

Secretary, for example, contain extensive reports on the activities of the Provincial Archives and an invaluable electoral history of British Columbia since Confederation.

Maybe, when a critical biography is written—and if the official papers of the Premier’s Office from 1972 to 1975 ever come to light—Barrett’s contributions to the documentary heritage of British Columbia can be properly assessed. In the meantime, those who are interested in Barrett’s administration and his “passionate political life” will have to make do with this ribald, outrageous memoir.

Patrick A. Dunae

Malaspina University-College
Nanaimo, B.C.

Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning. JAY WINTER. Cambridge University Press, 1995, 310 p. ISBN 0-521-49682-9 hardback.

The Great War saw massive destruction as unending lines of men were fed into the charnel-house of the Western Front. Most thought the war would be over by Christmas 1914. But as the professional soldiers of all armies were annihilated in the first months of the war and no end seemed to be in sight, it fell to the fathers, husbands, and sons of the various empires to see the conflict to the end. Britain, France, and Germany alone suffered some four million dead—almost one in six who served. For the millions of men who died in the rat- and lice-infested trenches, killed indiscriminately by shell, bullet, or poisonous gas, they left behind families scarred by the emptiness of their passing with little to console them except an official condolence letter with the inevitable beginning: “We regret to inform you...”

Jay Winter’s new book, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*, is an ambitious examination of the cultural patterns of collective memory and remorse used by the bereaved to deal with having had millions of their loved ones killed and dismembered on some foreign battlefield. Using the “construction of memory” as a broad form of analysis, Winter probes how people processed, understood, and acted upon their war losses. Employing an impressive array of sources in German, French, Italian, and English, Winter has successfully pieced together the grieving process during and following World War I. From isolated individuals to whole communities, there was an attempt to comprehend the sense and reality of loss. Mysticism, art, literature, history, architecture, photographs, film, and memoir all became methods of coping; in a sense, millions and millions of people were attempting to shape memory to reflect their individual tragedies, to create relevant concrete monuments and documentary testimonies to the fallen. Through the construction of such war memorials, the sacrifice of a generation could be commemorated and understood.

Was there any “meaning” to the war or the countless dead? For those who lost friends and lovers, there had to be, for anything else was unthinkable. Although the British and French fought against the Germans in the trenches, their subsequent collective grief was the same. It sprang from the same need for understanding, and reflected the harsh realities of the same shallow graves. Winter argues a revisionist view, rejecting new forms of modernization that broke with the past and the “big words” of honour and sacrifice, which the horrors of the trenches had ground into

obscurity, as recent historians have postulated. Instead, the grieving survivors and especially the artists constructing the memorials and cenotaphs reach back to the classical images of chivalry, sacrifice and honour to commemorate the dead. Winter builds a powerful case that the rupture with the past by the war was not as complete as is usually supposed, for a post-war world where “the centre no longer holds” was simply unacceptable to the mothers and wives who lost their men fighting for such traditional ideals. The construction of memory, and the aspect of mourning, needed older, more recognizable cultural codes.

Following the war the German, British, and eventually French governments forbade the return home of any of the dead for fear of a mass disinterment of the battlefields of the Western Front and the chaos inherent in the removal of hundreds of thousands of corpses—many of uncertain location and composition. Yet those men who set off for the Front between 1914 and 1918 and were never seen again left families and friends with no chance of saying goodbye. The importance of memorials, then, of which thousands sprang up in the decade following the war, played an emotional role as the focus for grief and a connection to the place of death. Memorials offered a place to grieve, remember, and put the dead to rest in a symbolic commemoration to all fallen soldiers of a community or country. For many who had waited helplessly on the Home Front, the memorials became the focal points for their memory, places of pilgrimage with many of the spiritual connotations of medieval pilgrimages to holy sites. It is this reconstruction of memory that Winter successfully documents and the significance it came to represent for millions of survivors.

Although the emotional subject matter makes this book a difficult read at times, Winter has accomplished a significant breakthrough in military history, and his work will be sure to stimulate further interest and study into the cultural aspects of the war. Such a study of the ramifications of war and death on those left behind in a relatively small country like Canada, with then not eight million people, and suffering almost sixty thousand deaths, remains almost completely unexplored. The known or identifiable Canadian dead are scattered throughout graveyards in France and Belgium; the names of 11,285 other Canadians having no known graves are carved into the Vimy Memorial, the site of the Canadian Corps' most memorable battle. The traumatizing effect of losing so many young men provoked similar needs for commemoration throughout Canada, where almost every small village had some form of memorial built in those postwar years. Dominion Archivist Arthur Doughty was involved in collecting “war trophies” for Canada. In other countries, the Australian War Memorial in Canberra was erected as part cenotaph, part museum, and part national archives. The Imperial War Museum in London was opened following the Armistice to ensure that the sacrifice of a generation would be remembered. All shared the same urge—to use artifacts and archival documents to commemorate and memorialize the dead.

Winter's deconstructionist analysis of what memorials impart to people, what people want to remember (and forget), and the role of memory in history and culture are also central concerns of archivists. If Winter asks what do memorials ask of us, perhaps one might go a step further to see what memory asks of us. How we shape our experiences, how we delineate the past and how we reconstruct events are all questions being asked by the new cultural historians, and for that matter, by some

archivists. As keepers of memory as well as active creators of it, archivists will find this important book very thought provoking.

Tim Cook

National Archives of Canada

Warpaths: Travels of a Military Historian in North America. JOHN KEEGAN. Toronto: Key Porter Books Limited, 1995, xiv, 370 p. ISBN 1-55013-621-6.

I approached this work with great apprehension, for as much as I admire the author I was not in the mood for a clinical approach to North America's military history or for discussions of musket balls expended vs. native casualties or the soil displacement of specific artillery shells. I found to my great amazement an engaging, entertaining, informative book on North American military history. Interspersed with his personal observations, rooted in childhood memories of American Western movies, American aircrews occupying Britain, and thirty years of travelling America's transportation corridors, Keegan's book takes the reader on a very personal guided tour of North America's military history. Using as a focus the system of fortifications in America, Keegan discusses Quebec, Yorktown, the Peninsula campaign of the Civil War, and, finally, the forts of the United States's western frontier. Each chapter contains a general discussion of his first encounter with the location, a description of his memories, a commentary on the culture and diversity of American society, past and present, and a general overview of the importance of the location and the events which have made the place famous.

The book is not a scholarly work. Keegan does not cite one source or bring forward one unique point or aspect of any historical record. For archivists, he makes no contribution to the practices or theory of information management. However, there are several interesting points for Canadians and for archivists contained in this work.

Of interest to Canadians, Keegan does make generous remarks about the differences between Canadians and our southern cousins. He finds "British" Canada to be "gentler in speech, in manners, in bureaucracy" when contrasted with the United States which is "tough country, where the individual must shift for himself." French Canada he acknowledges as "having a distinctive way of life which is felt to be under threat of extinction by pressure of preponderant and surrounding numbers." His admiration for the French history of discovery and exploration is very strong as he indicates that "the distances covered by those whose base rested at Quebec or Montreal ... were then unprecedented for journeys into unrecorded territory and were scarcely equalled later by the explorers of Australia or rainforest Africa."

For archivists and librarians, Keegan singles out the contributions of West Point cartographer Ed Kasnoborski for his publication *The West Point Atlas of American Wars*, the library at the United States Army's Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and the archivists at the United States Air Force Tactical School in Montgomery, Alabama. He does not acknowledge the contributions which archivists, librarians, and other information managers have made in our understanding of the past. One must imply such a sentiment when reading.