

**BOULEVARD PROVENCHER
BELGIAN WAR MEMORIAL**

City of Winnipeg
Historical Buildings Committee

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BOULEVARD PROVENCHER – BELGIAN WAR MEMORIAL

The use of war monuments and memorial cairns has a long history in Winnipeg. The oldest of these still standing is the Volunteer Monument originally located in front of the old City Hall (see Appendix I and II for an inventory). It was erected in 1886 to commemorate nine men of the 90th Battalion who died during the North-West (Second Riel) Rebellion in what would become Saskatchewan.

Winnipeg's war memorials have ranged from the standard, traditional stone cairn to more elaborate metal statues, entire buildings and the renaming of a street. These remembrances often have been raised to honour a battalion, a group of employees or a specific cultural group.

On October 1, 1938, the Belgian War Memorial was unveiled on a small portion of the Boulevard Provencher median in front of the Belgian Club (Le Club Belge). For the gathering of dignitaries, soldiers and citizens, the ceremony was the culmination of over a year of hard work.

STYLE

Winnipeg's war memorials are generally one of two types — inanimate forms such as monoliths, obelisks and crosses, and those containing statues of human figures. The former category includes more monuments, many of these being raised by the various Royal Canadian Legion branches throughout the city.

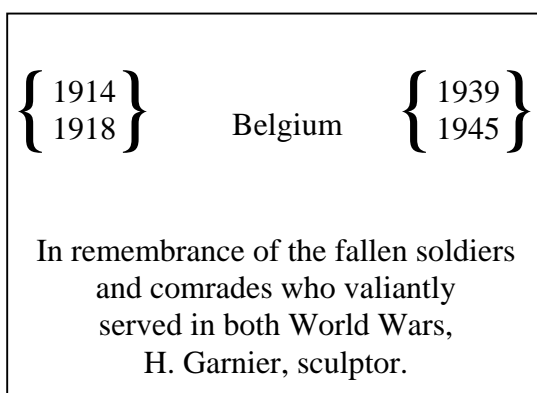
The Belgian monument is a member of the latter group, the substantial stone base raises the sculpture of two soldiers. The base also holds the plaques relevant to the monument.

CONSTRUCTION

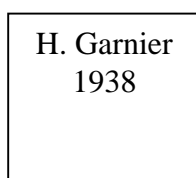
The actual figures of the Belgian War Memorial measure approximately 2.44 m. (8') tall. Depicted are a standing soldier holding a gun by the barrel with a fallen comrade face down before him. The figures were sculpted out of Haddington Island stone and completed at the Gillies Quarries in Winnipeg.¹

The statues stand on a base comprised of large, irregular and randomly placed stones. The four faces of the base contain plaques that read as follows:

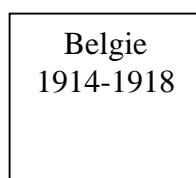
West face-



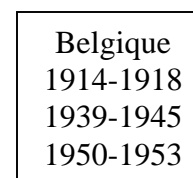
East-



North-



South-



DESIGN

In the design and completion of this monument, the sculptor has succeeded in showing both the heroism and pain that war brings. The prone soldier is faceless — focusing attention on the sacrificing and the loss of all those who gave their lives. The standing soldier, holding his gun by the top of the barrel, looks down at his fallen comrade, sadness etched in his features. The

¹ Hubert Garnier (St. Boniface: Les éditions du blé, 1976), n.p.

sculptor has created a poignant reminder of the true impact of war and the need for the creation of such monuments. The artist does not attempt to hide the realities of the battle, but rather uses them to strengthen this work.

INTERIOR

Does not apply.

INTEGRITY

The Belgian War Memorial occupies its original site. The only significant alterations to the 56-year-old structure have been the addition of plaques to its base to commemorate later wars.

Some damage occurred during the 1950 flood, and the figures were cleaned and repaired in 1965 with financial assistance from the City of St. Boniface.² At present, the stone figures are beginning to deteriorate due to water seepage.

STREETSCAPE

Since its unveiling, this monument has been an important contributor to Boulevard Provencher. It stands across the street from the Belgian Club (Le Club Belge), long an integral part of the social life of St. Boniface. It is also located in the middle of the busy thoroughfare and therefore is seen by hundreds of passers-by daily.

