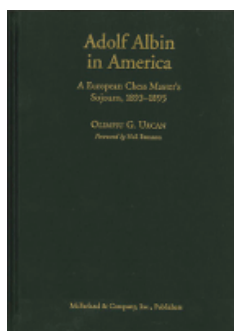




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## Frank P. Beynon

### Chess Player, Soldier, Hero

One of the early examples of courage Frank Percival Beynon showed in life was in May 1912 when he left his boyhood Canadian home to cross the border, through Buffalo, into the United States and camp in New York City. Not because he landed some highly lucrative job, but in order to follow his passion, which promised a struggling life to many of those who embraced it as a full-time vocation: the game of chess. Born on October 22, 1888, in Minnedosa, Manitoba, Beynon was the son of George W. Beynon, a prominent lawyer and District Registrar of Portage la Prairie, Manitoba. Beynon became absorbed with the game while in Minnedosa, but, once he moved to Toronto as a boy, his aspiration grew in intensity. Several accounts indicate that it was there that he first became known as a chess player by winning the city's championship.



Frank Percival Beynon

[Source: *American Chess Bulletin*  
November 1918, Vol. 15, No. 8, page 232]

The border crossing records indicate "student" as his occupation when he arrived in New York [*Border Crossings: From Canada to U.S., 1895-1956* (database-online). Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com]. Yet studying was far from Beynon's mind as, like many wanderers consumed by the game, he became an immediate fixture in the rooms of the famous Manhattan Chess Club. It took courage and, especially for the mentality of the 1910s, a certain dose of youthful rebellion, to dedicate his adolescence to the game rather than, much like his father, preparing for a more conventional calling.

In December 1912, Beynon was one of the thirty-eight players taking part in a handicap tournament at the Manhattan Chess Club. The players were grouped in five classes and three sections and Beynon was part of Section C, after seven rounds scoring well enough by the middle of the tournament to be just behind Magnus Smith, another Canadian-born player who made a mark on American ground. It appears that Beynon won the Section C ahead of Smith.

In January 1913, he was one of the twenty-one players pitted against George J. Beihoff who gave a simultaneous exhibition at the Manhattan Chess Club (+12 - 5 = 4). As reported by the *New York Times* of January 26, 1913, Beynon was one of the players who scored against Beihoff, while Magnus Smith, the champion of the club, managed only a draw.

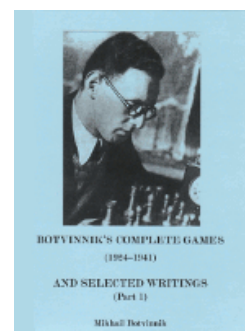
In August 1913, Beynon entered to play in his first master-class tournament: a

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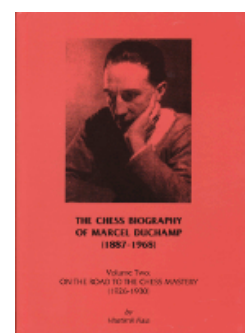
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by Vlastimil Viala

fourteen-player event staged at the Rice Chess Club. The event is rather well-known, as many high profile players participated. Capablanca won the top prize with an impeccable score of 13 points, while Roy T. Black and Abraham Kupchik tied for second-third with 7½. Duras finished fourth with 7 points, followed by Albert Marder (6½) and Chajes (6). Beynon scored 4½ finishing tenth. A few games played by Beynon in this event are available in common chess databases (all losses). His game against Capablanca was offered by the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* of July 17, 1913. It was prefaced as follows:

In the fifth round of the masters tournament, played at the Rice Chess Club last night, J. R. Capablanca met F. P. Beynon, whom he defeated in a Sicilian Defense adopted by the latter, after 40 moves. Beynon put up an excellent defense, but Capablanca was again in brilliant mood and sacrificed a Bishop at his thirty-third move. This gave him two connected passed pawns, advanced to the sixth, a force sufficient to win against the Knight that opposed them.

