

Major G.L. Thornton- Sharp (Sara Diamond)

People were interviewed in front of the Cenotaph on several occasions, once during a lunch hour and later in the week, during a week-day afternoon. Several interviews took place on the telephone, with callers responding to advertisements printed in the Vancouver Sun and Province.

Several factors defined and altered the responses gathered during the interview sessions; in particular the weather and limited time of the interview subjects. This resulted in the curtailing of some of the interviews, as respondents complained of being wet. Phone respondents gave fuller responses and had identified important personal meanings in the monument. The process of responding to the advertisement represents a pre-selection process.

On the street, people seemed to provide answers which they thought the interviewer expected. This may have been due to the belief that the interviewer was someone 'official': this would relate to the 'official' character of the monument. As well, the themes of the work relate strongly to important aspects of the dominant ideology of this society: one which defines the World Wars and Korean War as a defense of democracy, the sanctity of the war dead and the importance of their 'sacrifice'. The subjects may have been unwilling to contradict these meanings to an unknown person or may have genuinely embraced these concepts.

Thirty-five people were interviewed. The charts represent a break-down of their response.

The inscription on the piece poses the researcher's general question: "Is it nothing to ye, all ye who pass by?" The answer was a contradictory one: Most of those interviewed saw war as a social issue. Those who saw the monument as less effective now as in the past were concerned with the distance of the present generation from the immediate impact of the complex issues which lead to war. Some of those who stated that the Cenotaph was meaningless to them said this quite defiantly, negating their own neutrality and suggesting that they were conscious that such a stance was socially unacceptable. Others seemed genuinely disinterested.

There was a certain consistency of response amongst those questioned. The large majority of those interviewed had noticed the Cenotaph before it was pointed out to them. This was due to its location, historical significance, social meaning in the city, and to its use as a monument on Remembrance Day.

The vast majority of respondents identified it as a monument, as opposed to a sculpture or art piece. This was always linked to an identification of the piece as commemorative, with historic meanings. As well, several respondents mentioned its 'architectural' form in defining it as a monument.

It was thought to be effective by the majority of respondents. Reasons varied from its downtown location, the symbols on it, the inscription, and for a few, its personal meaning. Those questioned differed on the exact theme, although all identified war as an element. The majority mentioned the dead soldiers,

soldiers in general, or war. This is actually consistent with its overt and covert original meanings. The vast majority of respondents felt that it was less effective now than when erected. The primary reason for this was the present generation's distance from the actuality of war.

The majority of the respondents were opposed to any changes to either the piece or its location, equal numbers favoured changing one or the other. The reasons for change were counterposed: some felt the area should be cleaned up as it was disrespectful of the important themes of the war; others felt that the monument should be exchanged as it failed to show respect for the suffering and exploitation of war.

The Cenotaph was built through the joint efforts of the municipal and provincial governments and the Canadian Club: which represented Vancouver's elite. It was a public monument in a dual sense: both government owned and accessible to broad layers of the population. In a sense, it was built by the state to commemorate the lives of those who fought and died to defend its interests. These interests were intertwined with those of Vancouver's business and political community who collaborated to present this monument to the city. These interests were not necessarily at all identical with those for whom the monument was built. There had been a strong anti-war sentiment in Vancouver before the war, many men enlisted because they were impoverished, and after the war, vets found themselves in conflict with both government and local unions.

The state's interests in creating such a monument were ideologically consistent with the dominant concepts of patriotism within the developing Canadian nation-state. Economically, the public aspect of the monument had a double edge: Costs were kept relatively low. The material was donated and much of the financing was arranged through selling public subscriptions. In a sense the public paid twice: once for the war and then again for its commemoration.

The symbolism for its creators was the glorification of the recent war. This was, at the time inseparable from a memory of the soldiers who had fought, and a commemoration for the war dead. The proud imagery of the monument conveys within it particular interpretations of the deaths and events. This seems consistent through time; those interviewed who wished to change it to an anti-war memorial felt that its imagery must be changed to be more critical of the suffering which had occurred.

