

familiar with the history of the town. Living across from Knox Presbyterian Church which burned in 1901, it is evident that many of the descriptions in the novel came from the real life and times of that day, even using his own family residence prominently.

In 1914, Jessie and William and their children moved to Toronto, where Fraser continued with his writing.

In 1916, in the midst of the First World War, he made a suggestion that would live on as a Canadian tradition to this very day. Fraser was the one who suggested the creation of a tangible tribute that could be given to the mothers whose sons died in service to their country.

In an article titled *Cross for Mothers*, in the *Toronto Star* of September 23, 1916, Fraser suggested "...that Canada might pay a beautiful and deserved tribute to the mothers of slain Canadian soldiers by having struck a medal named the Silver Cross."

"The mothers are the heroines of the bitter home trenches. They suffer in silence with no reward but the sense that they have answered the call with their heart's blood— their sons."

He followed that up on October 12, with a letter to Prime Minister Robert Borden, enclosing that clipping and writing, "I ask for your kind consideration of this and, if it meets with your appreciation, help."

The Prime Minister was quick with a response on October 19, in which he showed "much interest" and offered to "discuss the subject with my colleagues at an early opportunity."

Very quickly momentum for the project grew, with articles and letters in newspapers across Canada, and a petition from the Empire Club of Canada.

The Silver Cross was first instituted by an Order-in-Council in December 1919, and was awarded to mothers and widows of Canadian soldiers who died on active duty or whose death was consequently attributed to such duty.

Sometime afterwards, the Silver Cross became known as the Memorial Cross, and the terms seem to be used interchangeably today. However, the term Silver Cross Mother is the description of a mother who lays a wreath, on behalf of all mothers, at the Canadian War Memorial on Remembrance Day.

Jessie Barber Fraser passed away in Toronto in 1931 and William died in 1933.

Both were

brought to Georgetown and buried in Greenwood Cemetery here, where in death they joined a great many of that early pioneering Barber family.

William Alexander Fraser, the noted but now somewhat forgotten author, who lived and wrote for so many years from his Georgetown home, and whose Silver Cross suggestion is honoured to this day, deserves to be remembered for his many contributions to the betterment of Canada.



William Fraser in his 115 Main St. S. Georgetown study (circa 1899) and his home (below).

Photos courtesy Glenn Fraser

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—An excerpt from William Fraser's 1916 suggestion for the Silver Cross medal



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