ARCHITECT/SCULPTOR

When the Belgians of St. Boniface decided to build a monument to their fallen soldiers, they did not need to look far for an artist to design and complete the work. They chose local artist Hubert

² City of St. Boniface, Minutes of Council (below as Minutes), May 25, 1965, p. 23871 and July 19, 1965, p. 23995.

A. Garnier (1903-1987) who would ultimately become a world-renowned sculptor. Garnier was born in Chasseneuil in southwestern France and emigrated to Canada with his family in ca.1913, settling in St. Boniface.³ After local grade school, Garnier studied at the Winnipeg School of Art, the Civic Art Institute in Chicago and the University of British Columbia. He worked in a variety of media, including stone, metal and brick. One of his specialties was crests and other official emblems.

Before returning to Winnipeg, Garnier apprenticed with established artists in Paris (1923), New York and Chicago, including Gutzon Borglum, the sculptor who directed development of the Mount Rushmore memorial in South Dakota.

Garnier's work can be found throughout North America on or in public and private structures, including banks, houses, department stores, government offices and religious buildings. He died at his home in St. Vital on February 27, 1987.

A partial list of his works includes:

WINNIPEG: Walker Theatre, Smith St. - decorative interior work
 Bank of Montreal, 426 Portage Ave. - exterior
 St. James War Memorial, Bruce Park (demolished) - sculpture work
 Tier Building, University of Manitoba - exterior
 Winnipeg Auditorium, St. Mary Ave. - medallions and interior stonework
 Hudson's Bay Company Store, Portage Ave. at Memorial Blvd. - exterior work
 Federal Building, Main St. - exterior work
 Belgian War Memorial, Boul. Provencher - sculptures
 Royal Bank, Garry St. (demolished) - emblems
 St. James Collegiate, Portage Ave. - carved panels
 Shaarey Zedek Synagogue, Wellington Cres. - bronze doors
 St. Boniface Cathedral grounds - monument to Bishop Provencher
 Manitoba Legislative Building, Broadway - bronze tablets

³ Garnier biographical information supplied by Debbie Lyon.

H. Garnier work, continued:

WESTERN CANADA:

Hotel Bessborough (CNR), Saskatoon - exterior stonework
 Natural History Museum, Regina - exterior stonework
 Water Power Building, Saskatoon - metal sculpture of Queen Elizabeth II
 University of Edmonton, Edmonton - sculptures
 Students' Union Building, University of Alberta, Edmonton - stonework
 Legislative Buildings, Victoria - stonework
 Hotel Vancouver (CNR), Vancouver - exterior decorative work
 Lion's Gate Bridge, Vancouver - lion heads (with others)

EASTERN CANADA:

Bank of Montreal, Toronto - bank emblems
 Sacred Heart Church, Thunder Bay - statue
 Saint-Joseph Chapel, Montreal - stonework

UNITED STATES:

Rockefeller Centre, New York - stonework (with others)
 Chicago Civic Opera House, Chicago - stonework (with others)
 Club Pontchartrain, Detroit - decorative sculptures

The Belgian War Memorial represents the last surviving Garnier war monument in Winnipeg. His only other work of this type, the St. James Cenotaph, was recently replaced by a replicated memorial. This is the first Garnier work evaluated by the Historical Buildings Committee.

PERSON/INSTITUTION

Traditionally, most Belgians have been Roman Catholics and many have been French-speaking. Because of this, emigrating Belgians chose to settle in St. Boniface, close to the Cathedral.⁴ Their numbers began to rise significantly after 1900. It thus was not surprising that in 1905 a club was incorporated, the Belgian Club or Le Club Belge, "so that Belgians, who were arriving in larger numbers every month, could gather, discuss their problems and find enjoyment among themselves."⁵

⁴ K. Wilson and J.B. Wyndels, The Belgians in Manitoba (Winnipeg: Peguis Publishers, 1976).

⁵ Ibid., p. 30.

Originally meetings were held on Lombard Avenue, but in 1906 the choice was made to build an up-to-date facility in St. Boniface. The club on Boulevard Provencher has served the Belgian community since. As the community grew, so too did its place in St. Boniface society and many Belgians took an active role in local politics and commerce.