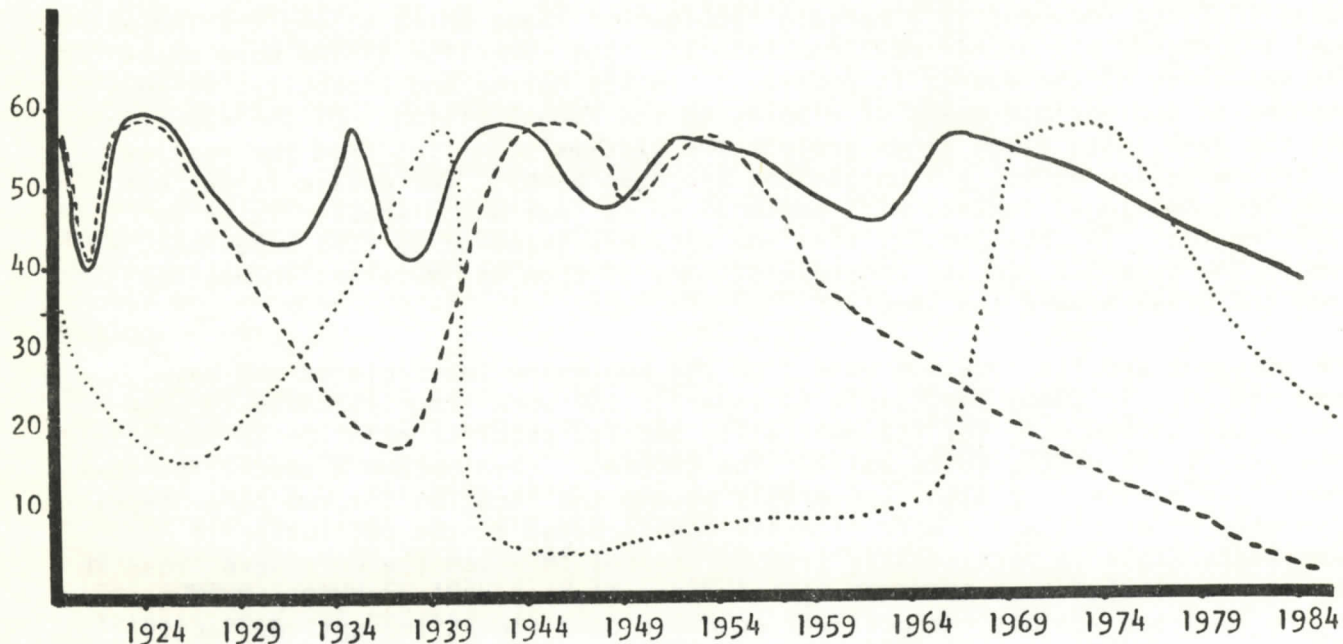
The classical architectural design remains effective through time in representing its original intent. This is in part through the abstractness of its imagery: The authoritarian lines of its construction, the symbolism of a giant gravestone, its maleness (erect and dominant), combined with the restrained symbols of a sword, wreath and helmets -- historical artifacts employed by many cultures in relation to war. The Cenotaph form was used throughout Canada, the U.K. and Europe as a form of dedication to the war dead: this adds meaning to it for many people, and also reinforces its function as a memorial placed by official sources to remember the war. The impact of repetition, abstract but symbolically placeable imagery, the setting of the monument in a park environment, all represent artistic devices for the purpose of framing and reinforcing meaning.

Built into the monument is a certain 'ambiguous' space which allows the individual to project his or her meanings into it. But symbolism of the work masks the actuality of the events it portrays: in its horror and intensity, it thus becomes an appropriate means of displaying the romanticising of the experience and the dead: its clean lines protect the victims' families from the reality of fragmentation bombs, poison gas and hydrogen bombs. The public is cut off from real emotional contact with personal pain, fear and disgust. It is no surprise then, in this context that the city has tried on various occasions, to remove the numerous old age pensioners, many of them war veterans themselves, from the grass around the Cenotaph.

