

1-20-2012

## The Canadian War Memorial that Never Was

Laura Brandon  
*Canadian War Museum*

---

### Recommended Citation

Brandon, Laura (1998) "The Canadian War Memorial that Never Was," *Canadian Military History*: Vol. 7: Iss. 4, Article 5.  
Available at: <http://scholars.wlu.ca/cmh/vol7/iss4/5>

This Canadian War Museum is brought to you for free and open access by Scholars Commons @ Laurier. It has been accepted for inclusion in Canadian Military History by an authorized administrator of Scholars Commons @ Laurier. For more information, please contact [scholarscommons@wlu.ca](mailto:scholarscommons@wlu.ca).

# The Canadian War Memorial That Never Was

Laura Brandon

Early in 1996, I discovered that the plan for the First World War Canadian war memorial building to house Canada's war art had survived as three water-colour designs in the Drawings Collection of the Royal Institute of British Architects in London, England. When I made an appointment to see them in April of that year, I discovered that two were missing, and the third broken into three pieces.<sup>1</sup> The Assistant Curator of the Drawings Collection made it clear to me that the fragments, while not even accounted for, and kept in deplorable condition, would never come to Canada as they were part of the papers of the architect, E. A. Rickards.<sup>2</sup> These small pieces of card, now housed 3,000 miles away, are important evidence of one of the most ambitious commemorative building plans ever envisioned for this country.

The First World War art collection was the brainchild of Lord Beaverbrook, the Canadian-born entrepreneur, newspaper owner, member of the British Cabinet, and founder of the Canadian War Memorials Fund (CWMF).<sup>3</sup> The fact that there was no fitting memorial to the Canadian success at the second battle of Ypres in 1915 inspired him to commission a vast portrayal of the event by artist Richard Jack.<sup>4</sup> Further commissions followed, mainly to British artists at first, but increasingly, after 1917, to Canadians. By 1919, the collection consisted of nearly one thousand works, including depictions of units as varied as the Canadian Veterinary Corps and the Canadian Forestry Corps, portraits of generals and Victoria Cross winners, and scenes of most of Canada's major battles.

This is the story of the failure to erect a building to house these works of art. There are



two main protagonists in the drama: Lord Beaverbrook, and Sir Edmund Walker, President of the Canadian Bank of Commerce, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the National Gallery of Canada, and a member of the Canadian War Memorials Fund committee. The two men worked together on the Fund committee commissioning works of art, Beaverbrook in Europe and Walker in Canada. They differed, however, over where the art work should eventually be housed. Ultimately, both lost out to other government funding priorities and agendas, and a facility never was built. The war art collections of the First World War, and the Second too, remain one of the country's great neglected treasures.

Beaverbrook never acquired the complete support of Walker. Sir Edmund had originally wanted to hire Canadian artists to make sketches in the field as documentary records that would be turned over, along with archival material, to the Public Archives of Canada, the ultimate destination being a National Historical Gallery associated either with the gallery or the archives. This building, and its documentary art, would then have linked a planned new national gallery and a new archives building on Sussex Drive.<sup>5</sup> Beaverbrook, on the other hand, wanted studio pictures - many of them large-scale - that could, as his initial vision saw it, be hung in public institutions. In the end Walker reconsidered his own plan, and wrote Beaverbrook on 11 October 1917, saying he would no longer pursue the archival option, but would instead support the latter's initiative in commissioning finished compositions.<sup>6</sup> Walker also wrote Eric Brown, the Director of the National Gallery, regarding his decision on 14 November 1917. "I do not wish to discourage [Beaverbrook's] effort which is

evidently sure to be made in any event, and out of which some strikingly good things may come."<sup>7</sup>

As the full scope of a new initiative by Beaverbrook, to create a full-fledged war memorial building to house the war art, became clear in late 1917, Walker began to experience renewed doubts. As he became increasingly aware that government funds were limited, Walker promoted a revised plan of his own that incorporated the war art, after 1921 in the gallery's custody, into a single new national gallery building in the hopes of strengthening the case for such a purpose-built facility.

In this Walker was ultimately as unsuccessful as Beaverbrook was to be, and the gallery was never built. In 1971, the National Gallery transferred the collection, since 1946 enlarged to include the art of the Second World War, to the Canadian War Museum, which proved equally unable to provide a purpose-built display space. This certainly was not what Lord Beaverbrook had in mind when he gave the CWMF art to Canada. Today, nearly 80 years after his bequest, the housing and display situation of this unique and very important art collection remains substantially unchanged.

Ironically, Beaverbrook's plan for a separate building seems to have had its genesis in the letter he received from Walker on 11 October 1917.<sup>8</sup> Here Walker made it quite clear that he saw Beaverbrook's work as assisting in his goal of acquiring a national gallery building. He wrote:

...there is no gallery of any kind at the moment and it may be that what you are doing will help us very much in the creation either of larger Archives buildings or of the National Gallery, or of both.

