I was lucky. My parents lived in the same house for forty-five years and they were always saving things: old daguerreotypes, tintypes, letters, notes, diaries, books, magazines, albums, gowns, and uniforms. History was alive in our attic. As kids my two sisters, brother and I played with period pieces: a brass medal of Admiral Dewey's victory at Manila Bay (1898), and my great-grandmother's Victorian gowns.

Writing history papers in school was easy for a kid with original letters from the trenches and casually clearing stations of World War I. Great Uncle William Gavin Johnston and his sister Annie Eliza Johnston (Argue) of Morden, Manitoba spent four years at the front, 1914-1918. William rose through the ranks from Private to Captain with the famous Princess Patricia Regiment Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI #552). Annie carried an equally impossible burden as a nurse at Gallipoli and in Flanders. Their sister Maud, my grandmother, saved all their mail.

At eighteen I left home for college, and then went to work in international sales. The family letters sat unopened for another four decades. Then, one February morning in 1993, a gorgeous winter storm settled over Mirabel Airport in Montreal. (I was traveling from California at the time.) I found a quiet corner with a fifteen foot picture window, watched the storm swirl outside and began reading an extraordinary Canadian history, Sandra Gwyn's Tapestry of War: A Private View of Canadians in the Great War. (1)

Ms. Gwyn masterfully weaves the letters of seven Canadians into a history and a tale of the people, places, and tragedies of the Great War. Since reading her work, my grandmother's writings and photographs of Manitoba, her brothers, sisters, and the war have become an obsession of mine. I have been researching ever since.

Take, for example, the photograph of Great Uncle Will Johnston with his mates labelled "Place Vogel Flixecourt 1915." My cousin Grace White in Ontario sent it to me a few years ago. Uncle Will is standing, second from the left. But who are his mates? What and where is Flixecourt? What was going through the minds of these men as the photo was taken? I had to learn more.

Fortunately, Uncle Will noted the names and regimental numbers of the men on the reverse side of the photo, so we know who they were. But what could I uncover about each of them? The place to begin is Volume II of the Regimental History of the PPCLI. (2) The "Nominal Roll and Record of Service" provides details about each of the men. The link that binds them is that they were all members of #2 Company PPCLI.

This is good news because #2 Company is exceptionally well documented, not only in the Regimental History, but in the collected letters of the #2 Company Commander. Lieutenant Colonel Agar Adamson wrote an extraordinary collection of letters to his wife Mabel, many of which appear in Sandra Gwyn's Tapestry and all of which have recently been published. (3)

Adamson...
Exercise STRONG CONTENDER 20 kicked-off this morning with the Opening ceremony at the Edmonton Garrison Twin Rinks Arena following by a hockey game between 2nd ...Battalion, Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry and Lord Strathcona’s Horse (Royal Canadians). Events like #ExSC20 represent an opportunity for our soldiers to demonstrate their fitness capabilities to Edmontonians, who we would like to thank for their unwavering support. L’exercice STRONG CONTENDER 20 a été lancé ce matin avec la cérémonie d’ouverture à l’aréna Twin Rinks de la garnison Edmonton, suivie par une partie de hock. The official lineage of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry regiment. Colonel-in-Chief: The Right-Honourable, Adrienne Clarkson CC CMM COM CD. Badge. Description. Argent the coronet of Her Royal Highness Princess Patricia enfiled by her cypher Or all within an annulus Gules edged and inscribed PRINCESS PATRICIA’S CANADIAN LIGHT INFANTRY in letters Or the whole ensigned by the Royal Crown proper. Symbolism. The crown represents service to the Sovereign. The cypher and coronet are those of H.R.H. Princess Patricia, the granddaughter of Queen Victoria, who granted the regiment t Topics. Canada. Canadian Army. Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. Publisher. London: Leo Cooper.