

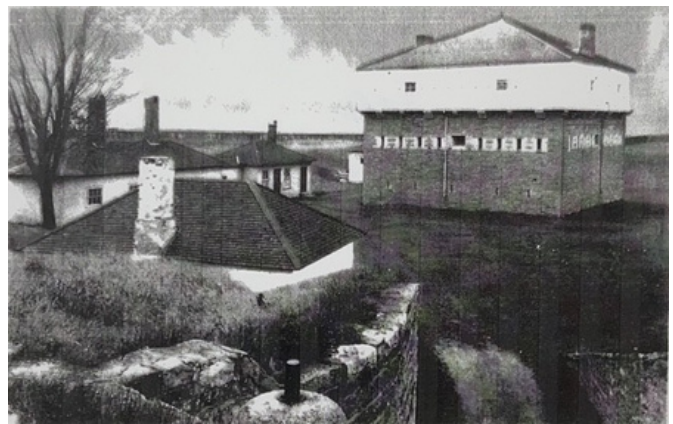
Prescott At War

How Prescott contributed to the WWII war effort

September 10, 1939, marked a pivotal time in Canadian history, when many lives were changed forever. Following the vote in Parliament, Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King announced that Canada had officially entered war with Germany, a week after our allies, the United Kingdom and France, declared war on behalf of Poland, which had been invaded by Nazi Germany on September 1, 1939. By December 1939, the first wave of Canadian soldiers was making landfall overseas in the allied countries of England and France, while in Prescott, many were helping in any way that they could to assist in the war effort. Dozens upon dozens of people lined up at Fort Wellington, which was converted to a recruitment center for the Leeds-Grenville area. Serving as an intake office for the larger recruitment centers in the country, many locals completed their basic paperwork and first round of screening there prior to getting deployed to larger recruitment centers in Ottawa, Montreal, Kingston, and Toronto.

The local regiment, the Princess Louise Dragoon Guards (often referred to as the IV PLDG B and C Squadron), set up home at the Prescott Armory (now the site of the Coast Guard) and assisted with training efforts, monitoring the St.

Lawrence River, and assisting the community through the war effort. During the early years of the war, the squadron was captained by Major James W. Bain of Prescott (1936-1940), with Capt. W.H. Drummond of Spencerville taking over the regiment from 1940 to disbandment in 1943.



Fort Wellington Circa 1930s

A few of these Squadron members were called into action overseas during the war. Lt. L.L. Morell was one of the first to go overseas when he was summoned alongside a draft of 75 other ranks in 1940 to form the 4th Reconnaissance Battalion (PLDG), later becoming an armored car unit. This regiment saw service in Italy and most European war theaters. After the war, Lt. Morell returned to Prescott and reactivated the Princess Louise Dragoon Guards, which he commanded for much of the late 1940s. However, two members of the regiment never made it home. Prescott's Lt. John H. Morris of the 12th Manitoba Dragoons R.C.A.C. was killed in action during the battle of Brussels on September 20th, 1944, and North Augusta's Lt. Robert L. Ferguson, who died while in service on May 21st, 1945.



L.t. L.L. Morell



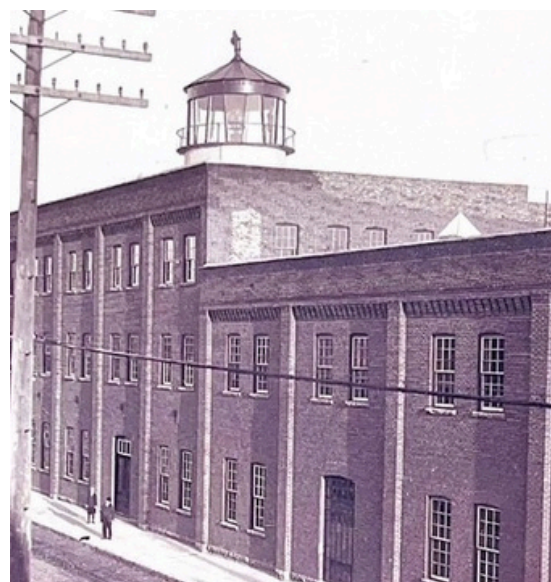
Major James W. Bain



DLD Building on King Street

Prescott's industrial sector experienced one of its largest boom periods as the demand for fuel, metals, and navigation equipment grew. The Canadian Pacific Railway Company's Prescott to Ogdensburg railcar ferry service experienced its highest level of service during WWII, delivering items such as truck chassis, army tanks, anti-aircraft weaponry, and gun mounts to the United States. The Dominion Lighthouse Depot (DLD) switched from manufacturing navigational aids to war machinery, specializing in the manufacturing of depth charger pistols and primers set to be used in the Commonwealth U-Boat Fleet. With a workforce of 650 individuals, the DLD became the largest manufacturer of depth charger equipment in the Commonwealth, with roughly 150 of the workers being women, who served as inspectors, deburrers, and clerks.

Next door to the DLD was the Canadian Coast Guard Prescott branch. Operating in Prescott since 1903, the 1940s brought the Coast Guard its toughest challenges to date. With a smaller staff (due to many Coast Guard workers enlisting in the military), the Prescott-based region of operation increased to include much of the St. Lawrence River, Lake Ontario, Lake Erie, and a portion of the Ottawa River and St. Clair River.



Original Prescott Coast Guard Building

Specializing in maintaining navigational aids, buoys deployment, and ice breaking services, the Prescott Coast Guard service played a crucial part in keeping Canada's waterways open for the transportation of goods and soldiers across Canada during the war effort. The site also played host to the commencement ceremony of a newly built Royal Canadian Navy vessel named in Prescott's honour.



