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Canada's Soldiers of the South African and First World Wars at Library and Archives Canada

Ken Reynolds

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Soldiers of the South African War (1899 - 1902)

Introduction

The South African War, 1899-1902, is a key event in the military history of Canada. It marked the first occasion for which Canada dispatched troops to an overseas war. A total of 7,368 Canadians and 12 Nursing Sisters served in South Africa. This research tool brings together three groups of records pertaining to the South African War: the service files, medal registers and land grant applications.

We thank our partner, the British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa, who initiated the project by creating an electronic index to the service files.

[South African War - Thematic Guide](#)

See Also:
Canadian Genealogy Centre
Military and Peacekeeping
On Our Website



"Troop Front." Canadian Mounted Rifles with Second Contingent South Africa
[Source](#)

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Soldiers of the First World War - CEF

Introduction

Over 600,000 Canadians enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) during the First World War (1914-1918). The CEF database is an index to those personnel files, which are held by Library and Archives Canada. To date, over 800,000 images of Attestation papers have been scanned and are being made available on-line.

Credits

We would like to thank the many employees of Library and Archives Canada who have contributed their time and expertise since 1996 to the successful digitization of CEF Attestation papers.

In particular, we thank the students from [Brimley, Ontario](#), who enthusiastically scanned and processed images from the Attestation papers during the summer of 1996, the 1997-1998 Gatineau Preservation Centre Team, and the Team who worked at headquarters on the 1999-2000 project. To date, over 60 youth have been able to benefit from the partnership between Library and Archives Canada and Industry Canada's Digital Collections program.



New names in Canadian history
More are coming - Will you be there?
ENLIST!

Enlist!
New Names in Canadian History
[Source](#)

means there is an online image of the document in question. Continuing with the "Smith" example, clicking on "SMITH, Alexander Fleming" on the result indicating his service file leads to a further description of the record. This also incorporates the LAC record group reference number for the file – useful for a request to view the original document or for a photocopy. Also on this page is a link marked "View Image" which, when clicked, leads to a page with (in his case) seven images online encompassing his service file. It's a similar situation for "SMITH, F.A." where clicking on the medals register line provides an opportunity to view the document denoting his medal awards. Each online image is downloadable for future use.

"Soldiers of the First World War (1914-1918)" is a very similar, although obviously much, much larger, project. Currently the home to more than 800,000 images of attestation papers for individual members of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF), this database is an index to the personnel files of the more than 600,000 men and women who served in the CEF. Note that not all of the 600,000 have attestation papers available online. The attestation papers and enlistment forms typically include information on name and address, next of kin, date and place of birth, occupation, previous military service and physical and medical descriptions. Each

attestation paper can be "right-clicked" and downloaded for permanent reference. The personnel files themselves, none of which are accessible online – usually included two or three dozen forms covering a wide range of subjects from enlistment to training to medical and dental histories (my grandmother was particularly enthralled by the dental records of two of her brothers), hospitalization, discipline, pay, discharge and death information.

Clicking on "Search" in the left-hand column takes the visitor to the search page. Here, just like with the South African War records, a search can be conducted using "surname," "given names" and "regimental number" (but no searching by "regiment") – either one at a time or in combination. Truncating the search parameters will result in a greater number of potential results. The visitor might also want to beware any reliance on using only the regimental number search box given the possible difficulty of getting the exact number under which the soldier is entered. For example, early members of the 38th Battalion, CEF, were given serial numbers in the 41000-411999 range, but many are listed as A10000-A11999 (an earlier version of the number) or even as 10000-11999.

The search results page, also similar to that of the South African War database, provides a columned series of results including "name,"

"date of birth," "rank," "regimental number" and "reference" (the archival record group location of the file). A simple search for "Jones" results in 2,623 responses. Clicking on "Jones, Albert, 19/06/1891, Gnr, 1260413" leads to his individual page. Here the search result data is repeated and the icon links for his attestation papers are available. Also of great utility is a link on this page titled: "How to consult a file on-site or order a copy of the complete file," which as the title suggests, allows the visitor to order the file for viewing in Ottawa or a photocopy for personal use.

"Soldiers of the South African War" and "Soldiers of the First World War" combine to provide an incredibly useful electronic resource for researchers of individuals who served in these two conflicts, permitting the visitor to get a head start on the soldier they are researching, the location of his or her records, or even the entire file itself through photocopying.

Ken Reynolds is an historian with the Directorate of History and Heritage, Department of National Defence. His duties as the Assistant Canadian Forces Heritage Officer involve research and writing in a wide variety of areas in Canada's military heritage.