

# War: A Family Affair

Memorial Cross GRI given to Janet Stewart of Saanich, BC. (Saanich Archives 2016-003)



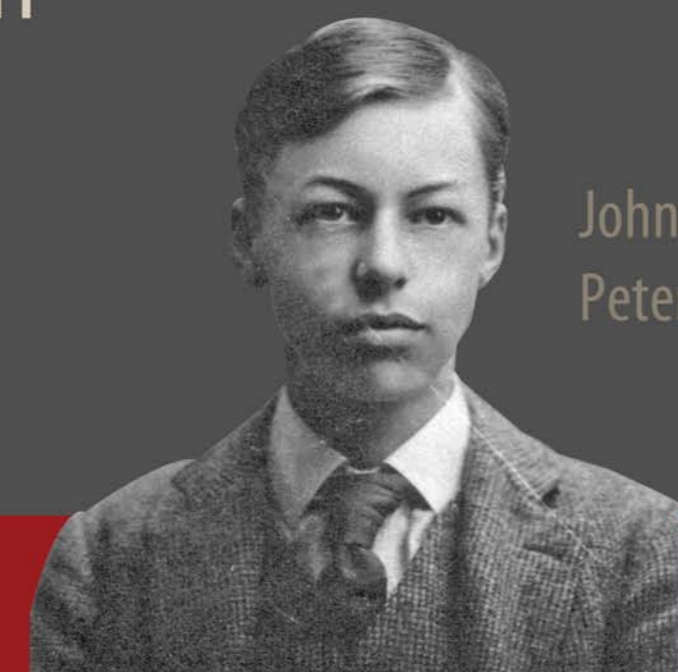
Commemoration of soldiers and nurses lost in the Great War takes various forms: names inscribed on war graves and monuments in Flanders and France, names engraved on Memorial Crosses awarded in memory of the fallen, names carved on the face of community cenotaphs and family headstones from one end of Canada to the other.

Two stone monuments—the community war memorial at Kettle Valley, B.C., and a family marker in Ross Bay Cemetery, Victoria—reflect the price Canadian families paid for the combined war effort of fathers, sons and daughters.



**The Memorial Cross**, commonly called the “Silver Cross”, was awarded to Canadians in memory of sons and daughters who died in the war. Three silver crosses were awarded to Sophia Oliver of Kettle Valley. This was not a rarity: many other Canadian mothers received three silver crosses, some even more.

Two families, six members lost to war: a toll familiar to families across Canada.



John Franklyn Peters (Jack)