The game, well-known by now, was featured with some general annotations by Irving Chernev on pages 49-52 of his *Capablanca's Best Chess Endings* (Dover Publications, 1982 edition). Some fresh analysis indicates that Beynon had quite a few defensive resources that he did not utilize:

### **José Raúl Capablanca – Frank Percival Beynon**

Masters Tournament, Rice Chess Club  
July 16, 1913

**1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 d6 6.Be2 g6 7.0-0 Bd7 8. Be3 Bg7 9.h3 0-0 10.Qd2 a6 11.Rad1 Qc7 12.Nb3 Rad8 13.Bh6 Bc8 14. Bxg7 Kxg7 15.Qe3 e5 16.f4 Be6 17.Nd5 Bxd5 18.exd5 Ne7 19.c4 Nf5 20. Qf3 e4 21.Qc3 Qb6+ 22.Nd4 Rc8 23.Kh1 Nxd4 24.Rxd4 Kg8 25.f5 Rce8 26.b4 Qc7 27.Qg3 Qe7 28.fxg6 fxg6**



[FEN "4rrk1/1p2q2p/p2p1np1/3P4/1PPRp3/6QP/P3B1P1/5R1K w - - 0 29"]

**29.c5! dxc5 30.d6 Qe5 31.Qxe5 Rxe5 32.bxc5 Nd7**



[FEN "5rk1/1p1n3p/p2P2p1/2P1r3/3Rp3/7P/P3B1P1/5R1K w - - 0 33"]

This position is relatively equal, as neither side can make progress via normal means. Capablanca's next imaginative sacrifice, however, placed enough pressure on Beynon to find the correct defensive moves. An excellent decision by the Cuban even if – as it will be shown – Black could have defended more tenaciously.

### 33.Bxa6!? bxa6

33...Rxf1+!? was also possible: 34.Bxf1 Kf7! 35.Kg1 e3 36.Be2 Ke8 with excellent chances for a successful defense by Beynon.

### 34.Rxf8+ Kxf8?

Chernev was wrong to write in *Capablanca's Best Chess Endings* that this move offered clearly better hope than 34...Nxf8 (page 51). In fact, the text move may be blamed for giving White clear winning chances. 34...Nxf8 35.c6 e3! – and not 35...Rc5?!, as Chernev suggested in his analysis – 36.Rd1 (36.d7? e2 37.d8Q e1Q+ 38.Kh2 Rf5! 39.Rd1 Qe5+ 40.Kh1 Qe2 and Black should win.) 36...e2 37.Re1 Rd5 38.Rxe2 Rxd6 39.c7 Rc6 40.Re7 h5 41.Kg1 Rc2 42.h4 with a balanced position since White's c7-pawn is a major asset and essentially untouchable.

### 35.c6!



[FEN "5k2/3n3p/p1PP2p1/4r3/3Rp3/7P/P5P1/7K b - - 0 35"]

### 35...Ke8??

Another major blunder unnoticed by Chernev. Tougher resistance was offered by 35...Re8 36.Rc4! (36.cxd7?! Rd8 37.Ra4 Kf7 38.Rxa6 Ke6 39.Kg1 Kxd7 40.Kf2 Rb8! with some chances for Black to maintain the balance.) 36...Kf7 37.c7 Rc8 38.Rxe4 Kf6 39.Re7 Nc5 40.Kh2 and the engines agree that White has concrete winning chances here, although things were far more difficult than in the actual game.

