

S. J. McKee Archives



BC 11: Brandon College military training programs

<http://archives.brandonu.ca/en/permalink/descriptions4278>

Part Of: RG 1 Brandon College fonds

Description Level: Series

Series Number: 11

GMD: textual records

Date Range: 1915-1960

Physical Description: 45 cm

In 1914 World War I broke out in Europe. As soon as Britain became involved in the war, Canada, as part of the British Empire, was involved. As soon as Canada became involved in the war, Brandon College became involved. In keeping with the patriotism of the time, Brandon College organized a Canadian Officers Training Corps in 1915. It was soon a common sight to see students drilling several times a week in every type of weather. Often the women of the college would offer food and drink after the more grueling experiences. In 1916, a Brandon College platoon was organized under J.R.C. Evans. When he was declared medically unfit to go overseas, the command went to Lieutenant William Carey McKee. Carey was the son of S.J. McKee. He had graduated from Brandon College in 1914, and secured his M.A. in 1915. The Brandon College platoon joined up with the Western Universities Battalion, the 196th. The men went overseas in 1916, most remained there until after the war. Sadly, their admired leader, Carey McKee, was killed on August 26th, 1918 at Arras, just months before the end of the war.

Over thirty other Brandon College men failed to return home from the war. Remaining students immediately began planning for a memorial gymnasium to honour their fallen friends. They eventually raised over \$20 000 towards the gym, but the money was given as a gift to the administration during the late 1920's and early 1930's when the College was in dire need of money. Although the Students' Memorial Gymnasium Fund went on for several years, due to lack of money and rising building costs, the memorial gymnasium was never built.

The C.O.T.C. remained on the campus, but it was not as integral a part of daily routine until the late 1930s. Once again, hostilities broke out in Europe. This time, however, Canada did not automatically become involved in the war when Britain did. In an attempt to show the world its independence, Canada waited five days before officially declaring war. By 1940, the C.O.T.C. was in full swing again. As well, part of Brandon College was given to the Royal Canadian Air Force for use as classrooms and accommodations.

After the cessation of World War II, the C.O.T.C. remained on campus. The S.J. McKee Archives has records of the organization up until 1960. The 1951 Brandon College Calendar describes the University of Manitoba contingent of the C.O.T.C., so at some point the two organizations were amalgamated. The 1954 Brandon College Calendar describes the R.C.A.F. (Reserve) University of Manitoba Squadron that students can apply for. Finally, the 1957 Brandon College Calendar contains a description on the Regular Officers Training Plan, which students could apply for. All of these programs were still in effect when the College was granted its University Charter in 1967.

Scope and Content:

The first member of Brandon College to join up was a professor, Philippe Louys. He happened to be visiting his father in France when hostilities broke out. He joined the French Army, and was almost immediately taken prisoner. For several years he tried to escape, finally being successful on his fourth try. Louys immediately began retraining in the French Army, but as soon as he was ready to fight again, the war ended. Philippe Louys' story is not uncommon in the history of Brandon College. The professors and students felt it was their duty to join the ranks and fight along with the rest of the British Empire. Most of them left the halls of the College, and many never returned.

The records consist mainly of correspondence having to do with the Canadian Officers Training Corps. There are also letters referring to Brandon College students who served in the World Wars. As well, there are lists of Unit Orders and Syllabii for the instructors of the C.O.T.C. There are also files regarding the War Maintenance Fund from 1918 and 1919. These records are a good source of material for studying how Brandon College viewed the outbreak of hostilities in Europe, and how the College responded to the crisis. Also, they show how attitudes changed about war and the college's role in it from the period of 1915 to 1960. The Presidents' files also have information on the role the military played at Brandon College. Finally, the series contains attestation and application for military training forms (1941-1943).

Storage Location: RG 1 Brandon College fonds
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