

### *Genealogy: A new life in Canada after the wars*

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We wear the red poppy for Remembrance Day, showing our respect and thankfulness to the men and women of Canada's armed forces, past and present. They served and are serving our country and its people, at great risk to themselves, often making the ultimate sacrifice.

Long ago before the two World Wars, in some European countries the red poppy had become a symbol of death, renewal and life. The seeds of the poppy can lay dormant in the soil for many years. But once the soil was disturbed with warfare, the seeds sprouted and there appeared a spectacular display of red poppies inspiring John McCrae to write his famous poem, "In Flanders Fields."

As we honour these brave men and women who fought for our freedoms, have you ever thought how these wars did "affect" their lives, and those of their families? Most returned home and led productive lives. But some didn't return, some endured shell shock, some were gassed in trenches, and were sick. Some were taken prisoner and tortured, and others relived the horrors of war silently for years to come. Lives and families were changed forever.

Have you thought about the "effect" it had on our country Canada?

From 1939 to 1949, there has been no other time frame where Canada's economy changed so much. The role played by Canada during the war was endless, supplying many resources and raw materials to the war, and thus our economy boomed. The supplies Canada gave to the war had to be made quickly and in large quantities. Many Factories across Canada were converted in order to send supplies to our troops. For example, Inglis Appliances produced Bren Machine Guns, and Sten sub machine guns. Canadian Steel Car, switched from making freight cars to making fighterplanes. General Motors made more than one million trucks during the Second World War. Because of this, the agricultural sector was overtaken by the industrial and manufacturing sectors in Canada.

Prime Minister Mackenzie King led the nation through the Second World War, during which Canada contributed food supplies. Financial aid, ships, aircraft, tanks and over a million Canadian troops to the Allied cause. Canada was also involved in the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan. Medicine Hat played a role in the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan with the establishment of #34 Service Flying Training School. More than 2,000 airmen were trained in Medicine Hat at this school.

By 1947 it was clear Canada's economy was booming, and the country would need many more workers to keep the economy moving forward. In Europe there was news of millions of displaced persons held in refugee camps, they had no country, no home, or material possessions and no future. In the summer of 1947 the Canadian government under King sent immigration teams into Austria and Germany. This started the process of selecting refugees deemed acceptable candidates to emigrate to Canada. These refugees would be accepted into Canada under a sponsored labour program. The refugees had to agree to sign a contract guarantying they would work for two years for their sponsor. Agriculture, mining, domestic service and railway work took most of these sponsored refugees.

Most of these refugees came to Canada on Cargo ships that were retrofitted to carry 600 to 950 people per trip. Women and children were separated from the men and older boys, so that the ships could carry more people.

By the end of 1949 over 45,000 new would be Canadians had passed through Pier 21 at Halifax on their way to a new life in Canada.

The fabric of Canada was forever changed by our new immigrants. Canada became a more tolerant society, with a bigger population, and a vibrant growing economy.

In closing, let us pause, and remember our men and women in uniform who uphold our freedoms and keep our country safe.

Your comments, suggestions and questions are always welcome.

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