### 36.c7! Rc5 37.Rxe4+ Kf8 38.Re7 Nf6 39.d7 Nxd7 40.Rxd7 1–0

Here is Beynon's win over Jacques Grommer from the same tournament, the score appearing in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* of August 3, 1913:

#### Jacques Grommer – Frank Percival Beynon

Masters Tournament, Rice Chess Club

July 1913

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 a6 5.Nc3 Be7 6.Bd3 dxc4 7.Bxc4 b5 8.Bd3 Bb7 9.0–0 Nbd7 10.Bd2 c5 11.Rc1 Qb6 12.Qe2 0–0 13.dxc5 Nxc5 14.Bb1 b4 15.Nd1 a5 16.Ne5 Rfd8 17.f3 Rd5 18.Nc4 Qb5 19.e4 Rd7 20.e5 Nd5 21.f4 Nb6 22.b3 Rad8 23.Be3 Nxc4 24.Rxc4 Bd5 25.Qc2 g6 26.Rxc5 Bxc5 27.Qxc5 Qxc5 28.Bxc5 Bxg2 29.Kxg2 Rxd1 30.Bd6 Rxf1 31.Kxf1 Re8 32.Bd3 Rc1+ 33.Kf2 Ra1 34.Bb5 Rxa2+



[FEN "6k1/5p1p/3Bp1p1/pB2P3/1p3P2/1P6/r4K1P/8 w - - 0 35"]

### 35.Ke3?

35. Kg3! Kg7 36. Ba4 Rd2 37. Bc7 Rd5 38. Kf3 and White's fortress seems impregnable.

**35...Rxb2 36. Ba4 Rc2 37. Kd4 h5 38. Be7 Rf2 39. Kc5 Rxf4 40. Kb6 h4 41. Kxa5 h3 42. Bxb4 h2 43. Bc6 Rf1 44. Bc5 g5 45. b4 g4 46. b5 Rf3 47. b6 h1Q 48. Bd6 Qa1+ 49. Ba4 Rf4 50. Bb4 Qxe5+ 51. Bb5 Rf5 0-1**

In December of the same year, Beynon took part in the annual championship of the Manhattan Chess Club, trailing just behind an unstoppable Kupchik after five rounds. In January 1914, he also took part in a rapid transit tournament sponsored by Aristides Martinez, the President of the Manhattan Chess Club. Beynon took part in the first knockout preliminary stage in which games were played at fifteen seconds a move and he was one of the eight players eliminated. The rest went on to play a round robin event under a time limit of ten seconds a move. Frank J. Marshall and Kupchik tied for first and second with 5½, Charles Jaffe finished third (4 points). Beynon was in good company.

While other significant data on Beynon's involvement with chess in New York seem harder to pin down without a more thorough examination of the New York press of the 1910s, it is known that by the time the First World War broke out, he became associated with the activities of Marshall's Chess Divan, a new establishment founded by Frank J. Marshall. According to the *American Chess Bulletin* (May-June 1917, Vol. 14, No. 5, page 110), on April 28, 1917 Beynon was part of the festivities celebrating the second anniversary of Marshall's Divan. Next to Marshall, Janowski, Chajes, Jaffe, Jacob Bernstein, A. B. Hodges, and Black, Beynon was one of the eight masters playing in a tournament with a time limit of twenty seconds a move. Marshall won the top prize (5½), Janowski finishing second (5), and Chajes third (4½). Jaffe (4) took fourth, Bernstein (3) finished fifth, followed by Hodges (3), Black (2½) and Beynon (1½). Beynon's drawn game was against Marshall, the winner of the tournament, while his win was registered against Janowski, the second-prize winner. The score of this latter game was given in full by the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* of June 24, 1917:

### Frank P. Beynon – Dawid Janowski

Marshall's Divan Tournament

April 28, 1917

**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 d6 7.c3 Bg4 8.d3 0-0 9.Nbd2 Nd7 10.h3 Bh5 11.Nf1 Bg6 12.g4 Nc5 13.Bc2 h5 14.Ng3 hxc4 15.hxc4 Qd7 16.Nf5!? d5?**

16...Ne6 17.Kg2 Bf6 18.Rh1 d5 19.Bb3 dxe4 20.dxe4 Qxd1 21.Rxd1 was a better continuation for Janowski.