Walker then outlined three alternatives for housing the war art based on a plan drawn up by the government's architect, Frank Darling, which earlier had received support from the prime minister, Sir Robert Borden. The war art might go into an enlarged archives building, or in a wing of a new national gallery, or into a completely separate facility. He wrote:

One can.. imagine your material as forming the chief feature of a great historical gallery in connection with the Archives, or, that in the National Gallery, although devoted to the fine arts, rooms to be set apart for works connected

with the war, or that a separate gallery be established entirely devoted to that purpose.

It was obviously the last suggestion that appealed to Beaverbrook. As for Walker, he most likely later regretted ever having included this final thought. It not only weakened his case for a war art wing in a new national gallery, but also introduced the concept of a separate building to house the war art apart from the National Gallery.

Beaverbrook replied to Walker on 19 October 1917, shortly after attending a dinner with a number of the artists he had hired for the Fund. "The artists," he reported, "strongly held the view that a special building should be secured."<sup>9</sup>

Meanwhile, in Canada it was becoming clear that Beaverbrook's CWMF programme was going to require considerable storage space. On 16 November 1917, Eric Brown wrote Walker expressing his concerns and arguing that the housing of these works should be used as a means of obtaining a new national gallery. He also thought it would be possible to argue for a new archives building to house the records and trophies that were coming in with the art works:

I do think that this immense acquisition by the War Records Office should be made as far as possible an urgent reason for the building of the National Gallery and the Archives, for in some part of them the material must be exhibited... I would suggest I come down to Toronto next week and discuss the matter with you...because I think that we should not be behind hand with our end of the work if we wish to profit by the display of the War Records Office.<sup>10</sup>

Over the subsequent year energies were absorbed in commissioning the artists which resulted in the matter of housing being temporarily left to one side

When the war came to an end on 11 November 1918, a flurry of activity ensued. In a letter to Walker of 26 November, Brown wrote that Sir Edward Kemp, the minister of the Overseas Military Forces of Canada, had requested some action regarding the housing of the war art, and that it appeared that the National Gallery plan was not widely known.<sup>11</sup> This plan, Brown urged, should be publicized.<sup>12</sup> "Ottawa is full of discussion of War memorials buildings both national and local," he wrote, "and I am sure the time is ripe for our plans to be known to

those in authority." On 9 December 1918, Beaverbrook unveiled his own plan in a letter to Walker:

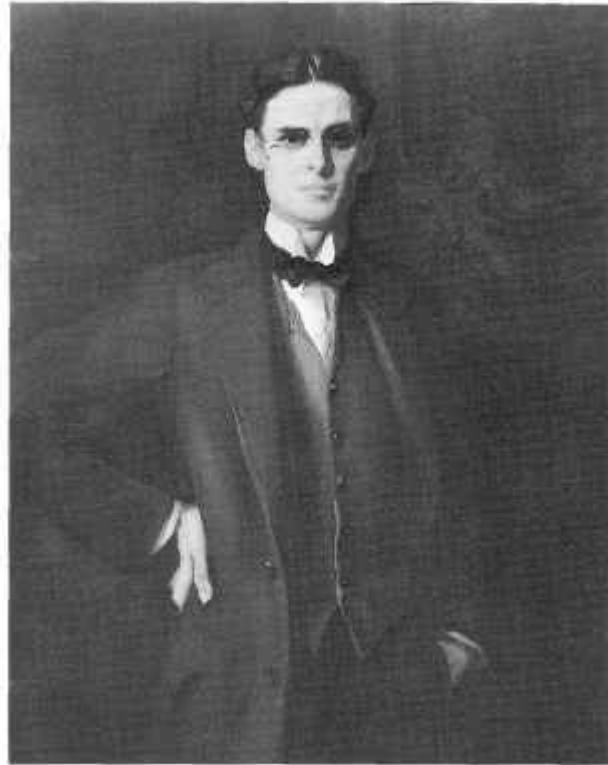
During the last three months we have been using the services of an architect to co-ordinate our work....[He] has conceived and drawn plans for a magnificent Memorial building which it is estimated would cost \$ 1,250,000. He is a genius and if the building were carried out it would be a most magnificent home for our paintings, and a splendid culmination of our work.<sup>13</sup>

The next day he made his intentions even more clear in a memorandum to Kemp, that outlined his activities with the Canadian War Records, the umbrella organisation for the Canadian War Memorials Fund. "This Commission," he argued, "should have for its final goal the erection of a suitable building by public subscription in Ottawa..."<sup>14</sup> A month later, in early January 1919, he unveiled a plan for the new building at the first exhibition of the CWMF art at Burlington House in London, England. He announced his expectations to Walker in a telegram on 30 January, in which he stated that his committee:

propose[d] [to] erect a building for paintings only raising private funds for this purpose. Committee would expect free site from Government. Committee here feel very strongly that paintings must be housed separately from war trophies.<sup>15</sup>

The architect invited to design this Canadian war memorial building was the Englishman, Edwin Alfred Rickards.<sup>16</sup> In a portrait painted by Waldo Murray, the architect appears self-assured and confident, a bit of an aesthete perhaps.<sup>17</sup> He is recalled by contemporaries as a popular man who moved easily in the cultured and literary circles of Edwardian London. It was from within this circle that he undoubtedly became known to Paul Konody, art advisor to the Canadian War Memorials Fund, and ultimately, to Lord Beaverbrook. The commission for the Canadian war memorial was his last major design. At the time he was a lieutenant in the British Army and thus his services were provided free as part of his duties.

