

**THE WARTIME LETTERS OF
LESLIE AND CECIL FROST
1915-1919**

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The
WARTIME
Letters
of
Leslie and Cecil Frost
1915–1919

Edited by R.B. Fleming

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For Marjorie, of course

**Mail is about the most popular of all things
as far as the men out here are concerned**

Leslie Frost in France to his parents in
Orillia, Ontario, 22 February 1918



C. ELLINGWOOD

MAP 1: Western Europe in 1914, with two insets showing where most of the letters in this collection were written.

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Other: John Keegan, *The First World War* (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1998), and Anthony Livesay, *Atlas de la Première guerre mondiale* (Paris: Éditions autrement, 1996)

Projections

Map 1: Cylindrical equal-area CM 3 Lat 50

Map 2: Not applicable.

Maps 3 and 4: Delisle Conic Equidistant

Map 5: Unknown

Disclaimer

These maps are representations and not intended as precise models. Please refer to sources for more information.

Design

Chantal Ellingwood, Lindsay, Ontario, using Adobe Illustrator CS.

Preface

Several voices have contributed to this book, the most important being the voices of two soldiers of the Great War, Leslie and Cecil Frost. About 170 of their letters survived the war. Another voice is that of their mother, Margaret, who wrote over a hundred letters to her two sons overseas, of which only three have survived. Then there's the voice of another Leslie Frost, the retired premier of Ontario, who, more than half a century after the Great War, comments on the letters of two youthful brothers. A fourth voice is that of Dr. Tom Symons, founding president of Trent University, Peterborough, Ontario, who in his foreword comments on the two young soldiers and the Great War. Symons and Frost were friends and colleagues from 1967 to 1973, when Leslie Frost was chancellor of Trent.

In addition, the editor's voice, as unobtrusively as possible, comments in footnotes on the contents of the letters. He has avoided [*sic*] as much as possible, even when tempted to use it for a spelling error, usually minor, or for an occasional vague phrase or missing word. Leslie Frost misspelled words—"allright" for "alright," and "staid" for "stayed." Small errors have been corrected without comment. Other errors, such as the absence of an apostrophe in the possessive case or the elision of words like "that is" to "thats," remain as they appear in the actual letters. The tone of the letters was usually conversational, and thus at times they read as if the brothers were talking directly to their parents, with the usual conversational ellipses and colloquialisms. Occasionally, for clarification, a comma or a question mark has been inserted. Dates are standardized in a day-month-year format. Leslie Frost's annotations of 1971 greatly facilitated the work of the editor, who identifies Frost's comments with "LMF 1971."

The reader is urged to consult the three appendices at the back for (1) an explanation of army units, (2) a list of politicians in two ridings, Simcoe East and Victoria, and (3) an annotated list of the scores of soldiers mentioned in these letters.

Acknowledgements

One of the pleasures in editing these letters was making the acquaintance of Dr. T.H.B. Symons, founding president of Trent University, Peterborough, Ontario. When I asked Tom Symons to write a foreword, I had no idea that he and I would discuss this project during many happy hours throughout 2005 and into 2006. His help was immeasurable. Not only did he encourage me, but he also advised on content, clarity, and nuance. Each time we talked, I felt that I was in touch with the Honourable Leslie M. Frost himself. Tom Symons was not only a colleague of Frost, when Frost was chancellor of Trent from 1967 to 1973, but also a close friend. I was also pleased to meet Christine Symons, who provided encouragement, along with tea and blueberry-banana loaf one lovely afternoon in late summer 2005.

I also want to thank Dr. Bernadine Dodge and Jodi Aoki of Trent University Archives. They could not have been more friendly and helpful in making the Frost letters available, in interpreting some doubtful handwriting, and in providing images for this book. Janice Millard, acting director of the archives for part of 2006, was also most helpful. I am especially grateful to Brian McFadden, who knows the early careers of Leslie and Cecil Frost better than anyone, for advising on battalion war diaries, the Port Hope Conference, military ranks, soldiers' identification, and so many other details, and for reading the manuscript carefully and critically. Military historians Owen Cooke and Dr. Bill Rawling helped me to become better informed about the Great War, and Owen was a constant guide on war strategy and personnel. I must also thank archivist Andrew Rodger at Library and Archives Canada, who pointed me to documents, photographs, and art connected with these letters. The Orillia Public Library was most helpful in finding obscure Frost information. I also want to thank archivists at Simcoe County Archives, home of the William S. Frost scrapbooks, and also archivists at the Archives of Ontario, home of the political papers of Leslie Frost. Clark Bernat, Managing Director, Niagara Historical Society and Museum, provided information on Janet Carnochan, the society's first president, as well as photographs of Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Mississauga. Dr. Paul Litt, Carleton University, commented on Ontario's historical plaques. Dr. Kenneth Munro, University of Alberta, and Dr. Richard Jones, l'Université Laval, advised on

looking publication. I must thank President Bonnie Patterson of Trent, and her assistant, Sandra Morgan, for pointing out this source of money, and Tom Symons for encouraging me to apply to this fund established by colleagues in his honour. I also wish to thank Winnie Janzen, administrative assistant and research centre coordinator at the Frost Centre for Canadian Studies and Native Studies, as well as administrative assistant of the Symons Trust Fund, for facilitating applications to both SSHRC and the Symons Trust Fund.

Working with Jacqueline Larson, Leslie Macredie, Lisa Quinn, Pam Woodland, Rob Kohlmeier, and the rest of the staff of Wilfrid Laurier University Press was a pleasure, and I must thank Jacqueline for finding two anonymous readers, a military and a social historian, whose careful reading and thoughtful comments greatly enriched the manuscript. I only wish that I could name them. My thanks go also to Margaret Crammond for her expert copy editing.

And finally, let me say that Marjorie Porter, daughter of Cecil Frost, was the ideal representative of the family. She was generous in sharing documents, books, and photographs, with no hint of censure. She lives in what William Butler Yeats calls "the deep heart's core."

