity to the place where we were working and when I was tired of working (shortly after we started) I beat it off on a foraging expedition on my own. I had just got through the hedge-fence and was stalking a very promising pear tree when 2 machine guns opened fire in my direction. As soon as the bullets began to fly I flopped very quickly and ground my nose into the real estate. In about five minutes there must have been 4 or 5 dozen bullets whizzing by within a dozen feet of where I lay. Much to my surprise I was more inclined to chuckle at the novelty of the situation than to feel afraid. Looking at the thing in the cool of the morning it really would have been too bad if after coming so far and leaving so much if I had been picked off by a stray bullet while swiping pears. I don't know what the M.A.C. Honour Roll¹⁶⁹ would have to say about it, for they could hardly have called it "killed in action".¹⁷⁰

September 7

Sports Day¹⁷¹. Loafed and watched the boxing and wrestling. Some good, some indifferent and most of it bad. Went to the village and bought a new diary as this one is nearly all in.

September 8

Pay parade. 15 francs. Rifle inspection. More boxing and wrestling.

¹⁶⁷ Nieppe was a village about two km northwest of Armentières

¹⁶⁸ This was the [Chateau de Bois-Grenier](#), which was 2-3 km south of Armentieres. It did have a moat, and was built in 1611, so it was 300 years old as Frank guessed.

¹⁶⁹ The University of Manitoba Honour Roll 1914-1918 included the servicemen (soldiers) who had attended the Manitoba Agricultural College. Ironically, Frank was neither listed in the "Roll of the Fallen" nor the "Roll of Service." He has been missed altogether!

¹⁷⁰ Many new recruits were killed in the first days after their arrival at the front because of their inexperience.

¹⁷¹ Sports Days were encouraged during rest periods to build morale and esprit de corps.

September 9

Building redoubts¹⁷² around the old chateau all day. Two men killed there yesterday by shellfire. Our guns just behind us were firing intermittently all day. No reply from Germans. Letter from Harry B[eaumont] tonight. Poor old sport. His faith in the festive female has taken a decided slump. In other words his engagement is, to use his own expression, busted!¹⁷³

September 10

Bath parade.¹⁷⁴

September 11

Sent Uncle Earnest Yeo 25 francs for a sleeping bag and some toffee, etc. Wrote Harry B[eaumont]., Dick B[eaumont]., Mrs. Pullman. Am mailing this diary and my University badge home to the folks.

¹⁷² Redoubts were enclosed trenches reinforced with earthworks or breastworks and topped by parapets or wooden palisades.

¹⁷³ His faith must have revived, because Harry was married to Annie Florence Ritchie by the end of June 1917.

¹⁷⁴ Frank would not have appreciated bath parade at this time as much as he would later. After three or four days in the trenches, most soldiers were filthy dirty and crawling with lice, so the "bath parade" was a welcome relief. However, it had its own hurdles. Describing one such trip to the baths, Will Bird wrote, "In an old building through which the winter wind whistled, we undressed on a floor covered with slime and in turn crouched under an icy trickle from overhead pipes, the water always failing when one had soaped himself. When we went to get dressed we found our shirts were gone and a bleary-eyed character tossed over any size garment he happened to pick up, with unmatched socks." Bird, Will R. *Ghosts Have Warm Hands* (Ottawa: CEF Book, 1968, Reprint 2002), 10.