Mayor Horan



HMCS Prescott Docked In Prescott



Mrs. Horan and Sailor

Constructed by the Kingston Ship Building Company, the HMCS Prescott was a part of the Royal Navy's RCN Flower Class construction program of 1939-1940. Setting out on its maiden voyage on January 7th, 1941, the ship would not officially join the Royal Navy fleet until its commencement ceremony on June 26th, 1941. The event was celebrated with much fanfare and brought some joy and realization to a stressful time in many lives. The event hosted by the Canadian Coast Guard brought in many dignitaries, such as Mayor J.T. Horan, the Minister of National Revenue Hon. Colin W.G. Gibson, the Postmaster General of Canada Hon. W.P. Mulock, and mayors from Ogdensburg, Brockville, Gananoque, Merrickville, and local presidents of community organizations.

Following the ceremony, which drew hundreds to Prescott's waterfront, Mrs. Horan gave the honorary christening of the vessel by breaking a bottle of champagne over it. Many then gathered at St. John's parish hall for a banquet hosted by the Junior Red Cross Auxiliary. After the community dinner, a small presentation followed with members of the OFA Girls band, and the exchange of gifts to the crew of the HMCS Prescott made by members of the Red Cross Auxiliary. Following the ceremony, the HMCS Prescott embarked on an impressive military journey. During its 4 years in operation, it served in fleets in Newfoundland & Labrador, England, and Africa, and was responsible for the sinking of a German Submarine U-163 off the shore of Cape Finisterre, Spain. After the conclusion of WWII, the HMCS Prescott was taken out of commission and scrapped in 1951.

The HMCS ceremony was not the only event the Junior Red Cross Auxiliary was involved in during the war effort. Receiving its charter on September 28th, 1939, the Prescott Red Cross branch was one of the leading organizations in Prescott during WWII, seeing over 200 members join the organization during the height of the war. Many women in the organization worked tirelessly, creating clothing ranging from sweaters, socks, hats, mittens, hospital gowns, and bandages to be sent overseas. Members of the Junior branch collected tin foil, lead, and other materials to be used for the war effort. During the War, the Red Cross Society also placed an emphasis on community involvement and often hosted cabarets, community dinners, and dances to bring some joy to a mourning community. These events were also used to raise funds for

the Red Cross Society to work overseas with the Prescott branch collecting \$3,106 (roughly \$63,000 in today's economy). These donations went towards aid kits for soldiers overseas, medical equipment, and for refugees fleeing war-torn Europe.



Dr. McPherson and members of his nursing staff at a Red Cross Clinic 1946.

The Red Cross Society of Prescott also frequently worked with other local organizations, such as the Women's Institute of Prescott, which was a lead organizer in helping displaced European families settle into Canada, and Dr. McPherson and his staff of nurses hosted medical clinics after the flu epidemic of 1944.

The town's churches were also at the forefront of the community during WWII. The St. Mark's Catholic Church, under the guidance of Father Charles J. Mea (1931-1943) and Father J.H. McDonald (1943-1950), was heavily involved with the Catholic Women's League, which made gift baskets for soldiers overseas and raised money for the families of the soldiers away at war. While at St. John's Anglican Church, Rev. H.R. Pettem (1932-1943) and Rev. J.B. Creggan (1943-1950) opened the doors of the church to all those needing a community space. From charity dances, community dinners, or a place to prepare gifts for the soldiers, the St. John's parish was heavily involved during the war effort. St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, under the guidance of minister Rev. M.W. Heslip, and St. Paul's United Church, operated by Rev. James A. Payton, focused more on Prescott's youth, opening their doors for school dances, band practices, and other extracurricular activities, bringing some sense of normalcy to a scary time in many of their lives. However, the churches' greatest involvement in the community was providing support and comfort to the grieving families of the 26 men who never returned home from fighting overseas.

After the end of the war in the Pacific on September 2nd, 1945, many were left to pick up the pieces of their lives for many years to come. The industrial sector turned back to pre-war production numbers with many temporary workers returning to their old jobs across the country. School returned to normal, as slowly but surely, the organizations created for the war effort started to dissolve, and the new Canadian citizens grew accustomed to life in Canada. Those who paid the supreme sacrifice to our country were commemorated with funeral services, war monuments, and medals of honour, making sure their memory and sacrifice would be remembered for centuries to come.

We Remember Those We Lost During World War II

Kenneth N. Arthurs, 1913-1941

Ralph Arthurs, 1917-1944

Carl Dietschweiler, 1910-1943

Gerald R. Egan, 1924-1942

Fredrick W. Fisher, 1913-1945

Maurice P. Halpin 1912-1943

Frank C. Miller, 1921-1944

George Miller 1919-1943

John H. Morris, 1917-1944

A. Barclay Newsome, 1917-1944

Elwood Pomeroy, 1924-1944

Thomas P. Quinn, 1924-1945

Arnold Running, 1915-1944

Guy Shaver, 1920-1945

Bowman Spero, 1918-1941

Grenville Swan, 1921-1944

Arthur Tindal, 1922-1945

Clarence Vickery, 1916-1944

Willam G. Vickery, 1920-1943

Robert Webb, 1920-1945

Carl Whitney, 1922-1945

Alton J. O'Neal, 1915-1942

John Brytan

Lawrence G. Miller

Robert L. Scott

Gordon Sutton