The monument and its location were from the beginning interrelated and have remained so. It seems impossible to separate the work from its context. The Square was chosen both for its centrality and its specific relation to recruitment activities during World War I. The Cenotaph, then became a center for commemorative events. It also, conversely became the location for two other types of events -- events which were directly counterposed to the patriotism it represents (this is particularly true of periods in which the wars were fresh in the public mind): thus the protests of demonstrators during the Depression, at the Cenotaph against the post-war economic conditions; the anti-war activities of the Doukhobors and the anti-war movement of the past decade. As well, the square has become a location for groups of drunken and impoverished people to stay, people who represent the conflicts between the ideological symbolism of the piece for those who erected it and the reality of the everyday people who fought in their wars. Thus, the conflict between ideology and the reality of the piece are manifest, violence is its content and surrounds it, and the work cannot be separated from its location and its uses. In this sense, the piece has been appropriated by the public and has been used in conflicting ways by it.

There is a consistent identification of the object's theme because of its historicity (its visibility and symbolic consistency over time) yet the specific history of the piece is unknown and unimportant to most people. The interpretations of the theme given by most of my respondents corresponds to its initial intent. Most people can identify at least one element of its inter-related meanings but it is also, in subjective terms: cyclical; seemingly dependent on these individual's proximity to war, age, social attitudes to war, and to some extent social class.

RESPONSES OVER TIME



— consciousness of theme
 - - - relative support of theme
 relative opposition to theme

CURRENT RESPONSES

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>DON'T KNOW</u>
EVER NOTICED MONUMENT	27		1
EFFECTIVE	20	12	
NOTICED LOCATION	11		
NOTICED SIZE	3		
READ INSCRIPTION	11	5	1
KNOW HISTORY	3	16	
AS EFFECTIVE AS IN 1924	9	16	2
WOULD CHANGE IT	6	18 (total)	
WOULD CHANGE LOCATION	6		
KNOW THEME (SOME OVERLAP):			
WAR	13		
FALLEN DEAD	19		
NOT FIGHT AGAIN	1		
REMEMBER THE PAST	3		
SOLDIERS WHO FOUGHT	13		

EVENT: Date and Description

- 1879: Dense forest; cleared for the establishment of Granville; dead tree bole at present site of Cenotaph
- 1887: Courthouse erected at site of present Victory Square
- 1901: Duke and Duchess of Cornwall speak at exact spot of Cenotaph
- 1902: Relief of Mafeking: celebration of Boer War victory. Hole is burnt in wooden plank sidewalk of Cambie St. Several days of riotous festivities. "It was Vancouver's wildest night..."
- 1906: Men's Canadian Club founded with membership including Duff Stuart, W.H. Malkin (Vancouver's future mayor) and other young men from the city's elite. "...the encouragement of the study of history, literature and resources of Canada; the recognition of motive, worth and talent and the fostering of a patriotic Canadian sentiment."
- 1912: Courthouse demolished; Square in disrepair
- 1914: WWI begins; men;s Canadian Club petitions for the Square to be used as a memorial site after the War
- 1915: City Hall planned at Square
- 1916: Recruiting marquee put up at Victory Square to enlist 1000s of men by 1918
- 1917: Evangelistic Tabernacle religious services in large tent which covered the vast part of the Square
- 1918: "sham" front line set up by vets on Square: complete with trenches, barbed wire entanglements and underground dug-outs. Admission is charged to tour it and proceeds sent to war widows and orphans. Front line still in place on Armistice Day: November 11, 1918. "...what they really should do is make a great big picture of a whole bunch of dead bodies and stuff all over the place and then maybe people wouldn't go to war. That way (now) it looks proud and people walk by it and remember the War and..."

Canada lost 66,655 men and women and countless were wounded or severely psychologically traumatized. Vancouver Labour Council opposed the "imperialist" war, and Quebec resisted conscription. The Canadian Army sent in to change their minds.

