



Book Review—The Danger Tree: Memory, War, and the Search for a Family's Past. By David Macfarlane, 1991.

Reviewed by John Anderson

This is another fascinating book, published some years ago, that I picked up in the Used Military Book Room maintained by the Friends of the Canadian War Museum (FCWM). The title refers to the so-called "Danger " in no man's land around which the shattered remnant of the Newfoundland Regiment gathered after being slaughtered on 01 July 1916 on the first day of the Somme Offensive in World War I. But the book is much more than a war story. More accurately, it is the story of the family of Josiah and Louisa Goodyear of central Newfoundland, particularly their six sons and one daughter. (Josiah and Louisa were the author's great grandparents.) It is also a history of modern Newfoundland, particularly Lord Northcliffe and the advent of the Anglo Newfoundland Development Corporation in 1909 and extending through confederation with Canada in 1949 to the modern day. But it is also a fascinating and insightful history of how the First World War was reported in Newfoundland and how it shaped Newfoundland and affected the Goodyear family. (Of the six sons, three were killed and two were wounded, one of the latter after being one of the 68 who survived the debacle of 01 July 1916.) The book is not just a third-person memoir. It is also the personal story of how the author encountered these memories as embodied in and recounted by his relatives on his mother's side. One of the strengths of this book is the author's ability to weave back and forth between personal memories, family history and Newfoundland history without ever feeling disjointed. Indeed, the three threads, or viewpoints, make a compelling cohesive narrative. As far as I can tell, the book is entirely factual. Some of the more detailed descriptions read like fiction -- until one looks at the acknowledgements and realizes that they are based on first-hand accounts. It might be easy to dismiss this book as being of primary interest only to Newfoundlanders. But as the book progresses it is clear that the author is also tracing the history of the stories and the memories, and notes with regret that, with the passage of time and "modernization", the stories are being lost. And in that

sense, this is a book that should be of interest to all of us. I commend this book to you, and this time I do say "Enjoy!" -- and reflect