Abbreviations

ADMS	Assistant Director of Medical Services
AO	Archives of Ontario
ASC	Army Service Corps
BEF	British Expeditionary Force
BF	Bayonet Fighting
CCF	Co-operative Commonwealth Federation
CEF	Canadian Expeditionary Force
CFA	Canadian Field Infantry
CIB	Canadian Infantry Brigade
C&M	Chemistry and Mathematics
CMGC	Canadian Machine Gun Corps/Company
CMGD	Canadian Machine Gun Depot
CMMGB	Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade
CMS	Canadian Military School (Crowborough)
CORD	Central Ontario Regimental Depot
CVWM	Canadian Virtual War Memorial (Veterans' Affairs Canada)
CWGC	Commonwealth War Graves Commission
CWM	Canadian War Museum
D	Distinguished (grade)
DCM	Distinguished Conduct Medal
DND	Department of National Defence
DSO	Distinguished Service Order
GSO	General Staff Officer
KC	King's Council
LAC/BAC	Library and Archives Canada/Bibliothèque et Archives Canada
MC	Military Cross
MM	Military Medal
MO	Medical Officer
NCO	Non-commissioned Officer
NFB	National Film Board
OTC	Officers' Training Course

POW	Prisoner of War
PT	Physical Training
RAF	Royal Air Force
RFA	Royal Field Artillery
RFC	Royal Flying Corps
SCA	Simcoe County Archives (Minesing, Ontario)
SOS	Save Our Souls, or Struck Off Strength
SS	Sunday School
TUA	Trent University Archives
UFO	United Farmers of Ontario
VC	Victoria Cross
WCTU	Women's Christian Temperance Union
WHMS	Women's Home Missionary Society

Introduction

My first taste of the Frost brothers' war letters dates to the spring of 1978. I was hosting a book club discussion of Timothy Findley's novel *The Wars*. Findley and his partner, Bill Whitehead, were neighbours, so I invited them. I also invited my neighbour Marjorie Porter, who had mentioned a collection of war letters.

During the discussion, Marjorie asked about the source of so much darkness in Findley's novel. Robert Ross, Findley explained, was based on his uncle Tiff, who wrote gloomy letters from France. Once back in Toronto, his psyche never recovered. "But Daddy and Uncle Les wrote such positive, often humorous letters," she told the novelist. "Their letters paint a much different impression of the same war."



Marjorie's Uncle Les was better known as Leslie M. Frost, premier and sometimes "prime minister"¹ of Ontario from 1949 to 1961. Her father, Cecil (pronounced "Sessil," as in "Rhodes") was a political organizer and, in 1936, mayor of Lindsay, Ontario, where the two men owned a successful law firm. Leslie and Cecil were two of three sons of William and Margaret Frost. In 1867 the boys' grandfather, John A. Frost, with his wife, Janet, and three young children, left Scotland for Canada. They landed in Toronto, then took the train north to Belle Ewart, at the southern end of Lake Simcoe. There they boarded the *Emily May*, which steamed up Lake Simcoe through the narrows at Atherley to the little town of Orillia on Lake Couchiching. Family legend has them arriving in both Toronto and Orillia on Canada's first Dominion Day.² The Frosts were good at linking significant national events with family history. With a population of about 750, Orillia was incorporated in November 1866, and its council first met in 1867. Soon John Frost opened the Glasgow Bakery, named after his home city in Scotland.

John's son, William Sword Frost, born in 1864, pursued his education in the manner of the time—in 1878 at age fourteen he was indentured as an apprentice to Matthew Drew, Orillia's pioneer watchmaker "to learn the art or trade of watch making and manufacturing jewellery for five years." Less



Stationery of the Glasgow Bakery, 1869. The bakery was located on Peter Street south of Mississaga Street. John Frost was grandfather of the Frost brothers. (Courtesy of Simcoe County Archives, B1 R4A S6 Sh4, p28.)

than three years later, Drew wrote a letter of recommendation. His student was "a good, steady boy anxious to learn his business," and "faithful to all his engagements." William Frost moved on to Toronto, probably shortly after Drew's letter of October 1880. In the big city, he apprenticed as a ring maker and diamond setter, then returned to Orillia to work for J.B. Thompson, jeweller and watchmaker. In 1883, when John Frost died, William's income was no doubt essential to his widowed mother and two siblings.

On New Year's Day, 1890, William Frost married Margaret Barker. Her parents, William and Maria (Waud) Barker, had migrated from Yorkshire and Lancashire, respectively, to London, Ontario, where "Maggie," as she was known then, was born in 1865. William Barker's father had failed in the cotton business near Manchester when power looms replaced hand looms in the 1830s. That failure may have prompted him to migrate to British North America. In England, the Barkers and the Wauds had belonged to the Church of England, but in Canada they became Methodists. When Margaret married William Frost, she became a Presbyterian, but she was also associated with the Salvation Army of Orillia.