The Square named Victory Square.

Armistice Day celebration begins at Square.

Men's Canadian Club petitions for the space as a site for a war memorial. Planning begins as the Club establishes War Memorial Committee. City also starts Civic War Memorial Committee.

1919: 99 year lease arranged by City for Square from the province. In future would raise questions about the actual ownership of the Cenotaph.

1922: The two memorial committees differ on site and type of monument. Impatience grows after 4 years and the two committees finally merge and work together.

1923: Decision to erect monument at Square, at cost of no more than \$15,000. Subscriptions used to raise money. Competition for designer who must have served overseas. Major G.L. Thornton Sharp of Sharp and Thompson Architects, in later years Parks Commissioner, chosen. Granite supplied by Vancouver Granite Co., owned by W.C. Ditmars, a pioneer of Vancouver and ex-president of the Club.

Cost of realization:
\$10,666. Messrs. Stewart and Wylie builders. Stewart injures back and later dies while transporting granite from Nelson Island.

Traditional memorial design "obelisk"; 3-sided to fit the square. Wreath of laurels and poppies and sword on it; 2 helmets of the type used in War. Concrete walls around base. 30 feet high.

those were the good days or something; I don't know, but it doesn't seem to serve its purpose of you know, giving people a bad idea about war." (Man, 20, 1979)

"Daddy's coming home, Daddy's coming home!"

"...what can you say...it's a marble monolith, a dedication to the war dead. It reminds me of a giant tombstone. The effort put forward on that kind of thing, it shouldn't be forgotten...but I really don't think the vehicle expresses the message as best as it could. The message... I don't think that it's tasteful because of course we're all familiar with history and we know what it stands for and there's no way that we can appreciate the sacrifice." (Man, 35; 1979)

Inscription; "Is it nothing to ye all ye that pass by (Behold and see if there is any sorrow like unto my sorrow.) Lamentations, Chapter One, Verse 12.

(Their bodies are buried in peace) "their names liveth forever more". Ecclesiastes, 44th Chapter, Verse 14 in Apocrypha.

1924: Unveiling April 24, 1924:
huge crowd attends.

"KENOS": empty.

"TAPHOS": tomb.

TOMB IN MEMORY OF ONE
BURIED ELSEWHERE.

Letters of appreciation include
one from the war vets: "Frag-
ments from France".

"Vancouver was one of the
last to erect its monument".

"Those whose sacrifice
this commemorates were those
who, at call of King and
Country left all that was dear,
endured hardship, faced
danger and finally passed from
sight of men by the path of duty,
giving their own lives that
others might live in freedom.
Let those who come after see
that they are not forgotten."
(Men's Canadian Club. 1924)

"Pride shone in the eyes of
mothers whose boys are com-
memorated; it swelled the
bosoms of fathers whose
right breasts bore the medals
their sons never lived to wear"

"...a crowd of worshippers..."

"Pleasing and pathetic amongst
the wealth of flowers was a
small bunch of violets labelled
'Daddy'."

"He died as few men get a chance
to die."

"All those people who went and fought
the War did not fight for them-
selves or for God or their country
but for someone else's interests
who had more to gain...in the war
...or the profits... or whatever
the issue

- 1929: Throughout the Depression 100's of unemployed congregate at the Square next to City Hall.
- 1930: December 20, 1930: demonstration for meal tickets and beds results in unprovoked police attack and arrests of men and women. Minister accuses leader of unemployed, Alan Campbell, of circulating literature in religious refuges. Campbell accepts accusation and offers to debate whether charity was an adequate cure for unemployment.
- 1933: The unemployed picket city gardeners working without pay, planting flowers and shrubs around the Square. They demand pay at union rates for all workers. They win wages for the gardeners.
- 1935: April 24, 1935: Unemployed demonstration moves to Cenotaph after marching through department stores. Hudson Bay display cases destroyed during fight with police. Delegation sent to see Mayor McGeer. He orders their arrests. McGeer reads the Riot Act (dispersement or life imprisonment) standing on the steps of the Cenotaph. Police raid strikers head quarters: final demonstration in response to this at 11 p.m. on Hastings Street. 19 men arrested, several head injuries, 6 police hurt.

was...more than those people did." (Woman, 22, 1979)

"Here is the monument to the dead", yelled a speaker at the demonstration who pointed at the Cenotaph. He pointed to the police: "And here is the monument to the living." The police roared and started to club those around them.'