The question of a monument dedicated to Belgians who had given their lives in World War I was first brought up at a Belgian Club executive meeting in 1937. Early in July 1937, the St. Boniface City Council received a request from the Belgian Veterans' Association Memorial Committee for a grant of land on Boulevard Provencher. This request was sent on to a special committee of council.⁶ On November 8, 1937, council voted in favour of the request and resolved to "highly commend this very worthwhile and patriotic objective."⁷ The motion went on to wish the Memorial Committee luck in erecting the monument. The construction costs, it appears, were to be covered solely by the Veterans' Association and donations from the public at large.

Plans went ahead quickly, as did the drive for funds. Within a year, the monument was well underway and preparations were made for the ceremonial unveiling. This event was held on October 1, 1938 (Plates 1 and 2). Included in the list of dignitaries were the lieutenant-governor of Manitoba, the Hon W.J. Tupper; A. DeJardin, local honorary consul of Belgium; and members of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry battalion which formed the honour guard. The distinction of unveiling the monument went to Baron Robert Silvercruys, Belgian minister of Canada who travelled from Ottawa for the ceremony.⁸ Silvercruys reflected

Ce monument symbolisera réellement l'amitié entre la Belgique et le Canada, une camaraderie née sur les champs de bataille, devenue aujourd'hui une camaraderie de paix et pour la paix.⁹

⁶ Minutes, July 12, 1937, p. 10767.

⁷ Minutes, November 8, 1937, p. 10886.

⁸ The Winnipeg Tribune, October 1, 1938, p. 3; and La Liberté, October 5, 1938, p. 1.

⁹ La Liberté, October 5, 1938, p. 1.

The patch of ground on which the monument stands was renamed “King Albert Place” by former Winnipeg mayor Dan McLean in honour of the then King of Belgium, Albert the First.¹⁰

EVENT

There is no known significant event connected with the monument.

CONTEXT

The Belgian War Memorial was built at a time when spirits were down all across western Canada. The Great Depression had caused hardships throughout the prairies and Winnipeg had been equally hard hit. The idea of a ceremony to honour local heroes was met with some enthusiasm as a way of escaping the problems of the day. As can be seen in Plate 2, the audience was large.

The memorial is also a reflection of the stage of development of the Belgian community in Winnipeg. In the hard times, they were still able to collect enough money to build this impressive statue honouring their fellow countrymen.

LANDMARK

The Belgian War Memorial is one of the most conspicuous monuments in all of Winnipeg. Located in the centre of a very busy street, the memorial can easily be seen from a great distance in both directions on Boulevard Provencher. It is familiar not only to the Belgian community and residents of St. Boniface, but also to citizens throughout the city.

¹⁰ Evelyn Baltessen, president of the Belgian Club, in conversation with the author, October 4, 1994.

BOULEVARD PROVENCHER – BELGIAN WAR MEMORIAL



Plate 1 – Group standing beside the newly unveiled Belgian War Memorial, ca.1938. Note the openness of Boulevard Provencher in the background. (Courtesy Evelyn Baltessen, president of the Belgian Club.)



Plate 2 – Official unveiling ceremony, Boulevard Provencher, October 1, 1938. (Courtesy of Evelyn Baltessen, president of the Belgian Club.)

BOULEVARD PROVENCHER – BELGIAN WAR MEMORIAL



Plate 3 – H.A. Garnier sculpting the Belgian War Memorial, 1938. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, N17244.)