William and Margaret's first child, Grenville Barker Frost, was born in 1891³ in the family home at the corner of Mississaga and Wyandotte Streets, not far from the centre of town. The next year, with \$300 lent by Andrew Miscampbell,⁴ a fellow Presbyterian and Conservative member at Queen's Park for Simcoe East, William Frost established "W.S. Frost and Company, Diamond Hall."⁵ When the Frosts' second son was born on 20 September 1895, William and Margaret named him Leslie Miscampbell in honour of the family's benefactor. Cecil Gray Frost, the youngest, was born on 15 August 1897,⁶ not long after the family had moved into the more commodious "Highlands" in

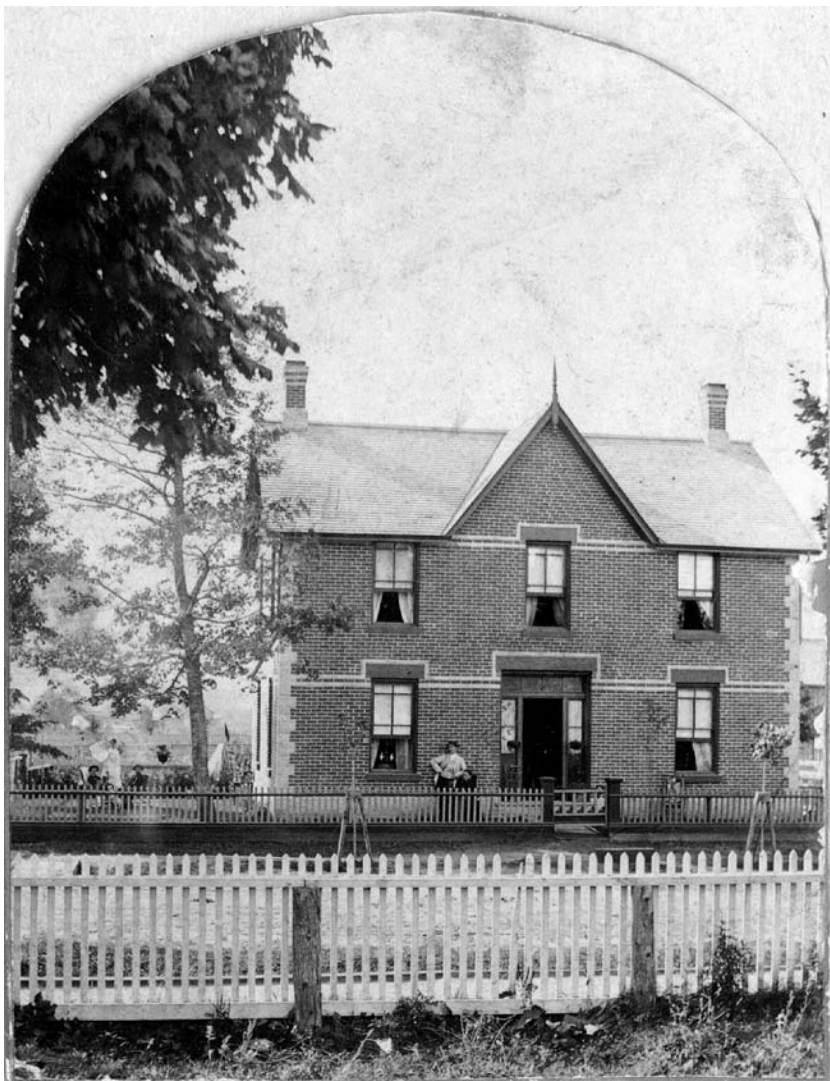


POINTS OF INTEREST

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church | 6. Champlain Monument |
| 2. First home of William and Margaret Frost | 7. Glasgow Bakery |
| 3. Orillia Opera House | 8. Diamond Hall |
| 4. "Highlands"—Cecil Frost born here | 9. Old Brewery Bay
(Leacock summer home) |
| 5. "Lochbrae"—372 Bay St. | |

MAP 2: The Frosts' Orillia, circa 1932, showing various Frost businesses and residences as well as the Champlain Monument, the Opera House, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, and Old Brewery Bay.

north Orillia near the Muskoka Road. From there they had a view of Lake Couchiching. In 1906, having rented two different locations for his business, William Frost purchased a building on Mississauga Street between Peter and West Streets, next to the Mulcahay block where he had carried on business for several years.⁷ On the ground floor of the new Diamond Hall, he sold fine jewellery, cut glass compotes, and expensive vases, as well as watches



The Frost house, Mississaga and Wyandotte Streets, Orillia, 1884, where Grenville was born on 27 January 1891, and Leslie on 20 September 1895. This was the home of Leslie Frost's grandfather, John Frost, who died the year before this photograph was taken. The *Orillia Times* reported in June 1904 that extensive alterations to the house were being made by John's son, William (father of Grenville, Leslie, and Cecil). In other words, when the family bought the Highlands, they kept this house, and probably rented it out. (Courtesy of Simcoe County Archives, B2 R4A S6 Sh4 p55.)



Orillia, June 1916, Capt. Leslie Frost and Harold Hale of the *Packet* during farewell ceremonies as "C" Company of the 157th Simcoe Foresters prepare to leave for Camp Borden. (Courtesy of Simcoe County Archives, B2 R4A S6 Sh4 p62.)

At Camp Borden, near Barrie, Ontario, July 1916 (left to right): William Frost, Lt. Cecil Frost, Margaret Frost, Dorothy Swallow (whose mother was a sister of William Frost), Jean Millar (one of several girl friends), Capt. Leslie Frost, and Sarah Barker (sister of Margaret Frost). (Courtesy of Simcoe County Archives, B2 R4A S6 Sh4 p198.)



River. However, during the early twentieth century, the growing middle class, with more expendable income due to growing prosperity in Laurier's Canada, could afford cottage life. They built modest frame cottages that later they renovated, enlarged, or replaced.