Rickards was born in Chelsea, London, in 1872, and he died there at the relatively early age of 48 in 1920. He was a prodigy who achieved success quite young. While of humble beginnings (his mother kept a drapery shop in Fulham), by



*E.A. Rickards*  
*Portrait by Waldo Murray*

the age of 15 Rickards had begun the first of a series of jobs working for a succession of London architectural firms. His workload was such that he suffered a collapse through overwork at the age of 21. Upon his return from convalescence abroad, he became a partner in a new firm named Lanchester, James, Stewart and Rickards. Of the four partners, H. V. Lanchester was in many ways Rickards' mentor. He was also the more business-like of the two and was able to allow Rickards' gifts in design and draughtsmanship to flourish over the course of the partnership.

The period of their early practice coincided with the end of Queen Victoria's reign and the beginning of King Edward VII's. At the time a great many architectural competitions were being held for the design of public buildings. Following Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887, it seemed to many that the British Empire had never been more secure or important. Growing national pride was reflected across the country in a series of commissions for impressive-looking town halls, institutional and other public buildings. The firm's first success was the design of Cardiff City Hall and Law Courts in 1897. By 1905, they were well established and won the



**Left:** General exterior view of the proposed Canadian War Memorial Building.

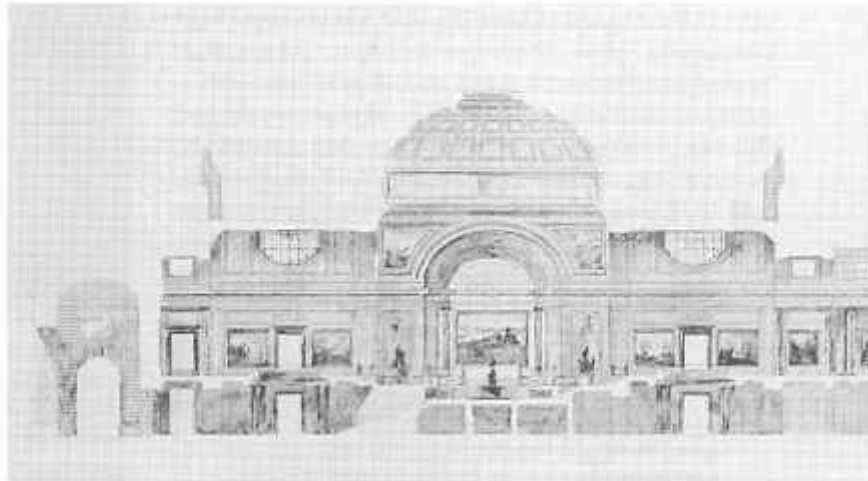
**Below:** Section of the building seen through transepts.

competition for the Wesleyan Central Convocation Hall in London, close by Westminster Abbey, and a site of prime importance in the capital. In this building, as in many of his other designs, Rickards' inspiration seems to have been a combination of Charles Garnier's Opera House in Paris and the rich decorative splendour of Vienna.

Rickards had designed a number of monuments and memorials before he undertook the design of the Canadian war memorial. These included designs for a Royal Memorial in Parliament Square, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1912;<sup>18</sup> the King Edward VII Memorial in Bristol;<sup>19</sup> and the 1920 Cardiff War Memorial, which in fact postdates the Canadian war memorial.<sup>20</sup> None of these designs was on the scale conceived for the Canadian war memorial, and certainly none shared the dual function of art gallery and memorial envisaged for the Canadian design.

Rickards' plan for the Canadian war memorial was presented in *The Housing of the Canadian War Memorials*, an illustrated brochure published in 1919 by Lord Rothermere, Beaverbrook's colleague on the Canadian War Memorials Fund, and a fellow newspaperman.<sup>21</sup> The overall design envisioned a monumental building in a neo-baroque style, more severe than his earlier creations, but in keeping with the building's memorial role. As the brochure stated:

In planning and organizing the great Scheme of the Canadian War Memorials, the [planning] Committee was guided throughout by three main



considerations. The first of these was naturally that the Memorials should constitute as complete a historical-artistic record as possible of Canada's share in the great War. The second, that this record should be thoroughly representative of all the varied and somewhat diametrically opposed tendencies and movements of Western Art at the time of the tremendous armed conflict, so that the collection should not assume a parochial character. The third and equally important aim was, to provide for an impressive and monumental setting, a great War Memorial in itself, planned in relation to the Works of Art to be housed in it, so as to avoid the wearisome monotony of the ordinary picture gallery with its long unbroken rows of architecturally unrelated exhibits.<sup>22</sup>

The memorial was to be built on Nepean Point in Ottawa, overlooking the Ottawa River, on the site where the National Gallery of Canada now stands.