BOULEVARD PROVENCHER – BELGIAN WAR MEMORIAL

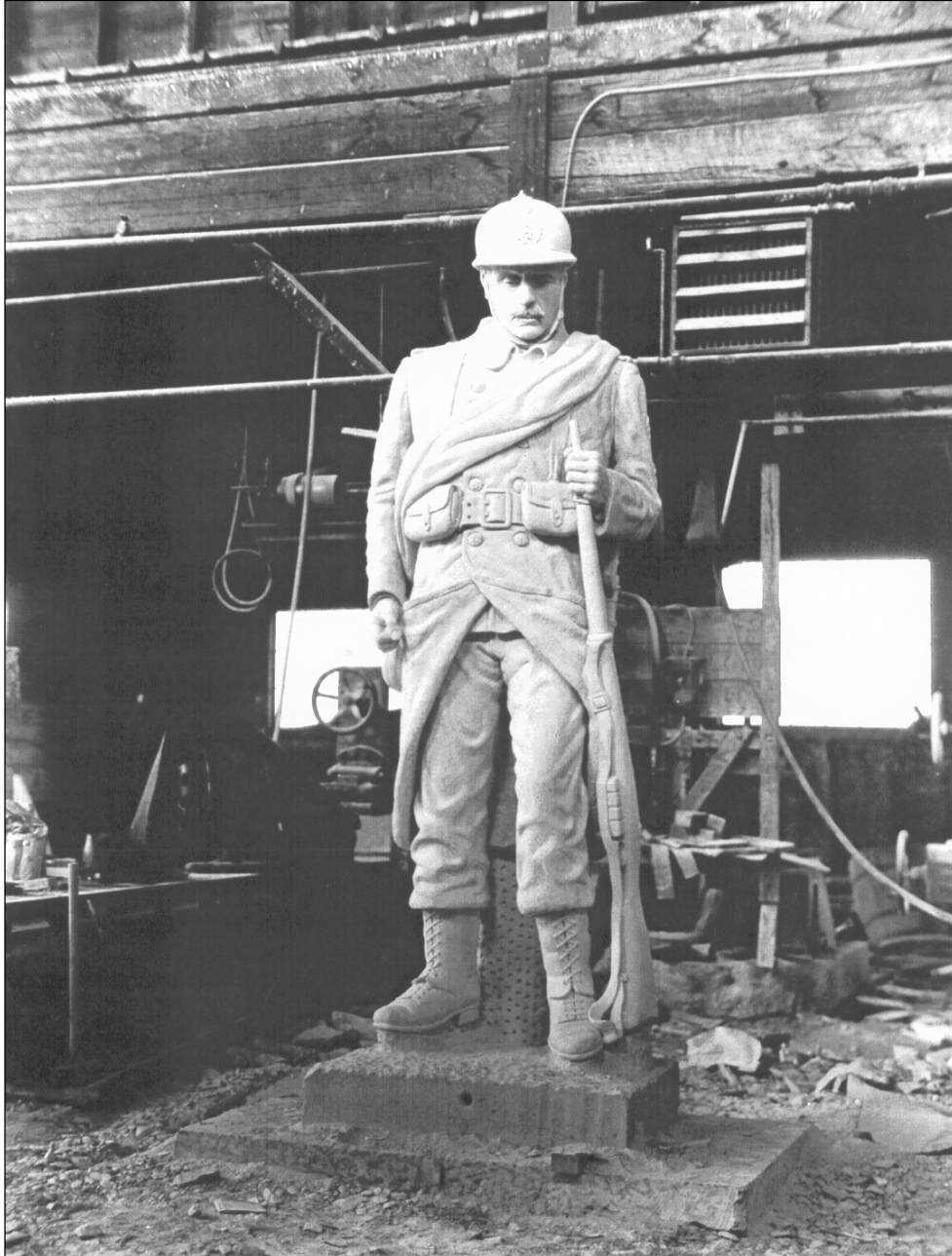


Plate 4 – Belgian War Memorial in H.A. Garnier's shop, 1938. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba.)