At the Beach, the Frost boys canoed, swam, and explored the outdoors. The family enjoyed the fresh air, the view of distant shores, and the sunlight sparkling on water. During the war, the boys worried about their mother spending so much time alone at the Highlands, so remote, it seemed to Leslie and Cecil, from the centre of the town. They were concerned that she might be lonely, and thus, perhaps, subject to ennui as she worried about her sons. Thus they encouraged her to spend more time at the Beach (letter, 20 May 1917) where contemplation of nature would guarantee emotional and spiritual well-being. By allowing easier communication with "wild things," cottage life drew Canadians away from the hurly-burly of everyday life in increasingly industrialized town and cities, and thus helped to refresh body and mind.²⁴

Despite the bucolic splendours of Lake Couchiching and the obvious happiness of the Frost family, the idea of sacrificing oneself for country and empire was never far from their minds. Among other things, *Chums* promoted the Boy Scouts. Since the movement's beginnings in 1907, its founder, Lord Baden-Powell, emphasized war preparedness. In order to obtain a first-class certificate and badge, each scout was required to "to drill a squad in elementary infantry movements." By 1910 there were some 10,000 Canadian scouts, including Leslie and Cecil Frost, no doubt encouraged by their father, who had been a rifleman in "F" Company of the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada from 1882 to 1884. When the two boys were old enough, they spent part of each June training as cadets, then later as "Volunteers" in Canada's army. In 1913, their father snapped his two sons in uniform prior to their departure for Camp Niagara, Niagara-on-the-Lake. While Leslie was a private, Cecil was a bugler. Behind them is the Red Ensign, which Premier Frost promoted as the official flag of Canada.²⁵

Leacock's "Sunshine World," with its leisurely cruises and sun-splashed picnics (along with periodic vote buying in dimly-lit hotel bars), scarcely prepared the two brothers for the cataclysm of the Great War. And yet Scouts, Henty, and *Chums* urged them to defend the great Empire, which in the autumn of 1914 was in peril as German armies marched relentlessly across Belgium towards the English Channel. In the spring of 1915, Leslie enlisted as a provisional lieutenant with the Simcoe Foresters, the 157th Battalion, and in August, he set off for Niagara-on-the-Lake for training. Cecil joined him later at Camp Borden. They were inexorably drawn into the war to end all wars.

one day in 1916 to a war that changed them and their century in more ways than Canadians today can ever understand.

Today Leslie and Cecil Frost rest among Frosts and Carews at Riverside Cemetery in Lindsay. Their tombstones, along with tens of thousands of markers in war cemeteries in Europe, and hundreds of cenotaphs across Canada and throughout the world, record the memory of soldiers who sacrificed their youth, and too often their lives, for the preservation of what they thought were the best qualities of mankind. Like the Empire he revered, Rudyard Kipling's poetic reputation has declined since the Great War. Nevertheless it is Kipling's lines, "Their name liveth for evermore" and "A soldier of the Great War—Known unto God," that visitors read on the stones of remembrance in war cemeteries in France and Belgium.⁹⁸ Thanks to an Orillia connection,⁹⁹ Kipling also contributed a four-line verse to the cenotaph in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. Its first two lines are "From little towns in a far land we came, / To save our honour and a world aflame." Twice in *Fighting Men*, Leslie Frost quoted that verse. It was important to him, especially the last line, which expresses the hope that future generations will carefully preserve "those things we won." The publication of these letters may help to fulfill Leslie Frost's wish that the sacrifice be remembered.

R.B. Fleming

NOTES

- 1 The term may be rooted in the pre-Confederation practice, during the union of Canada East and Canada West, of joint prime or first ministers, one from each section. Frost and his successor, John Robarts, may be the only two twentieth-century premiers of Ontario to use the term, but the title "Prime Minister" remained on the door of the premier's office at Queen's Park for years after Frost's time as premier/prime minister.
- 2 The Frost Scrapbooks at SCA differ slightly from the account of Roger Graham, Frost's biographer. Notes in those scrapbooks claim that the Frosts steamed into Orillia, not Toronto, on 1 July 1867.
- 3 During the war, Grenville worked for the Ministry of Munitions as a chemist, following which he pursued graduate work in California. From 1924 to 1961, he taught Physical Chemistry at Queen's University, Kingston. During his last five years he was chair of the department. In 1961 the Frost wing, designed by Professor Frost, was added to Gordon Hall. He was a Fellow of the Chemical Institute of Canada, and in 1963, he received its Chemical Education Award. When he died in 1964, he was buried in Beechwood Cemetery, Ottawa.
- 4 See Appendix 2.
- 5 The Frost Scrapbooks at SCA claim that Frost rented space from Frank Kean, who had arrived in Orillia in 1854. The *Newsletter*, another Orillia newspaper, claimed in 1935, when W.S. Frost retired, that he began his jewellery business

- 92 He would probably approve of the name change of the Frost Centre for Canadian Studies to the Frost Centre for Canadian Studies and Native Studies. The centre was established in his name in 1982, using a bequest from his estate.
- 93 Frost, *Fighting Men*, 139 and 181.
- 94 Thomas H.B. Symons, foreword to *Fighting Men*, by Leslie Frost (xxiii, xxv). Professor Symons later expanded on the theme in *To Know Ourselves: The Report of the Commission on Canadian Studies* (Ottawa: Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 1975).
- 95 George Grant, *Lament for a Nation: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965).
- 96 Alden Nowlan, "Ypres: 1915," in John Robert Colombo, ed. *How Do I Love Thee* (Edmonton: M.G. Hurtig, 1970), 94–96.
- 97 Carol Shields, *The Stone Diaries* (Toronto: Random House, 1993), 71–72.
- 98 Vance, *Death So Noble*, 60.
- 99 James Curran from Orillia was publisher of the *Sault Ste. Marie Star*. He knew Kipling, and asked him for a verse (Frost, *Fighting Men*, 180).

THE LETTERS

1 *Training
in Canada*



Niagara-on-the-lake

11 August 1915

Dear Aunt,¹

I received your card today and was glad to get it. I was writing to Dad and Mater so I thought I would write to you too. Cec and Gren arrived home on Wed. 4th just in time to go to the station with me. I wore my uniform etc. Dad & Cec went to Midland on the 5th and Mater stayed til the following Monday. At least that's what I gathered from their letter. There are about 8000 Men in the Camp. The 75th & 76th, 37th, 35th & 58th Battalion also the Artillery. The 81st is going to camp near Ft. Mississauga at the mouth of the river.² We roll out here at 5:30 and have coffee & rolls and parade at 6:15 when we have physical drill at 9:00 & have drill till 12:00 then a lecture til one and luncheon at 1:15 then from 2 till 2:45 we have company drill then we are free. We certainly get great meals. For tea (dinner they call it here) we had soup and fish, stuffed lamb, thimble berries, ice cream, fruit cake, oranges, bananas, apples and coffee. That's not starvation rations. We have iron beds with springs and mattresses. Now do your best to get Mater, Dad & yourself down here for a trip. It would be very interesting. Well I have a lot to say but the last post (10 P.M.) is blowing and we have to get up early so write soon and I will answer. I might say my uniform was great and we got them very cheap. When you see some others down here that cost more, there is no comparison. We also have the very latest cut. Well goodbye and

Good night

Yours lovingly

Leslie

Write Soon.