In its exterior design, the building was almost square, and - likely inspired by the Pantheon in Rome - surmounted by an imposing dome with an interior dimension 87 feet across. The exterior height of the dome was to be 155 feet. The outside

surfaces of the structure were to use a variety of stone, flat, dressed, and rusticated, and to alternate between curved and flat surface angles. Surrounding the edifice would be a series of terraces and water gardens visible from the interior. At the end of the avenue leading up to the main entrance would be a classically inspired triumphal arch:

surmounted by a group of heroic sculpture that will bear the inscription:- 'Quot Robusti Enses Canadae Sunt Gloria Belli Gloria Tot Pacis Canadienses Erunt' which is to say - 'As many sons of Canada, as kept her honour free, So many and no less shall make her glorious in the peace to be.'<sup>23</sup>

If today one stands on the northern bank of the Ottawa River, near the Canadian Museum of Civilization, and tries to imagine this building situated just behind the statue of Champlain on the south bank, it becomes clear that Rickards was familiar with neither the site nor the existing architecture nearby, including the parliament buildings, the former archives building (now the Canadian War Museum), and the Royal Canadian Mint. Unlike Rickards' neo-baroque design, these are mainly rectangular stone buildings of a neo-gothic and neo-romanesque style designed to withstand a rigorous climate. Rickards' building would have been unusual for the capital, especially with its water gardens, and this was a contributing factor in the project's failure.

The interior design was relatively straightforward. It was basically a cruciform design with rectangular spaces at each end and oval galleries tucked in between the arms of the cross. The four rectangular spaces were 45 feet across on the interior, with the interior length, and width of the building being 244 feet (280 feet on the exterior). On the main floor, after passing the rectangles that contained two curators' offices, the visitor could move to the left through an oval gallery of portraits, into a second rectangular space displaying Charles Sims' *Sacrifice*.<sup>24</sup> From there, the visitor could pass into an oval gallery featuring the work of Canadian artists, and then into a rectangular space containing Augustus John's immense *Canadians at Lens* where the walls would be so situated as to allow an uninterrupted view along the length of the crossarm leading up to its display space.<sup>25</sup> Moving out of a third oval gallery containing the works of British artists, the visitor

would come into another rectangular gallery with Richard Jack's two large canvasses, *The Second Battle of Ypres*, and *The Taking of Vimy Ridge*, before moving into an oval gallery with portraits of Victoria Cross winners.<sup>26</sup> "Portrait busts and smaller works of sculpture will be placed in the centre of each gallery, allowing for ample space for circulation between them and the walls."<sup>27</sup>

On the lower floor, beginning below the two curators' offices, was the entrance porch. From here, the visitor could move left through an exhibition of prints, followed by a display of David Milne's work, and thence to a show of Sir Alfred Munnings' paintings, and finally to a gallery devoted to photography. Cloakroom and refreshment facilities and other offices were also planned for this floor. In the centre, below the dome, a fountain of some kind was intended, with steps rising up from this area to the principal floor.

The drawing for the cross-section through the building suggests that the interior walls of the cruciform on the principal floor were to be used for the display of the 40 large, commissioned decorative or allegorical paintings. Eight of these now hang in the Senate Chamber on Parliament Hill, while the remainder are either in the custody of the National Gallery or the Canadian War Museum.

The placing of all these large paintings has been governed by the subject and manner of execution and varied methods, of lighting and dramatic presentation will be provided, ensuring to each work its due effect. They will also be sufficiently separated by the architectural framing of the walls, so that the inherent diversity of technique and subject will not in any way be distracting to the spectator or react among the works themselves.<sup>28</sup>

According to an early curator of the war art collections, R. F. Wodehouse, who published a brief account of the building in 1978:

Natural lighting for the arms of the cross on the main floor was by large areas of glass in barrel vaulted inner ceilings. These in turn were lit by clerestory windows in the outer walls. A large well midway along each arm gave some natural lighting to the ground floor and broke up the large floor space. Natural light for the large oval galleries was by sky lights.<sup>29</sup>

However, as the brochure noted: "...in the greater part of the building, artificial lighting will be provided from above, but concealed, so that the effect obtained will hardly differ from that of ordinary daylight exhibition of pictures."<sup>30</sup>

Beaverbrook and his colleagues in the Fund were aware that such a bold design might not be entirely suitable for Ottawa, and might well have to be modified. As much was admitted in the final paragraph of the brochure:

Lieut. Rickards' designs form part of the Canadian War Memorial Committee's gift to the Dominion. Their perfect suitability to their purpose cannot be questioned, though local conditions may make certain modifications advisable. These conditions can only be properly judged by a local architect. To get the ideal War Memorials Building a leading Canadian Architect might well be invited to carry out the building in collaboration with Lieut. E. A. Rickards, whose plan and designs combine so many daringly novel features with a profound respect for all that is best in tradition.<sup>31</sup>

Walker was critical of the plan from the beginning. He had already expressed doubts over the architect's unfamiliarity with the topography of Ottawa in a letter to Beaverbrook of 21 January 1919.<sup>32</sup> He roundly dismissed Rickards' plan in a letter to Captain J. Harold Watkins, Secretary of the Canadian War Memorials Fund, on 7 March 1919. "The plan suggested by Lieutenant Rickards, published in pamphlet form, is very handsome but the slightest acquaintance with Ottawa will make it clear that such a type of architecture is quite impossible there."<sup>33</sup>

Walker described in detail his own preferred plan dating from 1917 that reserved space on Sussex Drive for a new archives building and a new national gallery. "We propose to adapt an area originally designed only for the National Gallery of Fine Arts and the Archives to the four purposes of the National Gallery of Fine Arts, the gallery of war paintings, the hall of trophies and the archives,..."<sup>34</sup> Beaverbrook's objections to the Walker proposal largely centred on the amount of space the war art would be allocated, which at 3,484 running feet was considerably less than that encompassed by Rickards' design.<sup>35</sup> In a letter to Walker of 21 July 1919 Brown lamented: "I understand that Lord Beaverbrook is absolutely determined to have the separate

building and that our plans have no approval from him at all."<sup>36</sup>

The government provided no direction over the subsequent year. A letter to Walker from the deputy minister of Public Works, written on 31 May 1920 stated:

The general feeling seems to be...that Mr. Rickards' Building is entirely unsuitable in design and will be out of harmony with other Government Buildings in the Capital...I wonder if we cannot cooperate in some way to get something definite settled in regard to this matter.<sup>37</sup>

Nonetheless, Beaverbrook came to believe that Borden's successor as prime minister, Arthur Meighen, supported his project. Meighen wrote to him on 25 November 1920:

This collection of war pictures is very valuable and I believe that many experts consider that it is the most complete that any nation possesses. It is therefore necessary that the greatest care should be taken to preserve these paintings...I should therefore like to have your opinion as to how this can best be done...Permit me to take this opportunity of expressing my great appreciation of the patriotic work which has been done by yourself and the other members of your Committee...in collecting these valuable paintings..I know...that both yourself and Lord Rothermere have advanced large sums of money personally...I quite realize that you have done all this entirely as an act of friendship to Canada...<sup>38</sup>

Couched in such positive terms, this letter seems to have persuaded Beaverbrook that Meighen had his interests at heart, and his own housing plan - namely Rickards' design - had the support of the government. In his response to Meighen of 14 December 1920, Beaverbrook declared that he would hand over the art collection (presumably including the plan) to the Canadian government "unconditionally." His confidence was sufficiently strong that he cancelled a proposed trip by Lord Rothermere to Canada to discuss housing the collection.

I was most anxious to have them [the war paintings] suitably housed, and had hoped that Lord Rothermere might have been induced to visit Canada next summer to examine into the question of a Memorial Gallery for them. In view of your letter, however, I have dropped this idea...<sup>39</sup>



*Interior perspective of the Canadian War Memorial Design.*

There was, however, no action. The question as to whether Beaverbrook's plan, or Walker's would go ahead had not been settled when the paintings themselves were officially handed over to the temporary custody of the National Gallery on 12 April 1921, after a final showing in Montreal. To add to the confusion, earlier attempts to get Rickards and Darling together had failed because of the latter's heavy workload.<sup>40</sup> Matters had been further complicated by Rickards' ill health and, later by his death.

It may have been the continuing inertia that persuaded the National Gallery to press its own plan. The gallery's Annual Report of 1921-22 made no reference to a separate building for the war art collection at all, and recommended unequivocally that it be housed in a special section in a new gallery building.<sup>41</sup> Sir Edmund Walker weighed in with his support.

On 1 September 1922 he wrote to the minister of Public Works referring to his own original plan for housing the war art. Walker further indicated that he understood his plan was being used by the government. He wrote:

...I at one time made a report regarding the disposal of war material generally. This report was accompanied by a ground plan with suggestions as to buildings and space required. I believe this ground plan was passed on to the Public Works Department and that it is being made use of in connection with the development of a new group of buildings. The Deputy Minister of course knows all about this.<sup>42</sup>

More importantly, Walker suggested that while Beaverbrook was "as keenly interested in the whole matter as ever," he was no longer interested in promoting his own building design.

