

# The Generals Plant Memorial Trees

The significance of Shelbourne Memorial Avenue was recognized in visits paid by three VIPs in 1922.



Memorial Tablet, Shelbourne Street, Elnido Road and San Juan Avenue, Saanich BC courtesy of Alan Livingstone MacLeod



## Joseph Joffre

Hundreds of people lined the avenue in March 1922 to watch **Joseph Joffre** "vigourously shovelling earth" on the roots of a sapling London Planetree. Marshal Joffre was supreme commander of French forces in the first two years of the war of 1914-18. He came to Victoria to recognize the living memorial and deliver personal tribute to the 6,000 British Columbians who died doing their bit in the Allied effort.



Henry Jacquier, Joseph Joffre (1852-1931), commander in chief of the French Armies in 1915, maréchal de France in 1916. Painted in February 1915. Oil on canvas, 80 x 65 cm. MV6068. Photo: Gérard Blot. Location: Chateaux de Versailles et de Trianon, Versailles, France Photo Credit: © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY

## Julian Byng

The man who led the Canada Corps to its great victory at Vimy Ridge in April 1917 was **Julian Byng**. By August 1922, now recognized as 1st Viscount Byng of Vimy, he had another important role: Canada's 12th Governor-General.

Among the crowd gathered to observe Byng's tree-planting at Memorial Avenue were men who had served under his command in the Canada Corps. As popular a Governor-General as he had been a military commander, Byng conversed with several old soldiers and asked how they were doing in post-war civilian life. Veteran soldiers beamed with smiles at the attention paid them by Viscount Byng.

## Arthur Currie

In September Sir **Arthur Currie** took his turn as memorial tree-planter. Before the war Currie had been a teacher, realtor and militia commander in Victoria. He had gone far: by the spring of 1917 Currie had succeeded Byng as commander of the entire Canada Corps.



"Governor Byng Plants Tree", The Daily Colonist, Victoria, BC, August 24, 1922

"Currie Plants Tree on Memorial Avenue The Daily Colonist, Victoria, BC, September 22, 1922

*"There is no better way to commemorate the deeds of these men, than by this avenue of trees. A tree is a living thing which will stand and grow and perpetually keep green the memory of the Canadian soldiers."* —Arthur Currie



Memorial Tree Plaque. Photo courtesy of Saanich Archives

General Sir Julien Byng talking to General Sir Arthur Currie. February, 1918, Library and Archives Canada, accession number 1964-114 NPC, item 0-2517