35th Regt. S.F.
Provisional School of Infantry
Niagara-on-the-Lake
Ont.

Toronto, 2 November 1915

Dear Cec,

It takes me a long time to decide to write a letter but here goes. I have just received a letter from Col. Grant which looks good to me. I am going on his recommendation to the class on Nov. 18th and will receive my captaincy

afterward. That will be about Dec 10th. Don't say anything about this or what is to follow to anyone outside the family. He said he has been more successful than he had anticipated. He has been recommended by Brig-Gen Logie for command of the battalion and Logie's word is law in the 2nd Division. About my overseas appointment (I have never said anything to him yet about being attached as a Captain) this is an extract from his letter. "My idea is to put you on the staff of the battalion and wish you to qualify for the captain's rank not saying now that you will receive that rank." Now this looks pretty good, with what pull I can exert and if Dad will use his best diplomacy, I ought to get a good job. He said that the battalion would drill in small detachments throughout the county til spring and will then be mobilized. He said he would not need a very large staff of officers til then and I don't know whether he intends to attach me with his personal staff til then or not. It would appear by his letter that that is what he meant, but I will have to wait and see.

What was all that "ruction" about Larry Gilmore. Fox was telling me something of it this morning. I sent those books to Ira Clarke and also wrote to him. How is old Pick³ and the school getting on? How the deuce did you ever get the sailboat in?

When you come down here, be sure and come to one of these residences not to a private house. Knox cannot go to the next class as the number from his Regt. is limited. He will have to go in January. In the meantime he is back at Varsity. I don't know how he got in. Brebner told him there was no chance.

Well I guess I'll dry up.

Yours

Putt

Write soon

It looks as if all officers will be taken from Simcoe County so I don't know whether Knox & Bogres will have a chance with the battalion. By special permission 15 officers are going from the 35th to the class.

Toronto [ca. 10] November [1915]

Dear Dad & Mater

I received the papers and magazines all O.K. and was glad to get them. I was agreeably surprised to get the picture of Dad. I was going to write to you for one now that you are through moving but I won't need to now. I have both of your pictures on my dresser along with the one of us three "gentlemen"

Huntsville, Ont., 19 January 1916
From Lt. Col. D.M. Grant,
O.C. 35th Regiment Simcoe Foresters,
Huntsville, Ont.

To Cecil G. Frost, Esq.
Orillia, Ont.

Dear Sir:—

Your letter of the 18th inst. to hand. I am sending form G.S.O. 35 down for the 14th of February.

I suppose it is natural that you would rather go with the Simcoe Battalion, and I wish you good luck.

Yours truly,
D.M. Grant⁹

Knox College
Toronto 20 February 1916

Dear Father & Mother,¹⁰

Just a line to tell you that I'm still alive and kicking. We have just completed a real hard weeks work and physically I'm pretty tired but I have never felt better nor enjoyed myself more.

This work is a complete change from the kind I have been used to and believe me I'm glad to get into it because I've been thinking about it for so long. Anybody who says that this isn't a hard course is a vile fabricator.

There is a lot of work to get up but believe me there are some "raw" "green" ones down here. I think old Potter will have all his time in getting through let alone take a Captaincy. He is an old man for this kind of work.

In mutual instruction the other day I drilled the platoon for half an hour and kept them busy all the time. I honestly never made a mistake but of course I have had a fairly good training. Potter told me afterwards that I was the best there but of course I took that as a grain of salt but I secretly blessed my previous training.

Potter & I went down town at noon the other day and bought rubbers. They certainly are a great thing because the water comes right through any kind of shoes. We were at Convocation Hall this a.m. The parade was a pretty large affair all right. Gren played well.¹¹ Afterwards Gren, MacLaren and I dined at the Walker House and had a good feed of turkey.

Aunt is on a case and when I was speaking to her last p.m. I told her I would pay her that money. She is up at the Wellesley Hospital.

The New Barrie Hotel
Barrie, 15 May 1916

Dear Father & Mother,

In addition to that blanket that I asked you to send me, could you send my red sweater, a pair of white duck pants and belt. I have just received the pleasant news that I have to take a physical drill course.

I will get it in Barrie but will need the sweater, pants and belt. I guess you can easily send me a decent pair of white ducks. That's what the other fellows wear.

The course will last a week. One of the fellows, Hipwell, who has taken the course in Toronto, is going to give it to us.

We are going to start on Wednesday so if you could send them tomorrow, I wish you would.

You had better send it to the Orderly Room as I won't be staying at the Barrie House then.

I will probably be home on Sunday. Hope you are well.

Love

Cecil.

The New Barrie House
Barrie, Wed 17 May 1916

Dear Father & Mother,

Regarding my washing, I have sent my shirt and socks to the "Chink." I will continue to wear this underwear till Friday and then I will put on a clean suit and bring home the dirty one.

I have written Pick about my matric last week. I sent him a beautiful type-written letter on official military stationery. It surely ought to take his eye. He hasn't replied yet, however, so I don't know what his game is. I think if Dad spoke to him it might help, however. I may be home on Friday at noon as I intend being inoculated on Friday morning and then we get 48 hrs leave and then I get off for the weekend so I won't have to report till Monday morning.

