

PAMA opens exhibit of Perkins Bull hospital

The Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives (PAMA) officially opened a new exhibit recently that celebrates the contributions of a prominent Peel family during the First World War.

All the Comforts of Home: The Perkins Bull Hospital for Convalescent Canadian Officers highlights the Bull family, the hospital they opened for Canadian officers and the gratitude of those men and their families.

William Perkins Bull grew up on a family farm near Brampton. He developed international business and financial interests and in 1912, moved his young family to England. During the First World War, the Bulls opened their London home to visiting Canadians and established a convalescent hospital for recovering Canadian officers. For many, this respite from the conditions at the front enabled them to regain their strength and health and return to their duties. The Bulls provided all the comforts of home, and then some, to men suffering from injuries, sickness and nerve-damage.

"We are so thrilled to tell this story at PAMA," said Supervisor of Museum and Archives Services Marty Brent. "One of the outstanding objects in the exhibit is a tankard, or loving cup, engraved with the names of many of the officers who passed through the Hospital. This cup is on long term loan from the High Commission of Canada in London."

All the show includes items such as special menu cards, a patient newsletter, correspondence and photographs. Of special interest are the patient registers and letters. The guest book signed by King George V and Queen Mary will also be on exhibit.

"Our family is very pleased to be able to share this part of our history with the public," said Professor Thomas H.B. Symons, grandson of William Perkins Bull. "PAMA already has extensive holdings from the William Perkins Bull collection and this new exhibit adds to this legacy by its remembrance of this special chapter about Canada's part in the First World War."

The story of the hospital, the family who welcomed battle-fatigued Canadian officers with open arms (including Billy Bishop) and the gratitude of those men and their families highlights an important part of Canada's character, where people performed selflessly in the face of conflict and hardship.

Visitors to PAMA can view the exhibit Monday through Saturday.