



Militia Myths: Ideas of the Canadian Citizen Soldier, 1896-1921 (Studies in Canadian Military History)

James Wood

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The image of farmers and workers called to the colours endures in Canada's social memory of the First World War. But is the ideal of being a citizen first and a soldier only by necessity as recent as our histories and memories suggest?

Militia Myths brings to light a military culture that consistently employed the citizen soldier as its foremost symbol, but was otherwise in a state of profound transition. At the time of Confederation, the defence of Canada itself represented the country's only real obligation to the British Empire, but by the early twentieth century Canadians were already fighting an imperial war in South Africa. In 1914, they began raising an army to fight on the Western Front. By the end of the First World War, the ideological transition was complete: for better or for worse, the untrained civilian who had answered the call-to-arms in 1914 replaced the long-serving volunteer militiaman of the past as the archetypal Canadian citizen soldier.

Militia Myths traces the evolution of a uniquely Canadian amateur military tradition -- one that has had an enormous impact on the country's experience of the First and Second World Wars.

Published in association with the Canadian War Museum.

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