I got a letter from Dorothy.¹⁸ That show that she plays in is in town tonight. I will meet her at the train. I don't know if I can see her afterwards, though, as I am going to the theatre with a party.

Well goodbye—I got the money and will certainly pay Les a substantial sum. I got the belt and blanket & expect the pants and sweaters on next train.¹⁹

Lovingly

Cecil.

NOTES

- 1 LMF 1971: "L.M.F. became Provisional Lieutenant in 'D' Company (the old 8 company formation) of the 35th Regiment Simcoe Foresters on the 6th of May, 1915. He left for the School of Infantry at Niagara-on-the-Lake August 4th, 1915. This letter is to Miss Sadie Barker, his mother's sister and a beloved aunt."
- 2 After the War of 1812, Fort Mississauga replaced Fort George, which was destroyed by invading Americans. Fort Mississauga is located at the mouth of the Niagara River opposite Fort Niagara at Niagara-on-the-Lake.
- 3 Probably one of their teachers.
- 4 As a nurse.
- 5 A hotel that once stood on Front Street near University Avenue, Toronto.
- 6 Perhaps "Even though it's 8 p.m., I haven't had supper."
- 7 Earlier that day Frost had written to Lt. Col. MacLaren. That letter is missing, but Frost summarized its contents in 1971. He worried that if he accepted the position of assistant adjutant, he might be prevented from reaching France.
- 8 LMF 1971: "This letter expresses the anxiety of my parents that I should not lose rank. I was already Captain in the 35th Regiment and Col. Grant had offered me that rank in the 122nd, hence this letter."
- 9 LMF 1971: "C.G.F. had been offered a commission in the 122nd Muskoka Battalion, former Simcoe Foresters. He, however, chose to go with the 157th Simcoe Battalion."
- 10 This is the first letter by Cecil Frost, who attended the School of Infantry on College Street, Toronto, and resided with brother Grenville at Knox College, St. George Street.
- 11 On the organ at Convocation Hall.
- 12 Perhaps a cottage industry in Orillia.
- 13 Men's residence, Victoria College, the University of Toronto.
- 14 Cecil appears to be telling his father that he purchased a watch at a wholesale house (Rev. E's) in Toronto, and charged it to his father's store. "Cost price" is "wholesale price." "Rept" is short for "receipt." The watch was apparently a gift for Miller's instructor at the training camp, located at the Canadian National Exhibition grounds (commonly known as "the Ex") in Toronto.
- 15 LMF 1971: "C.G.F. became a Provisional Lieutenant in the 35th Regiment Simcoe Foresters January 1916. He attended the School of Infantry in Toronto and resided at Burwash Hall," Victoria College, U. of T.
- 16 Out-of-town officers lived at this hotel in 1916.
- 17 LMF 1971: "Seeding and harvesting furloughs were granted, which considerably interrupted training."
- 18 First cousin Dorothy Swallow. Her mother was a sister of William S. Frost.
- 19 Frequent train service expedited mail delivery from Orillia to Barrie and elsewhere in Canada.

2 *From Orillia
to England*



“ We have left Quebec behind us now.... It is mean, ”
low and cold.

New Brunswick
15 October 1916

Dear Father & Mother,

Just a line as the train speeds along. We have left Quebec behind us now. It isn't a patch to Ontario though it's mighty well worth seeing. The land has something indescribable about it. It is mean, low and cold. The country doesn't compare with Oro¹ at all. We passed through some beautiful hills and mountains, hills and lakes all morning.

I first viewed the ocean today at Campbellton² where the head of the bay of Chaleur comes into sight. Capt Finlayson, Major Home (the medical officer on training) and I went for a walk and pretty nearly lost the train as we had to run to get it. I lost my hat in my rush to get on the train but Capt Finlayson kindly lent me one with a badge on it so I am all fixed again.

New Brunswick looks better to me than Quebec.

Oh! I can understand now what a hold the R.C.'s have on Quebec. At every little village there never failed to be a large and beautiful R.C. church. About the same class of those at Penetang.³ We stopped at Drummondville, Arthabaska, where the Liberals had their famous election⁴ and at Gaspé where Hon. Rudolphe [Rodolphe] Lemieux runs.

I asked several Frenchies who was the best, Laurier or Bourassa, and they all said Laurier was but they thought that we were damn fools to go to war.

They say that we will be unable to post any mail after we pass Truro because we will then be in the war zone and we can't tell of our movements. However, I think I can smuggle the odd letter home anyway.

Well when you get this letter I guess you will be all alone. Jean and Aunt⁵ having gone.

Well make yourself busy and have a good time. Don't worry about us, we are having a first rate trip at the Government's expense.

I got some good pictures yesterday—The first one I took was one of the Quebec bridge—the famous one that broke. I hope it will be a good one. The scene was beautiful though the other bridge was pretty far away.⁶

New Brunswick is furrowed with beautiful raging rivers with stony banks etc.

Well goodbye for just now. I haven't any real news. I know nothing of our movements.

Lovingly
Cecil

“ **But in Quebec the people just peeked their noses
out of their houses and then scuttled back in again.** ”

Halifax, 15 October 1916

Dear Father & Mother,

Just a small letter home to let you know that we have arrived safely in Halifax. Further than that I can tell you nothing besides. I really do not know anything worth while telling.

We have had a fine trip alright. The Maritime provinces are certainly very nice. Parts of them are like Muskoka with rough winding rivers with steep rocky banks. We saw two or three big warships in the harbour this morning. Halifax is certainly an ideal one. There is a big French warship here too because we saw the French blue-jackets and they certainly looked very nice in their blue sails and colours. The people of the Maritime provinces are very different from those in Quebec. As soon as we left Quebec, at every town we came to the whole town would be out with all kinds of cheering and everything to make the boys feel good. But in Quebec the people just peeked their noses out of their houses and then scuttled back in again.