"Vancouver is being victimized by an organized attempt to capitalize for revolutionary purposes on conditions of Depression...a general strike would only increase hardship... there may be some justification to the complaints of the men in the camps...the government will hear them...the taxpayers of Vancouver cannot afford the support of the men...arrests won't help...(Mayor McGeer)

"When fathers of families get mad and smash things in their own homes over petty household irritation, what can be expected of poor fellows who have been herded into camps and denied all hope of the future?" (Vancouver Sun editorial)

"There's a big garage where City Hall was; on Hastings Street, at the Holden Building we had another demonstration...things were real tough.. Gerry McGeer came out and read the Riot Act. Behind his back was the Cenotaph: "Is it nothing to ye, all ye that pass by?" ...Reading to the sons of the soldiers...(Liz Wilson, 84)

"They, the single unemployed were tighter, it was easier for them to march, more than the married people. At the Cenotaph, after, not one flower was crushed. The men kept to the grass..."
(Lil Stoneman)

1941: Heatwave: people from downtown area move onto grass around Cenotaph

A sheltered sunny slope,
With flower beds and seats,
And at its foot a shaft,
Commanding city streets

They call it Victory Square
Where old men meet and tell,
Their tales beside the shaft
Is placed: a bunch of Immortelle.

Immortal deeds
Remember here enshrined
Them for the world to see
Sleep on, old men, for youth
combines

To carry on the fight
Their fathers waged so well
Still younger hands will come,
To place...a bunch of Immortelle.
(Jessica Money, 1941)

1943: Nightshift workers sleep in grass in Victory Square.

"no longer young men lounging in despair...when you see a sleeping figure in the autumn sunshine his oilgrimed hands and perhaps a union button in his hat will identify the nightshift shipbuilder or munitions worker". (Vancouver Sun)

1944: Doukhobors anti-war rally

"Stop shedding blood at once...
Down with War! Down with
Revolution and Exploitation!
Down with Private Ownership!"

1952: King George's funeral

1953: November 11: annual Memorial Day service to honour the dead of both wars.

"There is little of previous peacetime intervals where Tommy Atkins was a hero in war but a drudge on the market when the battles died down...Materially we are well rewarded: we get good pay, living condition and food, better than ever before; better than those men and women we are honouring...Our potential enemies are well-trained and used to living under much harder conditions than ourselves.

They are ruthless; imbued with doctrines foreign to our thoughts; care little for life... Let us ask ourselves constantly: Are we ready?"

1957: Old age pensioners cleared out of park for 5 days to try and clean up the area. The attempt fails.

1963: Sons of Freedom Doukhobours occupy the Square to free their members in jail. They are seeking residence in Vancouver.

"Get out and stay out"
(Mayor to Sons)

"Kick them out of the Square, It honours the war dead and these people are only there for publicity value." (Head of Pacific Region, Royal Canadian Legion Command)

1970: Site of many anti-war demonstrations.

"Desolation, sad...before I left home I had visions of spending my first night outside of my parents' place around Victory Square. I don't quite understand why, but I think that those people around there, they're on their own, the world is just the mess that its in...and people not being able to live a decent life; and that's where they hang out and so I was going to spend my first night there. (Woman, 22, 1979)

1979: November 11: Women from the B.C. Federation of Women read a poem at the Memorial Day service in Victoria. It is dedicated to the women who have died in the wars they had no part in creating and to the women who continue to die on and off of the battlefield.