

Military Type

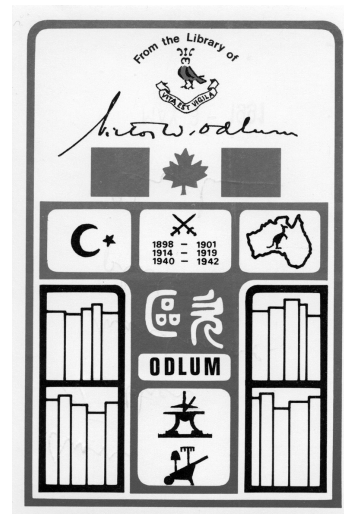
VICTOR ODLUM (1880–1971) was a distinguished soldier, journalist and diplomat. He fought in the Second Boer War with the Royal Canadian Regiment. Upon returning to Canada he became a journalist with the *Vancouver World*, rising to become editor-in-chief. During the First World War, his battalion experienced the first devastating gas attacks of the war, at Ypres. Odlum's conduct at the front won him the rank of brigadier general. During the Second World War, he briefly commanded the Second Canadian Division in England.

Between the wars, Odlum's involvement in politics, business and journalism deepened. He sat in the B.C. legislature from 1924 to 1928 and was a director of the Canadian Broadcasting Corp. He co-founded the Vancouver investment firm of Odlum Brown and also published the right-wing *Vancouver Star*. When *Star* employees unionized, Odlum shut the paper rather than meet their demands.

Despite his hardline approach to labour issues, Odlum became Canadian High Commissioner to Australia in 1941, then Canada's first ambassador to China from 1943 to 1946. He was appointed ambassador to Turkey from 1947 to 1957. In 1965, when the founders of the *Vancouver Times* needed financial assistance, he made a brief return to newspaper publishing, attracted (his biographer notes) "like a cat teased with a piece of string."

Odlum's bookplate is printed in black and red on white paper. The several images represent the diverse aspects of his life. At the top is the Odlum family crest, depicting a crowned owl (a pun on the pronunciation of his family name) and the motto "Vita Est Vigilia" ("Life is waking"). Underneath that is a representation of the national flag Canada adopted in 1965, a nod both to his nationality and service to the country.

Below the flag is a series of biographically significant images. From left to right: the crescent moon and star from the Turkish



flag recall his service as ambassador in Turkey; crossed swords (symbolizing battles) and his dates of military service are self-explanatory; and the outline of Australia and a kangaroo signify his years as a diplomat in Australia. Below this series is a Chinese character, known as a chop, a ceremonial mark representing Odlum's name and recalling his diplomatic service in China.

A printing press and a wheelbarrow with shovel and rake appear below Odlum's name in English. The printing press acknowledges his role in Vancouver's newspaper business as well as his love of books. The latter are also represented in the panels made to appear as book-laden shelves either side of the central panel. The garden implements reflect the affection he held for his estate called Rockwood, overlooking Howe Sound near Whytecliff Park in West Vancouver.

Odlum's library, mainly concerned with military affairs and world political events, was extensive, holding about 10,000 volumes. It was gifted to the University of British Columbia in 1963.

~ Ralph Stanton is head of the Rare Books and Special Collections division of the University of British Columbia Library. For further information about Odlum, please consult the Odlum fonds at UBC Library's Rare Books and Special Collections.

The Rare Books and Special Collections Bookplate Collection can be accessed from the UBC Library Digital Collections and Services site, <http://digitalcollections.library.ubc.ca>.