Our train was held up for about 10 hours on the way down owing to wrecks and we didn't get here till about noon today.

This afternoon I intend to view the city, the fort and everything else worth while seeing. We will write again if we can, though you [can] never tell anything of our movements.

Well goodbye
Lovingly
Cecil.

Constituency of Drummond
and Arthabaskaville,
12:20 P.M., 19 October 1916

Dear Dad and Mother

Just as we are passing through this famous "riding" I thought I would drop you a line. This is Laurier's old riding, you know.



October 1916, 1st Simcoes on the *Cameronia* somewhere in the Atlantic. *Left to right:* Lt. W.E. Preston, Lt. A.H. Tudhope, Capt. Leslie Frost, and Lt. Ernest Walker. (Courtesy of Simcoe County Archives, B3 R4A S6 Sh4 p49.)

NOTES

- 1 Oro Township, Simcoe County, adjacent to Orillia.
- 2 Campbellton, northern New Brunswick.
- 3 Penetanguishene, a francophone town on Georgian Bay.
- 4 Referring to the hard-fought election of 1911 in which Prime Minister Laurier, while holding his own seat in Drummond-Arthabaska, was defeated nationally by Borden's Conservatives, with help from *les nationalistes* and Henri Bourassa. Lemieux (1866–1937), Laurier's Solicitor General (1904–06), Minister of Labour (1906–09), Postmaster General (1906–11), and Minister of Marine and Fisheries (1911), was defeated in 1911 in his Gaspé riding, which he had represented since 1896. He was re-elected in 1917, 1921, 1925, and 1926.
- 5 Jean Millar was a friend, and Sadie Barker was a sister of Margaret Frost.
- 6 A centre span of the Quebec Bridge had collapsed about a month earlier, killing thirteen men. In August 1907, an earlier version had also collapsed. The *Pont de Québec* was successfully completed a year later, on 17 September 1917. The "other bridge" mentioned by Cecil Frost was later replaced by the *Pont Pierre-Laporte*.
- 7 The first censored letter. The date and place were removed. In 1971, LMF dated it at 17 or 18 October 1916.
- 8 The front page of the Orillia *Times* of Thursday, 16 November 1916, reported that the first mail from soldiers of the 157th Battalion, now in England, had arrived

in Orillia. Among the letters was this one from Leslie. The paper quoted his line "I will never be guilty of taking a sea voyage for my health." Other letters reported on sports aboard the ship, including tug-of-war, sack races, boxing, pillow fights, and spar-pushing, which may have been a form of wrestling. In 1971, LMF added that the *Cameronia* was later torpedoed.

- 9 The fort, one of a series protecting Verdun, had been captured by the Germans on 25 February 1916 soon after the beginning of the battle of Verdun. For both the French and the Germans, Verdun became "a place of terror and death that could not yield victory" (Keegan, *The First World War*, 285). On 24 October 1916, the French recaptured Fort Douaumont. Within two days, the news, more important for propaganda than strategy, had reached the *Cameronia*.
- 10 Leslie's name for the family Ford.
- 11 LMF 1971: "The gale was indeed a severe one. It was a Sou'Easter which did severe damage to the southern coast of England."
- 12 Brotherly love and companionship was one of the "duties" of the middle class. It is difficult to imagine a family that enjoyed each other's company as much as the Frosts.

Appendix 2

Electoral Ridings

SIMCOE EAST¹

Provincial

1890	General Election, 5 June	
	Miscampbell, Andrew, <i>Conservative</i>	2,092
	Drury, Charles A., <i>Liberal</i>	1,934
1894	General Election, 26 June	
	Miscampbell, Andrew, <i>Conservative</i>	2,021
	Harvey, H.M., <i>Liberal</i>	1,897
	Lawson, W., <i>Conservative (Patron)</i>	759
1898	General Election, 1 March	
	Miscampbell, Andrew, <i>Conservative</i>	2,593
	Harvey, N.M., <i>Liberal</i>	2,524
1902	General Election, 29 May	
	Tudhope, James B., <i>Liberal</i>	3,365
	Jupp, R.H., <i>Conservative</i>	2,918
1905	General Election, 25 January	
	Tudhope, James B., <i>Liberal</i>	3,284
	McIntosh, J., <i>Conservative</i>	3,041
1908	General Election, 8 June	
	Tudhope, James B., <i>Liberal</i>	3,105
	Hartt, James I., <i>Conservative</i>	2,925
1911	General Election, 11 December	
	Hartt, James I., <i>Conservative</i>	3,103
	Long, Erastus, <i>Liberal</i>	2,774
1914	General Election, 29 June	
	Hartt, James I., <i>Conservative</i>	3,293
	Cooke, Herbert, <i>Liberal</i>	2,394
1919	General Election, 20 October	
	Johnston, John B., <i>Labour</i>	5,063
	Hartt, James I., <i>Conservative</i>	4,580
	Anderson, Duncan C., <i>Independent</i>	2,773

1923	General Election, 25 June	
	Finlayson, William, <i>Conservative</i>	5,692
	Johnston, John B., <i>UFO</i>	4,194

Federal

1891	Spohn, Philip H., <i>Liberal</i>
1892	Bennett, William H., <i>Conservative</i>
1896	Bennett, William H., <i>Conservative</i>
1897	Bennett, William H., <i>Conservative</i>
1900	Bennett, William H., <i>Conservative</i>
1904	Bennett, William H., <i>Conservative</i>
1908	Chew, T.E. Manley, <i>Liberal</i>
1911	Bennett, William H., <i>Conservative</i>
1917	Tudhope, James Brockett, <i>Unionist</i>
1921	Chew, T.E. Manley, <i>Liberal</i>

