

# Permission to Marry

## Love & Marriage in Military Personnel Records

Following the end of the First World War, numerous ships crossed the Atlantic carrying war brides. These women (mostly of British origin) had fallen in love with the soldiers they met at dances, hospitals, or perhaps even in their parents' homes, where servicemen were often billeted. The couples married in simple ceremonies, then perhaps had a few days to spend together before the newlywed soldier was sent back to France.

After the Armistice and demobilization of the troops, the young wives boarded ships bound for Canada, often without their husbands, who were transported home on separate troop ships. It is unlikely that the brides fully understood the ruggedness of the land they were going to call home, or expected the challenges it would present. While there are no official figures, it is estimated that at least 35,000 war brides had immigrated to Canada by August of 1919. Most of them exhibited great courage and tenacity as they endured - and even thrived under - the hardships they faced here.

In the early 1900's, it was uncommon for a woman to be called by her given name by anyone but close friends and family. This makes researching war brides rather difficult, as news clippings (and even community books, which were published much later) simply refer to a 'Ms. Jones' or 'Mrs. J. Smith'. Soldiers' service files (digitized by Library & Archives Canada) are often our only source of information regarding their wives, since army records usually include the full name and address of the pay recipient and next-of-kin.



Above: Charles T.M. Turner and his wife, Jeanne Dubois, with their first child, Charles W.S. Turner, ca. 1917. Charles was billeted at the home of Jeanne's parents in France while serving in the army. They married in 1916 and moved to England, where Charles Jr. was born. After the war the Turners returned to Canada, eventually settling in the South Peace in 1920. (SPRA 2014.024.59)

P 820 12474-3754-13-2-18.		ASSIGNED PAY.	ENGLAND OR CANADA.	SEPARATION ALLOWANCE.	ENGLAND OR CANADA.	NAME:- COLLINS Alfred
EFFECTIVE DATE:- 1.11.16.		EFFECTIVE DATE:- 31.10.18.		NUMBER:- 525718		
AMOUNT:- 16 <sup>00</sup>		AMOUNT:- 20 <sup>00</sup>		PARTICULARS OF RANK OR APPOINTMENT		
NAME, ADDRESS, RELATIONSHIP & AUTHORITY				WHEN PAYEE OF A.P. IS THE SAME AS PAYEE OF S.A. THE WORD "SAME" ONLY TO BE WRITTEN IN THIS SPACE.		
Mr. Glenn C. Collins brother 66 Honeywell Rd. Windsorworth Common, London SW Eng.				Mr. W. C. Collins 64 Honeywell Rd. London SW 11		
Mrs. W. C. Collins, wife 64 Honeywell Rd., London S.W. 11				D.O. 9 811 24-5-18 Permission to Marry 24/10/18 D.O. 35 6/18 806		
effective 1.11.19				UNIT AND TRANSFERS		
Stopped off 1.11.19				ORIGINAL UNIT - 6th D. 19th Div.		
EXTRACTS FROM ACTIVE SERVICE PAY-BOOKS				DATE ACCOUNT FIRST OPENED:- 1.11.16		
AUTHORITY		DATE EFFECTIVE	DATE LOGGERS SHEET T 57 D	UNIT TRANSFERRED TO		
H. B. G.		11.2.17		3rd Div Eng		

Above: a pay sheet from Alfred Collins's service file, showing that he had been granted permission to marry as well as the change of address for his next of kin; originally he had listed his brother but after his marriage he changed it to his wife's name. (Source: Library & Archives Canada)

One can almost follow the developing relationship between a soldier and his sweetheart through his service file. Most often, hospital records will appear, indicating that the young man was wounded and sent to England for recovery. This is shortly followed by a note stating he had been 'granted permission to marry.' Obviously he had fallen in love with his nightingale. On the occasion that a healthy soldier found a wife, it likely occurred while he was on leave in England, or perhaps he had married the daughter of his French or Belgian billets. Shortly after being granted permission to marry, a new will was made out (with the wife's name on it), and near the same time, the pay sheet confirmed the change of next-of-kin. By following these leads, a number of war brides' stories have been uncovered.

On slightly rarer occasions, these new brides also became mothers before coming to Canada. Such was the case of Alfred Collins and his wife Winnifred Emily. Though it is uncertain when and where Alfred and Emily met, Alfred had leave in September 1917, and in April of 1918 he was hospitalized with influenza. It is quite possible that they became acquainted on one of these occasions. In October 1918, Alfred was granted permission to marry, and shortly thereafter he was given a week's leave, presumably for their honeymoon. During this leave, the war ended and Alfred did not return to France. By the time they were ready to return to Alfred's home in Spirit River, the Collins were parents to a baby daughter named Betty.

The clues found in the digitized service files have been invaluable to the research of our soldiers, their wives, and what awaited them following the war. Many of the nurses on our memorial would not have been found if not for the unique documentation of these love stories.

*Originally featured in Telling Our Stories, March 2018  
Contributed by Kaylee Dyck*

Form P. 85  
1914-60M-25.11.16. 167874

**FORM OF WILL.**

Name in full. I Jarvis Mark Guise  
Regimental Number 658018 serving in 4<sup>th</sup> Res. Bn.  
of the Canadian Expeditionary Force do hereby revoke all former Wills made by me and declare this to be my last Will.

Name & Address of person or persons to whom it is to go. I DEVISE and BEQUEATH all my real estate unto my wife  
Mrs. Florence Guise  
6 Radstock Rd  
Reading  
Berks Eng

Name & Address of persons or person to receive personal estate (see Note 7.) absolutely, and my personal estate I bequeath to my wife  
Mrs. Florence Guise  
6 Radstock Rd  
Reading  
Berks Eng

Fill in Date and Year. IN WITNESS WHEREOF I have hereunto set my hand this 15<sup>th</sup>  
day of November A.D. 1917 ✓

J.M. Guise  
(Signature)

*Right: Jarvis Guise's will, updated with his wife's name after their marriage. (Source: Library & Archives Canada)*