Who was interned?

During World War One, approximately 8,579 people who were identified as ‘enemy aliens’ were interned in Canada. The people who were identified as such were largely immigrants who had recently immigrated within five years of the war breaking out. ‘Enemy aliens’ were people who were from the countries that Canada and her allies were at war with. Generally, the people who were identified as ‘enemy aliens’ were from Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which included parts of the Ukraine, Poland, Croatia, Serbia, Czechoslovakia and others. The majority of people interned in Canada were Ukrainians, known then as Ruthenians.

There were also approximately 80,000 immigrants that were not interned but were registered and forced to report to authorities on a regular basis. These immigrants, who prior to the war, were regarded as preferred immigrants, “often characterized as hard-working, loyal and well educated,” with similar “perceived values and attributes” to that of Canadians and Americans, had become subject to discrimination after the war began. The immigrants, especially the people from Ukrainian regions, who had left their country of origin due to “economic dislocation and ethnic persecution,” had found themselves in a similar situation in Canada. However, since 80,000 of these immigrants were registered as ‘enemy aliens’ and reporting to authorities on a regular basis, their movement was monitored and limited.

Due to their ‘enemy alien’ status, many immigrants either could not find work, or were let go from any employment that they might have had. In addition to the discrimination in the employment market, their registration and regular reporting to authorities meant that they could not leave the area to find work. Any movement
undertaken, especially towards the neutral United States, was seen as a threat against Canada and the accused were then arrested, and usually interned. The discrimination against the immigrant ‘enemy aliens’ often caused their situation to become desolate and destitute; often leading some people to volunteer to go to internment camps where they would, at the least, be provided with the basic necessities of life such as food and shelter.

References

Buri, George. “'Enemies Within Our Gates': Brandon’s Alien Detention Centre During the Great War.” *Manitoba History* no. 56 (October 2007): 3-11.


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4 Ibid., 37.
5 Buri, “Enemies Within Our Gates,” 4-5.
6 Ibid., 4.
7 Ibid., 7.
CITY COUNCIL WANTS GOVERNMENT TO GET REGISTRATION OF ALL SUBJECTS OF COUNTRIES AT WAR WITH BRITAIN

Rapid Fire Session Passes Over $100,000 In Accounts in Half Hour's Time.

It is generally admitted that J. P. McConnell, the fire chief, and that Andrew O’Donnell, the city’s fire chief, are among the finest firemen in the world. The fire alarm system is well equipped and the response time is short.

The trade and labor council meeting of the Port William and District Landlords Association was held at 6 p.m. The meeting was well attended and discussions centered around the current state of the city’s fire services.

The new McLain-Fruitt car, which was ordered by the Port William and District Landlords Association, was delivered to the city yesterday. The car was built by the company and is expected to provide better service to the city.

C. Hedican, one of the night firemen at the plant of the Seaman’s Institute, has been promoted to the position of fire chief. The move is a result of the city’s efforts to improve its fire services.

PERSONALS

Jack Ryan, who has been spending the past few months in western Canada, returned to the city yesterday and will remain for a few weeks before returning to his home in the west.

B. Hamilton, of St. Mary’s, is visiting friends in the city today.

G. A. Mitchell and O. N. Goddard, of Ottawa, are visiting friends in the two cities.

Walter Carson and John Wilson, of Port William, are spending the weekend at the Adacan Hotel and will return on Monday.

A. G. Kingstone, accountant of the Port William and District Landlords Association, will be on leave from the office for a few days.

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Why were they interned?

The biggest reason that 8,579 people were interned and another 80,000 registered was due to the technicalities surrounding citizenship and naturalization. Individuals’ status in Canada was defined by three different statues: laws relating to British subject status, Canadian naturalization laws, and Canadian immigration law. It would seem that, in Canada, there was a difference between being a Canadian citizen and a Canadian subject within the British Empire. Canada had its own category of naturalization prior to 1914 which was seen as merely an administrative convenience. What really mattered was the Nationalization Act. Prior to the change in 1914, the Naturalization Act required immigrants who wished to obtain British subject status to reside in the United Kingdom for five years and take an oath of allegiance there.