BOULEVARD PROVENCHER – BELGIAN WAR MEMORIAL

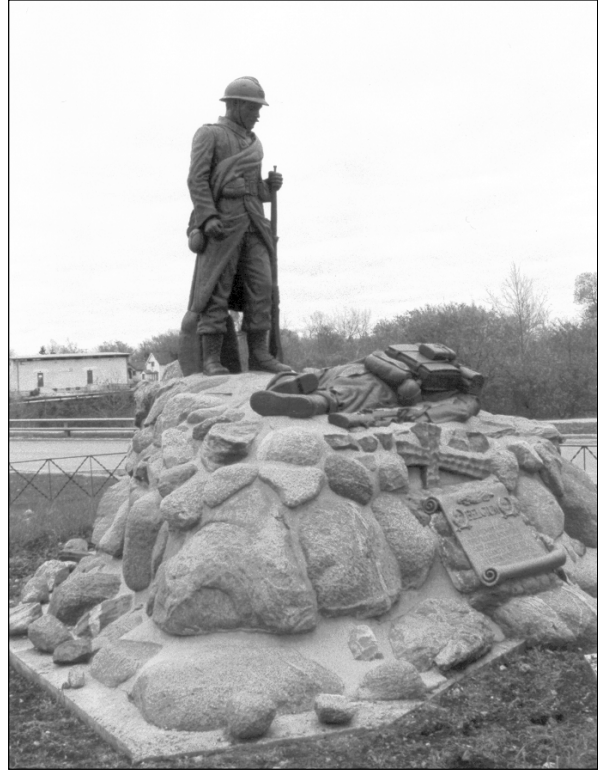
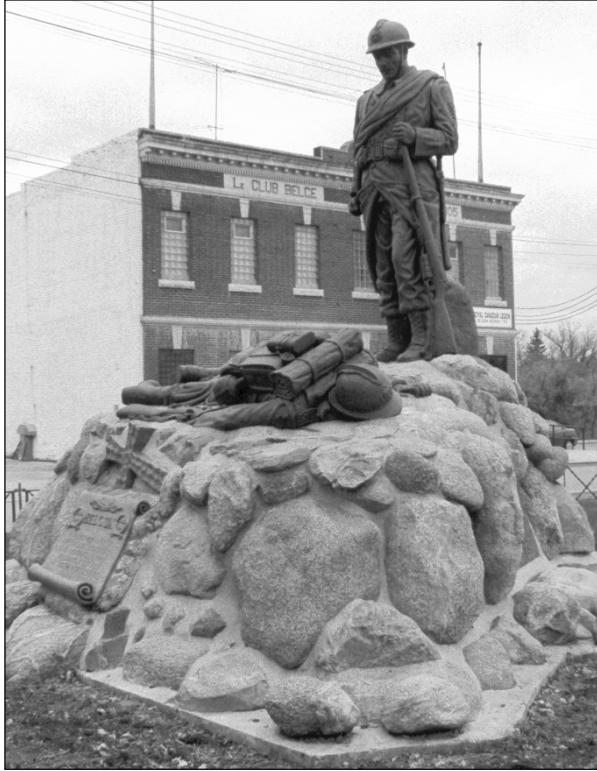


Plate 5 – Two views of the Belgian War Memorial, Boulevard Provencher, no date. (City of Winnipeg Planning Department.)

APPENDIX I

Name:	90 th Battalion Volunteer Monument
Location:	Main Street, north of the Concert Hall
Date of Dedication:	September 18, 1886
Erected By:	Public subscription
Description:	A 12.0 m. monument with polished Canadian red granite base dedicated to the nine men of the 90 th Battalion who died in the second Riel Rebellion. The 2.4 m. Tyndall stone statue on top depicts Sergeant Watson, whose name, along with eight others who perished, is on the monument (all are buried at St. John's Cathedral Cemetery).
Architect/Sculptor:	Base – James Chisholm Sculptor – Mr. Reid (Montreal)
Builder:	J.B. Gibson, contractor Samuel Hooper, marble columns Sid Johnston, carving
Comments:	This monument was moved twice before being placed at its present location. It was originally unveiled in City Hall Square, then was moved on July 12, 1962 to a site at the south end of the Disraeli Freeway.

Name:	Seven Oaks Monument
Location:	Main Street (north)
Date of Dedication:	June 19, 1891
Erected By:	Manitoba Historical Society & the Countess of Selkirk
Description:	Simple rough and smooth stone monument with metal tablet inset.
Architect/Sculptor:	Samuel Hooper, architect
Builder:	Samuel Hooper
Comments	In 1951, the monument was set on a new rough stone base and a metal plate was attached bearing the original inscription.

Name: Canadian Pacific Railway Monument

Location: Martha Street

Date of Dedication: April 28, 1922

Erected By: Canadian Pacific Railway

Description: Resting on a Tyndall stone base is a statue of an angel carrying a fallen soldier to heaven.

Architect/Sculptor: Coeur de Lion McCarthy, sculptor

Builder: Unknown

Comments: The monument was dedicated to railway employees who gave their lives during World War I. It was unveiled simultaneously with statues in Montreal and Vancouver. It was moved in 1989 from its original location in front of the CPR Station on Higgins Avenue.

