

Canadian Women of Valour Challenge:

ALEXINA DUSSAULT, Nursing Sister

On June 27, 1918, the Canadian hospital ship the HMHS Llandovery Castle was torpedoed off the coast of Ireland. The ship was properly marked as a hospital ship, not a war ship. Its appropriate lighting and the red cross painted on its hull were clearly visible to friend and foe alike. As the ship sunk, one of the lifeboats was pulled into its whirlpool and all fourteen nursing sisters onboard that smaller vessel drowned. After the Llandovery Castle had completely sunk, the German U-boat that had shot the torpedo surfaced and opened fire on the remaining lifeboats. Over two hundred Canadians were killed in the sinking, including Nursing Sister Alexina Dussault.

Alexina Dussault of the Canadian Army Medical Corps, lost on June 27, 1918, during the sinking of the Llandovery Castle.

(Credit: [Imperial War Museum](#) WWC-H22-17-1)



A trained nurse from Quebec, Alexina joined the Canadian Expeditionary Force on September 25, 1914, shortly after the war was declared. Alexina was considered too old to join, so in a brave and selfless act she told the recruiters that she was younger than her real age. The ruse worked and Alexina was sent to France where she was posted to a casualty clearing station (Due to the excellent medical care provided at these stations ninety-five percent of soldiers who made it to one of these medical outposts survived their injuries).



The ill-fated HMHS Llandovery Castle.

(Credit: [Nova Scotia Archives](#), date unknown)

In February 1916, Alexina volunteered for hospital ship service and was granted that posting. She proceeded to spend the next two years caring for soldiers on the long voyages from England to Canada until that fateful day, June 27, 1918.

ATTESTATION PAPER.

Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force.

No. _____
Folio. **44**

QUESTIONS TO BE PUT BEFORE ATTESTATION.
(ANSWERS)

1. What is your name? *Alexina Dussault*
2. In what Town, Township or Parish, and in what Country were you born? *St Nyanthe, Bagot Co. Quebec*
3. What is the name of your next-of-kin? *Basile Dussault*
4. What is the address of your next-of-kin? *673 Cadieux St. Montreal*
5. What is the date of your birth? *March 25th 1882*
6. What is your Trade or Calling? *Nurse*
7. Are you married? *No*
8. Are you willing to be vaccinated or re-vaccinated? *No*
9. Do you now belong to the Active Militia? *Yes*
10. Have you ever served in any Military Force? *No*
11. Do you understand the nature and terms of your engagement? *Yes*
12. Are you willing to be attested to serve in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force? *Yes*

Alexina Dussault (Signature of Man)

(Signature of Witness)

DECLARATION TO BE MADE BY MAN ON ATTESTATION.

I, *Alexina Dussault*, do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true, and that I am willing to fulfil the engagements by me now made, and I hereby engage and agree to serve in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force, and to be attached to any arm of the service therein, for the term of one year, or during the war now existing between Great Britain and Germany should that war last longer than one year, and for six months after the termination of that war provided His Majesty should so long require my services, or until legally discharged.

Date: *Sept 25th* 1914. *M. A. Follis* (Signature of Witness)

OATH TO BE TAKEN BY MAN ON ATTESTATION.

I, *Alexina Dussault*, do make Oath, that I will be faithful and bear true Allegiance to His Majesty King George the Fifth, His Heirs and Successors, and that I will as in duty bound honestly and faithfully defend His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, in Person, Crown and Dignity, against all enemies, and will observe and obey all orders of His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, and of all the Generals and Officers set over me. So help me God.

Date: *Sept 25th* 1914. *M. A. Follis* (Signature of Witness)

CERTIFICATE OF MAGISTRATE.

The Recruit above-named was cautioned by me that if he made any false answer to any of the above questions he would be liable to be punished as provided in the Army Act.

I have taken care that he understands each question, and that his answer to each question has been duly entered as replied to, and the said Recruit has made and signed the declaration and taken the oath before me, at *Quebec* this *25* day of *Sept* 1914.

Edw. Paul (Signature of Justice)

I certify that the above is a true copy of the Attestation of the above-named Recruit.

(Approving Officer)

Description of *Alexina Dussault* on Enlistment.

Apparent Age *32* years _____ months.
(To be determined according to the instructions given in the Regulations for Army Medical Services)

Height *5 ft 5 1/2 in.*

Weight _____

Complexion *Medium*

Eyes *Blue*

Hair *Dark brown*

Religious denomination: Church of England, Presbyterian, Wesleyan, Baptist or Congregationalist, Other Protestants (denomination to be stated), Roman Catholic, Jewish.

Distinctive marks, and marks indicating congenital peculiarities or previous disease.
Scar on front of left index finger one & half inches long.

CERTIFICATE OF MEDICAL EXAMINATION.

I have examined the above-named Recruit and find that he does not present any of the causes of rejection specified in the Regulations for Army Medical Services.

He can see at the required distance with either eye; his heart and lungs are healthy; he has the free use of his joints and limbs, and he declares that he is not subject to fits of any description.

I consider him *fit* for the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force.

Date: *Sept 24th* 1914. *W. G. Healey* (Signature of Medical Officer)
Place: *Quebec* *W. G. Healey* (Signature of Medical Officer)

CERTIFICATE OF OFFICER COMMANDING UNIT.

Alexina Dussault having been finally approved and inspected by me this day, and his Name, Age, Date of Attestation, and every prescribed particular having been recorded, I certify that I am satisfied with the correctness of this Attestation.

Henry MacLain (Signature of Officer)
Lieut.-Colonel
O. C. No. 1. GENERAL HOSPITAL,
CANADIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

Date: *Sept 28* 1914.

Alexina's attestation papers. These were completed upon her enlistment (28 Sept. 1914).
(Credit: Library and Archives Canada)

The sinking of the Llandovery Castle was considered one of the worst atrocities perpetrated in the war and was used as a rallying cry for Canadian soldiers during the last Hundred Days.

For more on Alexina Dussault's experience as a nurse, visit the Imperial War Museum's "Lives of the First World War".

Key Vocabulary:

- U-boat: a German submarine. U-boat is short form for the German word, unterseeboot, aka under sea boat
- Attestation: a declaration of truth. In this case, Alexina is testifying to her identity, health, and skills.
- Atrocities: an unacceptably horrific act, particularly in war
- Perpetrated: to carry out, do, or commit, a harmful, illegal, or immoral action