

History Lecture #16 - Not Over by Christmas

Wednesday, November 9, 2016 2:30 PM

War Fever



Audio 1

- The worst thing for young men wanting to fight wasn't getting killed but was missing out on fighting in the war
- Hamilton Gault
 - He wanted to buy his way into the war
 - Was very rich - son of a man who ran a cotton mill
 - He was interested in the highlife, socializing and soldiering
 - He joined the Militia
 - He decided to make his own unit and make his own private army
 - Put this into the hands of the military secretary
 - He turned to the daughter of the military general - Princess Patricia of Connaught
 - 3000 people applied to be in this army
 - 90% were British born
 - Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry
- The prime minister wanted to increase conscription
- The strength of the CEF grew from 1914 to 1916 from 36 000 to 500 000
- By January 1916 the Canadian Expeditionary Force pledged to have 500 000 men in uniform

Joining Up

- The process of enlisting men didn't change much over the war
- If someone comes forward with a non-anglo name it was confusing to the people sorting the form
 - As a result the people anglicized names
- The average age for recruits was 26
- British born men enlisted more than Canadian men
- Most men were farmers
- 80% of Canadians were single when they enlisted and men married after the enlisted
- A lot of men were pulled out of the army if their wife didn't consent to them being in uniform
- Vaccination was compulsory
- There was a preference for people with military experience
 - A lot of people lied about having experience because they wanted to move to the front of the line
- People who enlist in the war are in the war to the end and then another 6 months after the war ends
 - They sign a contract agreeing to be in the war until it ends + 6 months
- If you were in an apparent age you didn't need proof of age
 - This was to avoid young or old men from fighting
- Facial and body characteristics were recorded in order to be able to identify a body if found
- There were 3000 or so Jewish fighters
 - Those who identified
- Many would say there were a part of the Church of England in order to avoid discrimination
- Men needed to be physically and mentally healthy and not have any diseases
- Men needed to take two oaths
- Rejections over the course of the war became more and more rare

The Opening Battles

- Germany invaded Belgium on way to France to capture France before Russia could mobilize
- First battle was the battle of the Frontiers which took place on the borders and in Belgium
- The second stage was to move south and German soldiers follow them
- France wanted to defend Paris from the Germans
- Battle of the Marne was a whole bunch of battles of collisions and they were small battles that took place over 5 days
 - This was the first decisive encounter of the war
 - France pushed back the Germans and was able to defend Paris
 - There were a lot of casualties on all sides

- The German generals underestimated the challenges of moving a large army through hostile territory
- The fighting was initially in Belgium and northern France but then it stretched to Switzerland
- By 1915 it is obvious that the world is stuck with a long war

The 1st Contingent Overseas

- Canada was going to take its rightful place among the World powers
- 30 000 men were to reach England by October 1914
- Shortly after arrival in Salisbury Plain it rained nearly the whole time
- Diseases, hospital admissions sky rocketed

To the Western Front

- The troops landed in France in February 1915 in one division
 - The British wanted them split into different smaller divisions but the government insisted on having one unit
- The Canadians were involved in the English attack at Neuve Chappelle
 - This was a disaster for the British
- After, they were sent to Ypres, Belgium
- This city was in a vulnerable place
 - Rationally people wanted to escape the city as it was hard to defend
 - But symbolically Ypres was important and many didn't want to withdraw
 - A decision was made that the city would be defended at all costs
 - No other city of this size was destroyed to such a level
 - The city of Ypres became a metaphor for the entire war
 - Cities, farms, families were completely wiped out because of the war
- The western front is converted into a wasteland of the course of 4 years
- There was fighting everywhere and yet no where was the destruction so complete as it was on the western front