Gerald Hamilton Peters  
Photos: Courtesy of Sam McBride

## The Oliver Family

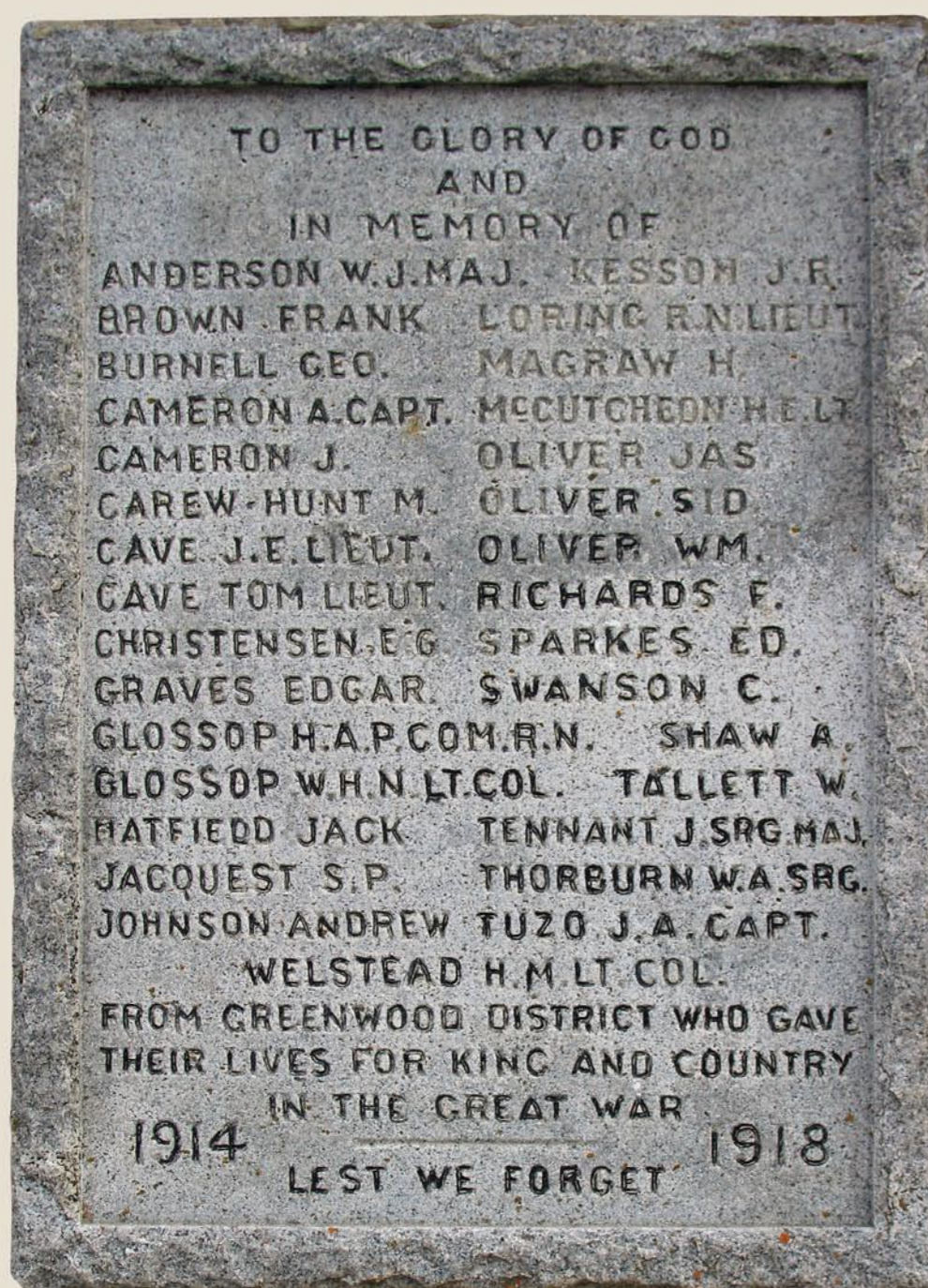
Just Thirty-one people are listed among the fallen of Kettle Valley but four surnames are repeated. One of those names is Oliver.

Some 549 Canadians died in the Battle of Second Ypres, April 24, 1915. Among those who fell that day was Sidney Oliver, 44. Killed the same day in the same action was William Oliver, 22. Sidney and William were father and son. Neither has a known grave: each is remembered on the great monument to the missing, the Menin Gate, Ypres.

Having lost her husband and son the same dark day in 1915, Sophia Oliver would be bereaved again. On Easter Monday, 1917: a second son, James, 19, was killed in the battle for Vimy Ridge.

The three Memorial Crosses awarded to Sophia Oliver would not make her unique: many other Canadian mothers received as many, some even more.

Detail of the Kettle Valley War Memorial. Courtesy of Alan Livingstone MacLeod



## The Peters Family

A century of west coast weather has made the north-facing words inscribed on the Peters family marker at Ross Bay illegible. But memory endures. An early volunteer, John Franklyn ‘Jack’ Peters, 22, died in the same action—Second Ypres—that killed Sidney and William Oliver. Fourteen months later, in June 1916, Jack’s brother Gerald, 21, died in the Battle of Mont Sorrel.

Like Sidney and William Oliver, neither Peters brother has a known grave. They too are commemorated on the Menin Gate.

A third Peters brother, ‘Fritz’, served with great distinction, being awarded both the Distinguished Service Cross and Distinguished Service Order. Unlike his brothers, Fritz survived the Great War. When its sequel erupted in 1939 Fritz volunteered again. He was awarded the greatest of all British gallantry medals, the Victoria Cross, but died in an air crash shortly afterward.

Menin Gate, Ypres, Belgium—almost seven thousand Canadians are included among the 54,896 Commonwealth soldiers without a known grave who are commemorated on the Menin Gate. Courtesy of Alan Livingstone MacLeod



Kettle Valley War Memorial, Kettle Valley, BC



Peters Brothers grave at Ross Bay Cemetery, Victoria BC



Photos: Courtesy of Alan Livingstone MacLeod

