

Backgrounder

Enemy Aliens – Internment in Canada, 1914–1920

As the British Empire went to war in 1914, thousands of newly-arrived European immigrants to Canada fell under suspicion as citizens of enemy empires. National security fears and wartime prejudice drove the policy of internment, which lasted until 1920. During this time, Canada interned 8,579 men identified as enemy aliens, mainly Ukrainian and German immigrants, across a network of 24 camps. Now, 100 years later, using photographs drawn from Canadian archival collections, **Enemy Aliens – Internment in Canada, 1914–1920** explores internment operations and the experiences of the internees: who they were, the conditions they endured, and the legacy they left behind.

“Enemy alien” was the term used to describe citizens of states legally at war with the British Empire, and who resided in Canada during the war. These included immigrants from the German Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria. They could be interned for a number of reasons, including unemployment, attempting to leave Canada, and failing to abide by government regulations.

Photos for this exhibition were drawn from sources across the country, including: Library and Archives Canada; the provincial archives of Ontario, Alberta, and Manitoba; the archives of Mount Allison University, Queen’s University, and the University of Manitoba; museum archives of the Cumberland County Museum and Archives, the Glenbow Museum, the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, and the Ron Morel Memorial Museum; City of Toronto Archives; Fernando Monte and the Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Foundation; and the Canadian First World War Internment Recognition Fund, A. Humphrey Collection.

Enemy Aliens – Internment in Canada, 1914–1920 has been developed in partnership with the Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Foundation. The exhibition runs October 2, 2014 to March 29, 2015 in the Museum’s north corridor.

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