At one time he talked vaguely of a building to hold the war paintings to be erected by himself and Lord Rothermere. I do not think that what he had in mind would ever have been possible and I think it is unlikely that he will ever again offer to do this, but, on the other hand I think he is deeply offended at the apparent indifference of the Government to the possession of a collection of paintings, trophies and other records of the war finer than that possessed by any of the nations concerned in the war.

On the same day that he sent this letter to the minister of Public Works, Walker made it clear to Brown that his somewhat vague references to "a new group of buildings" included housing the war art in a new national gallery.

I have not mentioned the building for the National Gallery because it would seem inconsistent with the rest of my letter, but of course, the building for the paintings will inevitably mean the Gallery as a whole.<sup>43</sup>

Both letters are interesting for the light they shed on Walker and his agenda for the National Gallery. In the first, he discussed both his own preferred plan for housing the war art and his own interpretation of Beaverbrook's vague intentions. While he clearly drew attention to his own plan, he also skated around Beaverbrook's plan for a separate war memorial building, dismissing it as an idea that Beaverbrook had



once only vaguely considered. Furthermore, he neglected to mention that an actual plan had been drawn up in the form of Rickards' designs, of which he was well aware. It is important to remember that at the time of writing Walker was Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the National Gallery, which had custody of the paintings. Thus, it was Walker and not Beaverbrook who was best placed to influence the agenda as to their fate. As he had stressed in the letter to Brown, housing the war art in a new national gallery was the only option he was considering. It was, quite simply, not in his interests in 1922 to remind the Department of Public Works that a separate war memorial building had ever been more than an idea.

Walker's efforts, were not successful. Support was not forthcoming from the government for a new building to house either art or war art. As J.H. King, the minister of Public Works replied to Walker on 30 September 1922: "With the urgent necessity for public buildings to carry on the ordinary Government services, I am not hopeful that we will secure the appropriation that would construct the building required.."<sup>44</sup>

Walker subsequently wrote to Beaverbrook on 8 May 1923 stating his view that politics were at the base of the problem as to whether any building would be erected. "In the present condition of Canadian politics," he declared, "it would seem as indefinite as ever when a proper gallery for housing these pictures will be erected."<sup>45</sup> In other words, there was little point in Beaverbrook pursuing Rickards' plan at that time. Likely discouraged, Beaverbrook elected not to meet with Brown the following year in England when presumably the plan could have been discussed.<sup>46</sup> Maria Tippett suggests in her 1982 Ph.D thesis on the First World War Canadian war art programme that since by this time Beaverbrook was no longer active on the political scene he would have been unable to bring much pressure to bear in any case.<sup>47</sup>

Brown also allowed Rickards' plan to be buried even deeper the following year. In a letter to the deputy minister of Public Works, J. B. Hunter, on 2 March 1925, discussing the state of the war art collections, he wrote:

There is no doubt that proper housing is urgently needed and it is the hope of the Board of

Trustees, which will take the form of a concrete proposal before long, that when a new National Gallery is built a special wing or connected building will be added to place [the war art] within reach of the Canadian public for ever.<sup>48</sup>

This plan was confirmed at a meeting of the Gallery's Board of Trustees of 26 January 1926. The minutes record the following resolution:

...[that] the Government be requested to leave the Canadian War Memorials collection in the permanent custody of the National Gallery of Canada to be housed in a specially designed wing of the permanent building of the National Gallery of Canada...and that further, the Board impress upon the Government the urgent necessity of an early commencement on such a building for the National Gallery.<sup>49</sup>

The Government did not act on this resolution. Two years later, however, in April 1928 Prime Minister Mackenzie King was briefed on the matter, after a question had been asked in the House of Commons by Sir George Perley, war-time Acting High Commissioner for Canada in London, Sir Edward Kemp's predecessor as minister of the Overseas Military Forces of Canada, and an early supporter of Beaverbrook's plan. (His wife, indeed, had been on the Fund's committee.)<sup>50</sup> Speaking in the House of Commons on 16 April, King was, typically, non-committal, but nodded in the direction of a single national gallery. After praising Beaverbrook's role, and even referring to Rickards' plan as the sort of building that might be built as an art gallery, King said:

Undoubtedly if the collection is to be properly exhibited, it should be part of a national art gallery, and as matters now stand would appear to mean asking parliament to make an appropriation for an art gallery. Up to the present time we have felt that there were other demands more imperative than the demand for a building for the purpose of housing these particular works of art...<sup>51</sup>

The renewed interest caught Beaverbrook's attention and he wrote an enthusiastic note to King on 28 April. "I am writing to express my gratitude to you for paying such a magnificent tribute to the work I was able to do in helping to make the collection," he wrote.<sup>52</sup> The fact that at no point did King suggest that the war paintings should go in a separate building, and that this did not concern Beaverbrook, underlines the fact that by this time the latter had abandoned his

own scheme for the separate housing of the CWMF paintings.

King replied equally warmly to Beaverbrook on 17 July, suggesting that he had been unaware of Rickards' plan prior to his pre-speech briefing.

