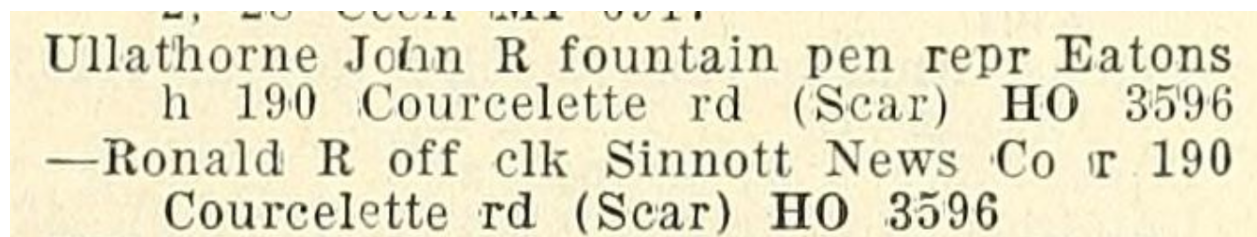


For Posterity's Sake

By Joshua Lim

The Golden Age of comic books and the creation of superheroes are closely tied to World War II. The stories of the earliest superheroes, such as Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Captain America, and more, were centred on fighting the Axis and supporting the war effort. In fact, though targeted for children, servicemen were some of the biggest consumers of comic books. These iconic superheroes were created by American publishers, but unknown to most is that there exist superheroes created by Canadian publishers. On 6 December 1940, MacKenzie King's parliament instituted the War Exchange Conservation Act, banning non-essential items such as comic books from the United States. This led to the rise of Canadian publishers such as Anglo-American Publishing in Toronto. Anglo-American Publishing's Ted McCall and Ed Furness would create the character and series Freelance. Freelance no. 1 was published on July 1941, becoming the second Canadian comic book superhero. Freelance would travel the world fighting Nazis. Little is known about these superheroes and the creative process for making them, as shortly after the war ended, the War Exchange Conservation Act was repealed, which saw the end of Canadian publishers and their comic books.

It was said that artist Ed Furness based the design of Freelance on a young blonde-haired clerk from Anglo-American Publishing's parent company, Sinnott News. It was noted that the clerk was named "Ronny Ullathorne" and that he joined the Navy. Ronald Royston Ullathorne grew up in Scarborough, Ontario, about ten minutes away from Sinnott News. Once turning 18, Ronald Royston Ullathorne joined the Royal Canadian Navy in 1941, serving on the HMCS Summerside. Toronto archives confirm that Ronald Royston Ullathorne worked at Sinnott News as an Office Clerk in 1941.



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The piece of evidence that seals the deal is the striking resemblance. On the left is the cover of Freelance no. 33 (September 1946), with Freelance giving a good hit to a Nazi. On the right, courtesy of Ronald's daughter Dianne, is a picture of him on the HMCS Summerside next to the paintings he drew.

