

New from Wilfrid Laurier University Press

Just a Larger Family Letters of Marie Williamson from the Canadian Home Front, 1940–1944

Mary F. Williamson and Tom Sharp, editors

\$50.00 hardcover, 408 pp., 16 b/w photographs • 978-1-55458-266-2 • April 2011 • Life Writing series

An extraordinary slice of wartime Canadian life. These splendidly edited letters are full of wonderful detail on attitudes, blackouts, food rationing, gas and coal shortages, and the higher prices of everything, all the manifold details of daily life that normally are forgotten in most accounts. By taking in two British children and regularly keeping their mother overseas up-to-date on their progress, Marie Williamson and her family created a record of genuine historical importance.

– J.L. Granatstein, co-author, *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Military History*

We know a great deal about the consequences of World War II in Europe, but in this wonderful book we discover an untold part of the story. Here's what life was like in Canada for three British children who came to escape the bombing and for the Toronto family that took them in. In letters written by the mother of the host family, this book brilliantly captures the wartime years of food shortages, air raid precautions, gas rationing, and the raising of the young British evacuees in her care.

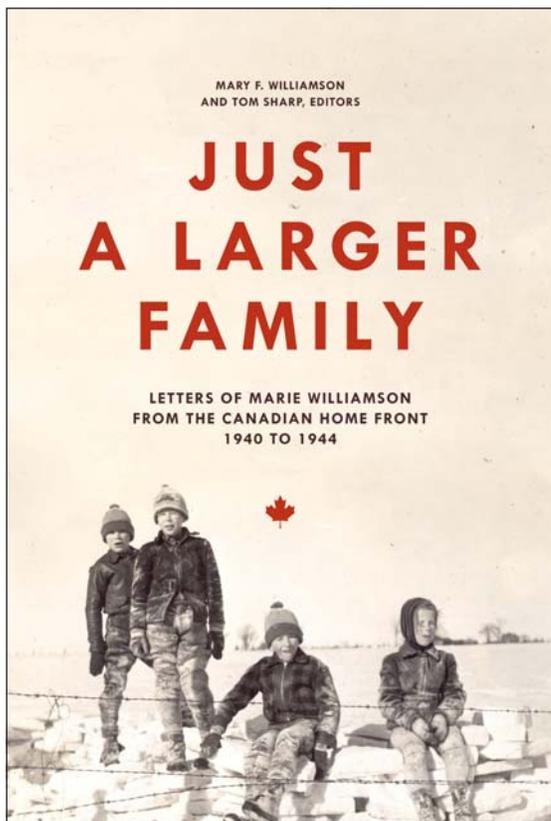
– Anne Innis Dagg, Independent Studies Program, University of Waterloo, author, *Pursuing Giraffe: A 1950s Adventure* (WLU Press, 2006)

The Second World War had been under way for a year when Marie and John Williamson welcomed two English brothers to join them and their two children in their small house in north Toronto for the duration of the conflict. Marie wrote over 150 letters to the boys' mother, Margaret Sharp, imagining that she could make Margaret feel she was still with her children. She shepherded the boys through education decisions and illnesses, eased them into a strange new life, and rejoiced when they embraced unfamiliar winter sports. The letters brim with detail about family holidays, the financial implications of an extended family, their involvement in their church, and the games and activities that kept them occupied. Marie's letters reflect the lives and concerns of a particular family in Toronto, but they also reveal a portrait of what was then Canada's second-largest city during wartime.

The introduction is by Mary F. Williamson, Marie's daughter, and Tom Sharp, Margaret's youngest son. The book features a foreword by Jonathan Vance that puts the letters in historical context.

Mary F. Williamson is a retired fine-arts bibliographer and adjunct faculty in graduate art history at York University. She co-authored *Art and Architecture in Canada* (1991), and her recent writings on nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century cookery have appeared in *Covering Niagara: Studies in Local Popular Culture* (WLU Press, 2010) and *The Edible City* (2009).

Tom Sharp is the younger of the two boys who came to live with the Williamsons in Canada. He had a civil service career in trade policy and was awarded the Commander of the British Empire (CBE) in 1987. He was an elected local councillor in Guildford, Surrey, a governor of two local schools, and a citizens' advice bureau member.



CONTENTS

FOREWORD | Jonathan Vance ix

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS xxi

INTRODUCTION 1

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES 19

FAMILY TREE 28

1940 31

1941 71

1942 159

1943 249

1944 309

EPILOGUE 331

APPENDIX 1 339

APPENDIX 2 341

APPENDIX 3 345

APPENDIX 4 347

APPENDIX 5 349

NOTES 351

INDEX 367

MEDIA, EXAMINATION, AND REVIEW COPIES

Contact Clare Hitchens
519-884-0710 ext. 2665 or
clare@press.wlu.ca

ORDERS

Contact your favourite bookseller
or call 1-800-565-9523

Wilfrid Laurier University Press

toll-free 1-866-836-5551 | www.wlupress.wlu.ca | facebook.com/wlupress | twitter.com/wlupress