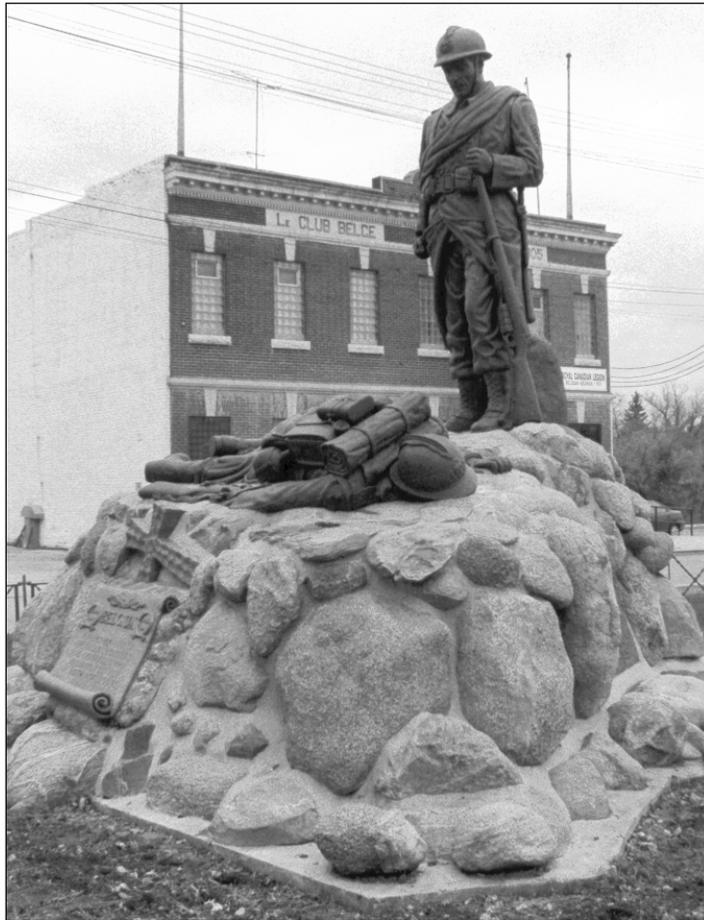


BOULEVARD PROVENCHER – BELGIAN WAR MEMORIAL
Hubert A. Garnier (sculptor), 1938



For hundreds of people who travel Boulevard Provencher near the Des Meurons intersection, there is a poignant daily reminder of the stoicism, loss, pain, and heroism associated with war.

That reminder is in the form of a memorial stone sculpture which shows an armed Belgian soldier, sadness etched in his features, standing over a fallen comrade. The prone figure's faceless anonymity symbolizes the sacrifice of all who gave their lives during the two World Wars and Korean conflict.

The monument, initially intended to honour the veterans and victims of World War I, was unveiled during a public ceremony on October 1, 1938. Its sponsor was the Belgian Veterans'

Association Memorial Committee which planned the project, raised public donations, and secured a grant of land from the City of St. Boniface. The site on the Boulevard Provencher median was across from Le Club Belge, a centre of social support and recreation for Belgian immigrants and their families since 1906.

Local sculptor Hubert A. Garnier (1903-1987) designed and completed the work. The artist used white Haddington Island sandstone for his 2.44-metre (eight-foot) figures, placing them on a base of large, irregular stones piled at random. Over the years, plaques have been attached to each face of the base.

This is one of two war monuments Garnier produced in Winnipeg. The other, the St. James War Memorial (1930) in Bruce Park, had to be replaced in 1990 after it was damaged by frost.

Born in Chasseneuil in southwestern France, Garnier was a youth when his family emigrated to St. Boniface in c.1913. He subsequently studied at the Winnipeg School of Art, Civic Art Institute in Chicago and University of British Columbia, as well as apprenticing with artists in Paris, New York and Chicago.

He worked in various media, including Tyndall stone, granite, marble, metal, brick, and wood. His main portfolio, established during the 1920s to 1960s, consisted of architectural ornamentation, official emblems, monuments, and reliefs. His clients primarily were businesses, governments and religious, historical and cultural organizations, although he also undertook some private family commissions.

In the United States, Garnier was involved with the Rockefeller Centre (New York), Chicago Civic Opera House and Club Pontchartrain (Detroit) projects.

In Canada, he was acclaimed for his elaborate frieze and bas-relief of a pioneer family for the Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, dedicated in Regina in 1955. He also produced crests for several federal buildings and ornamentation for the Hotel Vancouver, Lion's Gate Bridge (Vancouver), various structures at the University of Alberta (Edmonton), Hotel

Bessborough (Saskatoon), Bank of Montreal (Toronto), and Saint-Joseph Chapel (Montréal).

His Winnipeg-area projects included exterior stone work for the Hudson's Bay Company Department Store, Bank of Montreal at 426 Portage Avenue, Tier Building (University of Manitoba), Winnipeg Auditorium, Federal Building, and St. Vladimir and Olga Cathedral. He also sculpted bronze doors for the Shaarey Zedek Synagogue, stone panels for St. James Collegiate, the metal Tree of Life for Rosh Pina Synagogue, bronze historical tablets at the Legislative Building, and a memorial to Bishop Provencher at the Cathédrale de Saint-Boniface.

In 1974, an accident affected his eyesight, forcing him to stop work on a marble statue for the Franciscan order in Chicago. A retrospective exhibition of his work was held two years later at the Centre Culturel Franco-Manitobain. Garnier died at his St. Vital home in February 1987.

The Belgian War Memorial is one of at least 23 battle or war markers located along Winnipeg streets, in parks, on the grounds of public buildings, and at Royal Canadian Legion facilities. Most are metal or stone statues, obelisks and monoliths dedicated to participants of one or more of the three major conflicts of the twentieth century. The oldest, however, recall the 1816 Battle of Seven Oaks and the 1885 North-West Rebellion. All but the Seven Oaks Monument and Holocaust Memorial commemorate formal military service.