In addition, the Immigration Act of 1910 made everything more confusing because it granted Canadian citizenship to the people who had met Canada’s requirements in the 1881 or 1906 Naturalization Acts but who had not been able to claim British subject status. Prior to the new Naturalization Act of 1914 that came into effect January 1, 1915, it was difficult for an immigrant to obtain British subject status and no longer be considered an ‘alien.’ Under the acts prior to the 1914 Naturalization Act, the only other way of becoming a British subject (other than residing in Britain for five years and taking their oath there), was to be born within the British Empire.

The Naturalization Act of 1914 saw a couple of changes that would have been beneficial to most immigrants, if it had been enacted earlier. The new act included changes that required immigrants to reside in Canada for five years after which they could submit an application to become a British subject that gave them protection of the
British Empire wherever they might go.\textsuperscript{vi} However, because of the timing of the enactment of the new provisions of the Naturalization Act, there were still many immigrants living in Canada that had not obtained British subject status at the time the war broke out. Furthermore, any fees associated with the applications had to be paid by the immigrant applying, which could often be costly, especially if unemployed.\textsuperscript{vii}

On August 4, 1914, parliament enacted the War Measures Act which granted Governor in council power to enact emergency measures. Following the enactment of the War Measures act, an order-in-council was issued on October 28, 1914 “stating that un-naturalized immigrants from Germany or Austria-Hungary were to be classified as ‘enemy aliens’ and would be required to register with federal authorities.”\textsuperscript{viii} All enemy aliens were required to register and ensure that they had their identity papers on them at all times. In addition, according to the order-in-council, ‘enemy aliens’ were forbidden to leave the country and had to visit their local registration office at designated intervals; failure to comply resulted in immediate internment.\textsuperscript{ix}

In January of 1915, British authorities recommended that Canada regard all Ukrainians as friendly rather than hostile ‘aliens.’\textsuperscript{x} General Otter, the man put in charge of internment operations, declined the recommendations and instead continued the belief that Ukrainians, and other Austrians were a perceived threat to national security and proceeded with the internment and registration.\textsuperscript{x} Due to the above reasons, many immigrants in Canada saw themselves fall into poverty and destitute situations. They were discriminated against within the country they had hoped to make a better future in. After the registration had occurred, even if the ‘enemy aliens’ tried to pursue other
employment ventures such as in the United States, they were immediately arrested and subsequently interned.

References

Buri, George. “‘Enemies Within Our Gates’: Brandon’s Alien Detention Centre During the Great War.” *Manitoba History* no. 56 (October 2007): 3-11.


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ii Ibid.

iii Ibid.

iv Ibid.

v Ibid.


viii Ibid.

ix Ibid.

x Ibid., 5.

xi Ibid.
IF NATURALIZED IN CANADA GETS EMPIRE PRIVILEGES

NEW REGULATIONS GIVE THE MAN WHO TAKES CITIZENSHIP HERE SAME IN ANY PART OF BRITISH EMPIRE

HITHERETO IT WAS CONFINED TO CANADA ONLY EXCEPT IN CASES OF PEOPLE FROM THE UNITED STATES

Ottawa, Dec. 23---The coming into effect of the imperial naturalization act on January 1 will introduce an entirely new set of conditions relating to the making into citizens of the Dominion aliens who have made Canada their home. The most striking difference between the new and present acts is that under the new act aliens naturalized in the Dominion will be given not only Dominion but world-wide British nationality. They will be entitled to the protection of the British flag no matter where they go. Should a German alien of peace have been declared come to Canada and after the lapse of five years be naturalized under this inter-imperial legislation, he would be recognized as a British citizen even in the event of his return to Germany. An alien other than a native of the United States, who has been naturalized under the present act is entitled to the rights of British citizenship only within the Dominion. A native of the United States has wider privileges by virtue of a treaty agreed to by Great Britain and the United States in 1870.