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World War One Continues Nursing-Sisters in England and France Hilda MacDonald, Glendyer: (Did you always plan to be a nurse?) No, no, I didn't. My mother died before I was 16, and she died following a stroke. Two nurses who looked after her were neighbours who were home for the holidays from different parts of the country, and they looked after her. And I admired them so immensely that I thought, well, I would like to be a nurse. (There was no thought of serving in the World War.) Oh no. A world war wasn't thought of during my whole training, I went into training in 1910. I trained in New York at the Presbyterian Hospital there, 70th Street and Madison Avenue. It's now the Presbyterian Columbia Hospital, way up in Morningside Heights. I graduated in 1913; and, of course, before the year was out, war was declared. I had wanted to go up to the Labrador, the Grenfell Mission in Labrador, up to St. Anthony. And I had my application in and talked a lot about it. Because my father had been very keen about all sorts of reading material that told about Dr. Grenfell's work, and I was extremely interested in it. (This would be along the Labrador coast?) Yes, and in northern Newfoundland. (You weren't looking for an easy job.) No, no, I wasn't. I never was particularly interested in private duty nursing. More the social type of nursing appealed to me. Then, of course, the war broke out, and I changed my mind completely. Immediately, I knew that's where I wanted to go. But it took quite a long time to get yourself accepted, make various applications through various people. And at that time I was spending a long holiday with my sister in Saskatchewan, so we were far away from friends in Ottawa, or people who could pull wires and get one into the army. So I didn't get in till 1915. (But you really wanted to serve.) Right away. (Was there any thought that it might be a dangerous thing for you?) Oh, no. We, in those days, didn't know anything about war, really. War was just something that you read about in history, and perhaps in novels. No reality in the world. You just didn't know. I went with those troops. We were taken on board a transport ship going to England, This was in September 1915, and we were all so afraid the war would be over before we got there. (Was the journey over eventful?) No. Until we began getting well across the Atlantic. And then destroyers came out and circled round us to ward off any possible submarines, or anything of that sort. And we landed at Plymouth. We were quite a long time going overseas. It was rather a slow trip. Less than a week after we got there, we were posted to different hospitals. I was sent out to Lord Astor's estate near Maidenhead. It was a Red Cross hospital, and very well organized--quite a large hospital. And there one came directly in contact with war victims, I came back to Nova Scotia, We were sent out instructions and we went to Halifax, were fitted out there, (Was there any special war training?) No, there wasn't. You had to be a registered nurse, and I already had been a registered nurse. And we just carried on from there. Many had gone overseas before I was able to get there. I was with a small group--there were just 4 of us who prepared in Halifax, Then we went from Halifax to Quebec. We found there were about 20 other nurses, from other parts of Canada. And there were 2500 They



must have suffered a great deal. But, troops on board, and the officers that of course, everything possible was done to CAPE BRETON'S MAGAZINE, NUMBER THIRTY-FOUR WRECK COVE, CAPE BRETON, NOVA SCOTIA SECOND CLASS MAIL -- REGISTRATION NUMBER 3014 (How did you find those young men?) Wonderful, absolutely wonderful. Always. I enjoyed very much my work with the troops, everywhere. I can see now quite vividly one of my soldiers in my first ward. He was an amputation--one leg was off, and the other to the thigh. He was just a young fellow from some part of England. They were all wonderfully nice people. I enjoyed every moment of my working with the soldiers. They were tremendous. (1)