

In the Company of Sisters

CANADA'S WOMEN IN THE WAR ZONE, 1914–1919

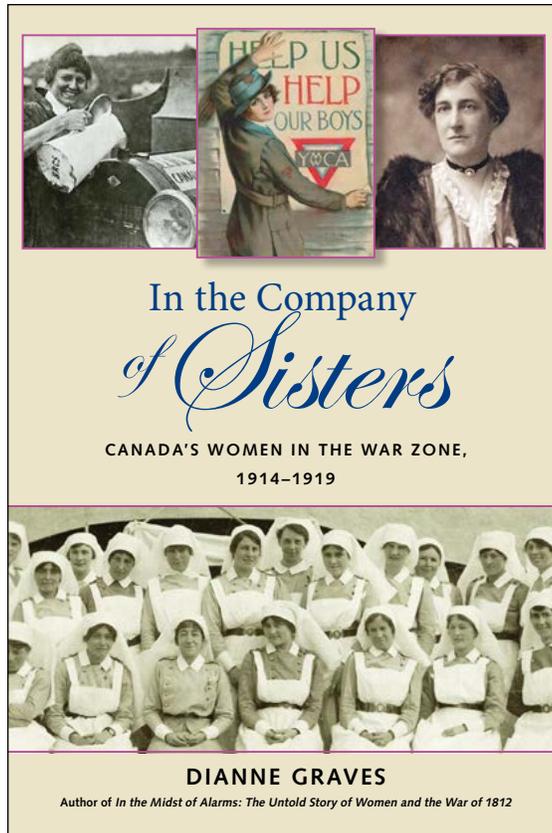
Dianne Graves

When Canada entered the First World War in August 1914, it embarked on a major war effort at home and abroad. The nation's women worked tirelessly to support the troops fighting overseas, and among them were many who chose to "do their bit" by serving and volunteering in areas of the war zone from Britain and the European mainland to the Middle East and Russia. *In the Company of Sisters* chronicles their endeavours and achievements amid the drama of a life-and-death struggle that claimed millions of lives.

Spearheaded by the nurses who were sent to various theatres of war, plenty of other determined souls channelled their energy into a wide range of much-needed work and, in so doing, broke new ground. Whether driving ambulances in range of enemy shelling, nursing sick soldiers in the heat and disease of the eastern Mediterranean, clothing destitute Belgian refugees or cheering up the troops with concerts, care packages and a cup of tea, these remarkable women played an important part in a multitude of ways. Canadian nurses at the Anglo-Russian Hospital in St. Petersburg watched the Russian Revolution taking place at their front door and cared for people wounded in the streets.

Four remarkable Canadian "women with a mission" are covered in detail: Julia Drummond, who became "mother" to the Canadian forces; actress and theatre producer Lena Ashwell, who took concerts and theatre to the troops in the front lines; Julia Grace Wales, pacifist and peace worker, who inspired peace negotiations even as the battles raged; and Mary Riter Hamilton, pioneer among Canadian women artists, who documented the devastated battlefields for posterity.

What the Canadian women who went overseas experienced had a marked impact on their own lives, and in some cases acted as a catalyst for what they went on to accomplish in later life.



The legacy they bequeathed to future generations was one of selfless and positive action that remains an inspiration to this day. *In the Company of Sisters* celebrates the "sisters" – military and civilian – who ventured overseas from 1914 to 1919 and highlights their courageous march along the path towards the equality and self-determination that Canadian women went on to achieve.

About the author

A native of Kent, England, Dianne Graves studied languages before embarking on a public relations career in international education and travel. She is also the author of *A Crown of Life: The World of John McCrae*, *In the Midst of Alarms: The Untold Story of Women and the War of 1812* and *Redcoats and River*

Pirates: Sam and Ellen's Adventure at the Windmill, an historical novel for young readers set on the St. Lawrence River in the 1830s.

Dianne Graves has acted as a consultant on a number of projects, including the CBC documentary series *A People's History of Canada*, and has appeared in several documentary films, notably *John McCrae's War*. She continues to research and write and lives in a 19th-century farmhouse in the scenic Mississippi River Valley of eastern Ontario with her husband, Canadian military historian Donald E. Graves.

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