Name: Next-of-Kin Monument

Location: Legislative Building Grounds

Date of Dedication: May 13, 1923

Erected By: Soldiers' Relatives' Memorial Association

Description: Stone base with plaques listing all the local soldiers who died in World War I. Topped by a statue of a soldier holding a gun and raising his helmet.

Architect/Sculptor: Mrs. Hilliard Taylor, sculptor

Builder: Unknown

Comments

Name: Bank of Montreal Monument
Location: Main Street at Portage Avenue
Date of Dedication: September 1923
Erected By: Bank of Montreal
Description: The soldier is modelled after a Winnipeg captain who worked for the bank.
Architect/Sculptor: James Earle Fraser (Scotland), sculptor
Builder: J.E. Fraser
Comments: Dedicated to bank employees who died during World War I.

Name: Valour Road
Location: Valour Road at Portage Avenue
Date of Dedication: 1925
Erected By: Women's Canadian Club of Winnipeg
Description: A plaque attached to a golden lightpost describes the men and their deeds that caused this route to be renamed from Pine Street in 1925.
Architect/Sculptor: N/A
Builder: N/A
Comments: Perhaps Winnipeg's most unusual monument, it commemorates three men who received the Victoria Cross for acts of bravery during World War I and who previously had lived within a block of each other on Pine Street.

Name: 44th Battalion Memorial

Location: Vimy Ridge Memorial Park (former St. James Park), Portage Avenue

Date of Dedication: June 1926

Erected By: 44th Battalion Association

Description: Tyndall stone base and monument, topped by a sandstone cross.

Architect/Sculptor: Unknown

Builder: Unknown

Comments: This monument was originally erected on Vimy Ridge in France in 1917 by members of the 44th. It was removed to make way for a new memorial in 1924 and re-erected and rededicated on its present site in 1926. It was restored by the Department of Veteran Affairs in June 1967 and by the City of Winnipeg in October 1992.

Name: Winnipeg Cenotaph

Location: Memorial Boulevard

Date of Dedication: November 11, 1928

Erected By: City of Winnipeg

Description: Stone steps and cenotaph with bronze accents (including lion heads) dedicated to Winnipeggers who died in the two World Wars and the Korean War.

Architect/Sculptor: Gilbert Parfitt

Builder: Unknown

Comments The choice of both the designer and the location of the Cenotaph caused heated public debates for three years.

Name: Women's Tribute Building

Location: 200 Woodlawn Street

Date of Dedication: July 4, 1931 (cornerstone), opened Autumn 1931

Erected By: Women's Tribute Association and the Deer Lodge Branch of the Royal Canadian Legion

Description: Buff brick and concrete building.

Architect/Sculptor: C.W.U. Chivers, architect

Builder: Claydon Construction

Comments: Erected to commemorate Manitoba's contributions in World War I, the total cost of the building was approximately \$32,000.

Name: Belgian War Memorial

Location: Boulevard Provencher

Date of Dedication: October 1, 1938

Erected By: Belgian Veterans' Association Memorial Committee

Description: The base is comprised of large, irregular stones placed randomly in a pile. The sculpture features two figures in white sandstone: a standing soldier looking at a fallen comrade lying face down.

Architect/Sculptor: Hubert Garnier, sculptor

Builder: H. Garnier

Comments

Name: Women in the Services Memorial

Location: Memorial Boulevard

Date of Dedication: July 4, 1976

Erected By: Women's Tri-Service Association, World Wars I and II Veterans of Winnipeg

Description: Bronze statues on a Tyndall stone base depicts three standing women in the uniforms of the three arms of the military.

Architect/Sculptor: Helen Granger-Young, sculptor

Builder: H. Granger-Young

Comments: Dedicated in honour of the women of the British Commonwealth who served during the two World Wars.

Name: Airmen in Training Memorial

Location: Memorial Boulevard

Date of Dedication: September 8, 1984

Erected By: Wartime Pilots and Observers Association of Winnipeg

Description: This bronze statue set on a Tyndall stone base depicts a young airman in full flying gear.

Architect/Sculptor: Helen Granger-Young, sculptor

Builder: H. Granger-Young

Comments: Dedicated to the airmen and instructors who died in Canada during training in World War II.