I was glad to learn from your letter of April 28 that you had seen the Hansard containing my much too inadequate reference to your part in securing for Canada the invaluable collection of war paintings which have still to find their fitting accommodation. I would like to have said very much more...[but] I had to be brief, apologizing as often as I could for the nation's neglect in the matter of housing your gift.

I only wish that I had been really fully apprized of the scope as well as nature of the collection at the time that we were considering Canada's National War Memorial. I may frankly say that I would have thrown the weight of my influence toward securing as a National War Memorial a National Gallery in the Capital to house the collection. It could have been made a marvellous memorial to Canada's service and sacrifice in the Great War. Just imagine a building such as the one designed for the purpose, of which plans were forwarded with the collection! The latter were all unknown to me until a very short time ago. I believe Parliament would have responded handsomely to a suggestion of the kind.<sup>53</sup>

Ingratiating as is the tone, the prime minister's use of the past tense suggests that the moment for such a grand project was gone, if it had ever existed. On 7 May 1929, King told the House of Commons, in response to another question from Sir George Perley, that:

Up to the present time the government has not felt it would be justified in asking parliament to appropriate money for an art gallery. There are many public buildings urgently needed...we feel we should consider meeting these requirements before undertaking a building for the exhibit of paintings.<sup>54</sup>

To the extent that he cared about the issue at all, King's thinking was more allied with Walker's vision of a single national gallery than with Beaverbrook's war memorial project. Revealingly, in his 1929 remarks to the House he declared that he was not "without hope that some public-spirited citizen will be found who one of these days will present the country with a national art gallery." Although this statement confirmed that he had no intention of allotting public funds to the project, it does raise the possibility that his letter to Beaverbrook nearly a year earlier was

written in the hope that Beaverbrook himself might be persuaded to support a national gallery whose collections would include the war art as well.

Nothing happened, and the issue disappeared after 1929 as the Great Depression enveloped the world. Even before this crisis came to dominate domestic politics, the likelihood of the project ever moving forward became increasingly remote. The need to rebuild the Parliament Buildings after the fire of 1916 had made enormous demands on the federal government's budget, and the new structures included the Peace Tower, housing a book of remembrance for Canadian war dead, which was unveiled on Remembrance Day, 1928. In addition, a contract had already been let for the National War Memorial, a large sculptural piece designed by Vernon March for Ottawa.

Beaverbrook seems never to have completely given up on his war memorial building. Upon learning, in 1944, that the two-year old Canadian War Museum was making plans for its own building, Beaverbrook sent copies of the 1919 plan for his war memorial. Gustave Lanctot, who as Dominion Archivist, administered the war museum, replied:

I have...received the album containing the plans and sketches of the War Museum you had in mind for Canada...It will certainly be very helpful when the Board of the War Museum submit to the Government its proposal for the construction of a museum. I hope that some day, in your next volume of memoirs, you will let us know why Canada did not accept the gift of the wonderful museum you were offering to put up in Ottawa.<sup>55</sup>

He never did.

## Notes

1. The three water-colours consisting of a perspective view of the interior, a transverse-section through the interior, and a drawing showing the overall design of the exterior, are illustrated in colour in *The Art of E.A. Rickards*, a volume which includes essays by Arnold Bennett and H.V. Lanchester published in London in 1920.
2. Verbal request by the author to Dr. Neil Bingham, Assistant Curator, Drawings Collection, The British Architectural Library, Royal Institute of British Architects [RIBA], April 1996.