VICTORIA²**Provincial**

1934	General Election, 19 June	
	Newman, William, <i>Liberal</i>	10,629
	Frost, Leslie M., <i>Conservative</i>	7,982
1937	General Election, 6 October	
	Frost, Leslie M., <i>Conservative</i>	9,372
	Newman, William, <i>Liberal</i>	9,033
1943	General Election, 4 August	
	Frost, Leslie M., <i>Progressive Conservative</i>	6,985
	Welsh, Frank, <i>Liberal-Progressive</i>	4,042
	Hand, John R., <i>CCF</i>	1,150
1945	General Election, 4 June	
	Frost, Leslie M., <i>Progressive Conservative</i>	9,732
	Benson, C., <i>Liberal-Progressive</i>	4,634
	Smith, R., <i>CCF</i>	1,487
1948	General Election, 7 June	
	Frost, Leslie M., <i>Progressive Conservative</i>	8,830
	Newman, William, <i>Liberal</i>	4,657
	Dent, George A., <i>CCF</i>	1,249

Leslie Frost was Premier of Ontario from 4 May 1949 to 9 November 1961.

NOTES

- 1 Simcoe East was created in 1874, and included the east part of Simcoe County; the townships of Tiny, Tay, Matchedash, Orillia, Medonte, and Oro; and the town of Orillia. In 1885, the riding was changed to include the townships of Tay, Orillia, Matchedash, Medonte, and Oro, the towns of Orillia and Penetanguishene, and the village of Midland. In 1914, the villages of Victoria Harbour and Coldwater were added, and Midland was listed as a town.
- 2 Created in 1933, consisting of Victoria North and Victoria South and the provisional County of Haliburton.

Appendix 3

Soldiers Mentioned in Letters and Commentary

“ What I want to say is that this region [Georgian Bay] is in a way responsible for my decision [to enlist]. I can't explain it; but it's all so beautiful. And this morning it came in on me somehow that there is one thing that matches it in beauty. Do you know what it is? "Killed in Action." (Fred Grandy explaining to Marlow Shaw his reason for enlisting, in Shaw, *The Happy Islands*, 173. Grandy was killed in action on 28 August 1918.) ”

“ Sat 3 June 1916. My Sergeant killed beside me and I had my watch smashed smithereens by piece of shrapnel. A perfectly good Blighty spoiled. Went out on a wiring party later on. ”

“ Sun 4 June 1916. Very quiet all day till 7 P.M. when they put over quite a few big fellows.... Heard we had big losses. Went wiring again tonight. Received several letters which were good to get. ”

“ Fri 4 May 1917. Spent the day in collecting all sorts of equipment etc off our part of the field and also reclaiming dugouts etc. Brouhl was shipped off to hospital today. (From the diary of Arthur Ardagh, killed in action 10 May 1917. Courtesy Eleanor Bingham, Lorne Williams and the Regimental Museum, Grey and Simcoe Foresters, Barrie, Ontario.) ”

Anderson, Capt. F.W., chaplain of the 157th Battalion and the 20th Battalion, and president of the Orillia Club, an association of Orillia soldiers in England. Leslie Frost was critical of the army for appointing a chaplain, i.e., Anderson, as messing officer, which resulted in food distribution chaos (letter, 18 February 1917).

Anglin, ———.

Ardagh, Capt. Arthur H. "Doc," son of Dr. Arthur E. and Elizabeth (Thomson) Ardagh, Orillia, Ontario, born 21 December 1893. Captain of the Cadet Corps in Orillia, member of 20th Battalion, killed in action in France 10 May 1917; buried at Lievin Communal Cemetery Extension, 3.5 kms west of Lens, France. For further information, see Library and Archives Canada (LAC), RG 150, Box 214-18. (His photo is on CVWM website.)

Asselin, Maj. Olivar, former editor of *le Nationaliste*, founded in 1904 to promote Henri Bourassa's ideas of "Canadian autonomy within the empire, provincial autonomy within Confederation, and the rational development of Canadian resources" (Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, *The Dream of Nation*, 17). In 1903, with Armand Lavergne and two others, he founded the *Ligue nationaliste*, which formulated a French-Canadian Catholic response to problems of identity during a period of rapid urbanization and industrialization. Asselin was a military enthusiast and a veteran of the Spanish-American wars at the end of the nineteenth century. (LAC, RG 150, Box 279-33.)

Bailey, Fred, from Orillia, killed in late 1916.

Baines, ———, studied at Wycliffe College, Toronto, trained at the Canadian Military School, Crowborough (letter, 1 February 1917). Perhaps J.A. Baines, 19th Battalion (Central Ontario Regiment), killed 12 April 1917, buried at Barlin Communal Cemetery Extension.

Barnecott, M.C., mentioned in letter, 14 May 1917. Probably an error on Leslie Frost's part; likely W.A. (William Allen) Barnecott of Poughkeepsie St., Orillia, born 15 May 1888. Husband of Alice Barnecott. Member of 1st Battalion, wounded in 1917. (LAC, RG 150, Box 443-27.) William is the only Barnecott listed on the website of soldiers of WWI at LAC.

Basevi, James, resident of Calgary, born 21 September 1890, Plymouth, England. Cecil Frost's batman. (LAC, RG 150, Box 491-58.)

Beatty, Sir David, in charge of Great Britain's battle cruiser fleet.

Belding, Lt. William Raymond (Ray), born 7 December 1893 in Toronto; next of kin Mrs. Jessie Jaquith, Orillia. (LAC, RG 150, Box 603-11.)

Bernhardt, James (Jimmie), batman of Cecil Frost, killed 1917, the first member of the old 157th Battalion to lose his life (letters, 8 April and 28 May 1917).

Bertram, Maj. Leonard H., Dundas, Ontario. Joined 1st Battalion 22 September 1914; member of 20th Battalion; wounded 23 April 1915; member of 23rd Battalion, 5th Brigade M.G. Company. Granted leave to Canada 9 April 1918. Awarded MC. (LAC, RG 150, Box 693-25.)

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