Name: Holocaust Memorial

Location: Legislative Building Grounds

Date of Dedication: September 16, 1990

Erected By: Holocaust Memorial Remembrance Committee of the W.J.C.C.

Description: Simple black marble slabs with the names of Holocaust victims.

Architect/Sculptor: Unknown

Builder: Unknown

Comments: Erected with the support of the governments of Canada and Manitoba and the Jewish Foundation of Manitoba.

Name: St. James Cenotaph

Location: Bruce Park, Portage Avenue

Date of Dedication: September 30, 1990

Erected By: St. James Royal Canadian Legion #4 and the City of Winnipeg

Description: Terracotta-ornamented cenotaph dedicated to local servicemen and women who died during World Wars I and II and the Korean War.

Architect/Sculptor: Unknown

Builder: Unknown

Comments This cenotaph replaced another of similar design dedicated on the site on June 30, 1936 as a memorial to those who fell during World War I. Designed by sculptor Hubert Garnier, it was slowly destroyed by frost.

Name: Royal Winnipeg Rifles Little Black Devils Monument

Location: Vimy Ridge Memorial Park (former St. James Park), Portage Avenue

Date of Dedication: June 6, 1992

Erected By: Members and friends of the Royal Winnipeg Rifles Association

Description: Marble base and marble obelisk with two empty sides.

Architect/Sculptor: Unknown

Builder: Unknown

Comments: Two of the sides hold plaques. The first commemorates all those from the battalion who died during World War II. The second lists the names of all those who died in France as prisoners of war in 1944.

Name: Unknown

Location: St. Boniface Cathedral Cemetery

Date of Dedication: Unknown

Erected By: Unknown

Description: Stone base with statue of a standing soldier holding branches aloft.

Architect/Sculptor: E. Benet, sculptor

Builder: N. Pirotton and A.C. LeGrand (C.E.)

Comments The monument is dedicated to the French of Western Canada who perished in the first and second World Wars.

Location: Guay Park, St. Mary's Road

Date of Dedication: Unknown

Erected By: St. Vital Legion

Description: Concrete steps leading to a marble base and polished marble monument dedicated to local servicemen and women who died during the two World Wars and the Korean War.

Architect/Sculptor: Unknown

Builder: Unknown

Comments:



ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION MEMORIALS

Location: St. James Branch, 1755 Portage Avenue

Date of Dedication:

Description: Concrete pad and rough-cut marble base below twin, polished black marble obelisks. Plaque inscription reads, "Erected in Honour of those who served, we will remember them."

Architect/Sculptor: Unknown

Builder: Unknown

Comments:

Location: Brooklands and Weston Branch, 1613 Logan Avenue

Date of Dedication: 1935

Description: Pebble stone base and large stones set in cement. Limestone plaque reads, "They Served till Death."

Architect/Sculptor: Unknown

Builder: Unknown

Comments Dedicated to those who died in the two World Wars and the Korean War.

Location: Monte Cassino Branch #178, 605 Notre Dame Avenue

Date of Dedication: Unknown

Description: Stone base and black, polished marble monolith.

Architect/Sculptor: Unknown

Builder: Unknown

Comments Dedicated to those who died in the two World Wars and the Korean War.

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION MEMORIALS

Location: St. John's Park, Main Street (General Sir Sam Steele Branch #117. 1414 Main Street)

Date of Dedication: Unknown

Description: Unadorned marble base and obelisk

Architect/Sculptor: Unknown

Builder: Unknown

Comments: Dedicated to those who died in the two World Wars.

Location: Kildonan Park (West Kildonan Branch, 1748 Main Street)

Date of Dedication: Unknown

Description: Unadorned marble base and obelisk.

Architect/Sculptor: Unknown

Builder: Unknown

Comments Dedicated to those who died in the two World Wars and the Korean War.

Location: Fort Rouge Branch #97, 426 Osborne Street

Date of Dedication: Unknown

Description: Cement pad and random-shaped stone obelisk with limestone head. Copper plate reads, 'In Memoriam "Their Mission Accomplished, Ours But Begun".'

Architect/Sculptor:

Builder:

Comments Dedicated to those who died in the two World Wars and the Korean War.