3. Maria Tippett's thesis and book provide the fullest accounts of the formation and progress of the Canadian War Memorials scheme. "The History of the Canadian War Memorial Scheme as a Study of Patronage and Visual Record of the Great War," Unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of London, 1982; and *Art at the Service of War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984).
4. Richard Jack, *The Second Battle of Ypres, 22 April to 25 May 1915*, nd, Canadian War Museum, 8179.
5. National Gallery of Canada Archives [NGC], National Gallery of Canada fonds, Canadian War Art - Canadian War Memorials (General) 5.41-C (File 1), Sir Edmund Walker to Lord Beaverbrook, 11 October 1917.
6. *Ibid.*
7. NGC 5.41-C (File 1), Walker to Eric Brown, 14 November 1917.
8. *Ibid.*, Walker to Beaverbrook, 11 October 1917.
9. *Ibid.*, Beaverbrook to Walker, 19 October 1917.
10. *Ibid.*, Brown to Walker, 16 November 1917.
11. *Ibid.*, Brown to Walker, 26 November 1918.
12. *Ibid.*, Brown to Walker, 28 November 1918.
13. University of Toronto, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, Sir Edmund Walker papers, Box 24, document entitled "Extracts from correspondence relative to a building to contain war memorials in Canada." Beaverbrook to Walker, 9 December 1918.
14. NGC 5.41-C (File 1), memorandum dated 10 December 1918.
15. Walker Papers, "Extracts," Beaverbrook to Walker, 30 January 1919.
16. A. Stuart Gray, *Edwardian Architecture; A Biographical Dictionary* (London: Wordsworth Editions, 1985), pp.308-311. I am indebted to this author's summary of Rickards' life and career for much of the biographical material provided here.
17. Waldo Murray, *Portrait of E.A. Rickards*, 1911, oil on canvas, 111.5x86 cm, British Architectural Library, RIBA, London, U.K.
18. This example of his bravura style of drawing was illustrated in *The Builder* on 7 June 1912.
19. Illustrated in *The Builder*, 13 January 1911.
20. Illustrated in *The Builder*, 24 September 1920.
21. House of Lords Archives, London, England, Beaverbrook Papers, BBK/E/1/41, *The Housing of the Canadian War Memorials*. Tippett dates this brochure to 1921 in her thesis (p.266), but the fact that the brochure describes the architect as living, and we know that he was dead in 1920, makes this date untenable. The letter to Watkins referred to in endnote 33 confirms the date of publication as 1919.
22. *Housing*, p.1.
23. *Housing*, p.4.
24. Charles Sims, *Sacrifice*, nd, oil on canvas, 415.2 x 409 cm, Canadian War Museum, 8802.
25. Augustus John, *Canadians Opposite Lens*, oil on canvas, private collection, London, U.K.
26. Richard Jack, *The Taking of Vimy Ridge*, 1917; nd, oil on canvas, 366.1 x 604.5 cm, Canadian War Museum, 8178, and *The Second Battle of Ypres, 1915*, nd, oil on canvas, 370.8 x 595.7 cm, Canadian War Museum, 8179.
27. *Housing*, p.7.
28. *Ibid.*
29. R.F. Wodehouse, "Lord Beaverbrook's Plan for a Suitable Building to House the Canadian War Memorials," *Journal of the Organization of Military Museums of Canada*, No. VII, 1978-9, 4.
30. *Housing*, p.8.
31. *Ibid.* See also Walker papers, "Extracts," Beaverbrook to Walker, 15 January 1919, and National Archives of Canada [NAC] MG 27 11 D9, Vol 133, Canadian War Records, Official Reports, 1918-1920, File C-27, Canadian War Memorials, Report of Executive Committee.
32. Walker papers, Box 24, Walker to Beaverbrook, 21 January 1919.
33. Walker papers, "Extracts," Walker to Captain J. Harold Watkins, 7 March 1919.
34. *Ibid.*
35. *Ibid.*, Walker to Watkins, 7 March 1919.
36. *Ibid.*, Brown to Walker, 21 July 1919.
37. Walker papers, Box 15, J. B. Hunter to Walker, 31 May 1920.
38. Beaverbrook papers, BBK/A/247, Meighen to Beaverbrook, 25 November 1920.
39. *Ibid.*, Beaverbrook to Meighen, 14 December 1920.
40. Walker papers, Box 24, Walker to Beaverbrook, 21 January 1919.
41. NAC MG 27 II D9, Vol.133, Canadian War Memorials, The National Gallery of Canada Annual Report 1921-22.
42. NGC 5.41-C (File 3), Walker to J. H. King, 1 September 1922.
43. *Ibid.*, Walker to Brown, 1 September 1922.
44. *Ibid.*, J. H. King to Walker, 30 September 1922.
45. *Ibid.*, Walker to Beaverbrook, 8 May 1923.
46. Tippett, "History," p.296.
47. *Ibid.*
48. NGC 5.41-C (File 3), Brown to Hunter, 2 March 1925.
49. *Ibid.*, Minutes of the Board of Trustees of the National Gallery, 20 January 1926.
50. See NGC 5.41-C (File 4), Brown to Norman Rogers, Secretary to President of the Privy Council, 12 April 1928, and Rogers' memorandum to the prime minister, 16 April 1928.
51. *Ibid.*, extracts included in a copy of a memorandum or letter dated 5 July 1929, likely written by H.O. McCurry, Director of the National Gallery of Canada. At the top is noted in handwriting, "Written for Mr. Elliot. D.P.W."
52. NAC MG 6 J1, Mackenzie King papers, reel 2302, p. 128165-6, Beaverbrook to King, 28 April 1928.
53. Beaverbrook Papers, BBK/A/241, King to Beaverbrook, 17 July 1928.
54. NAC MG 27 11 D9 Vol. 133, Canadian War Records, copy of House of Commons Debates, Vol.LXIV, No.56, 7 May 1929.
55. Beaverbrook papers, BBK/A/281, Gustave Lanctot to Beaverbrook, 30 December 1944.

Laura Brandon is Curator of War Art at the Canadian War Museum. The author would like to express her deep appreciation to Angela Marcus who compiled much of the research that forms the basis of this article, and to Dr. Cameron Pulsifer for his stringent but most necessary editing.