### 17.Be3

Beynon should have went for 17.exd5! Qxd5 18.Rxe5 Qd7 19.Nxe7+ Nxe7 20.Rxc5 Qxg4+ 21.Kh2 Bh5, as he was very much on top after 22.Bg5!.

**17...Rad8 18.Kg2 Bxf5 19.gxf5 d4**

19...dxe4!? 20.dxe4 Nd3 21.Rh1 Nf4+ 22.Bxf4 Qxd1 23.Raxd1 exf4 24.e5 Rxd1 25.Rxd1 Rd8 26.Rxd8+ Nxd8 27.Be4+/=.

**20.cxd4 exd4 21.Bd2 Qd6?!**

21...a5 22.Rh1 Bf6 23.Rh3 g6 24.fxg6 fxg6 25.Bb3+ Nxb3 26.Qxb3+ Qf7 27.Qxb7 Ne5 28.Nxe5 Bxe5 29.Qb3!+/=.

**22.Rh1 Bf6?!**



[FEN "3r1rk1/1pp2pp1/p1nq1b2/2n2P2/3pP3/3P1N2/PPBB1PK1/R2Q3R w - - 0 23"]

If 22...Rfe8, then 23.b4! Nd7 24.Bb3 Bf6 25.Nh4 Bxh4 26.Qh5 with a winning attack for White.

**23.Ng5!**

23.Ne5!! was also possible: 23...g6 24.Nxg6 fxg6 25.Bb3+ Rf7 (25...Nxb3 26.Qxb3+ Rf7 27.fxg6+-) 26.fxg6 Nxb3 27.gxf7+ Kf8 28.Qxb3 and White wins.

**23...Bxg5 24.Bxg5!**

24.Qh5? would have been too impulsive: 24...Bh6 25.f6 (25.Rag1 Rfe8 26.f6 Qxf6 27.Bxh6 gxh6 28.Kf1+ Kh7 29.Qxc5 Re5 and Black is not only defending successfully, but getting the better play.) 25...Qxf6 26.Bxh6 gxh6 27.Qxc5 b6 28.Qh5 Kh7 29.Rh3 Rg8+ and Black is better.

**24...f6**



[FEN "3r1rk1/1pp3p1/p1nq1p2/2n2PB1/3pP3/3P4/PPB2PK1/R2Q3R w - - 0 25"]

**25.Bd2**

5.Bb3+! would have allowed a spectacular finish: 25...Nxb3 26.Qxb3+ Rf7 27.Rh8+!! Kxh8 28.Qxf7 fxg5 29.Rh1+ Qh6 30.Rxh6+ gxh6 31.Qg6 Rd6 32.f6.

**25...Kf7 26.b4 Nd7 27.Bb3+ Ke7 28.Rh7 Rde8 29.Rxg7+ Kd8 30.Be6**





[FEN "3krr2/1ppn2R1/p1nqBp2/5P2/1P1pP3/3P4/P2B1PK1/R2Q4 b - - 0 30"]

**30...Nde5?**

30...Re7! 31.Rg3 Rh8 was the best way to defend in this position.

**31.f4!**

After this it was all over for Janowski.

**31...Nxd3 32.Rd7+ Qxd7 33.Bxd7 Kxd7 34.Qb3 Rg8+ 35.Kf3 Rh8 36.Rg1 Nce5+ 37.fxe5 Nxe5+ 38.Ke2 Rh2+ 39.Kd1 d3 40.Bf4 Rh3 41.Bxe5 Rxe5 42.Rg7+ Kd6 43.Qf7 Rxe4 1-0**

White mates in two.

During the dinner that followed at Café Francais that evening, Beynon was given to hear war stories. Earlier that month, on April 6, the United States of America ended its neutrality and entered the First World War. From the same issue of the *American Chess Bulletin*:

Patriotic music opened the proceedings and nearly every nationality responded when called upon for speeches. When the list of the Allies had become exhausted Chairman [J. C.] Fireman called upon Oscar Chajes and Henry Koehler as representatives of the Austria and Germany, respectively, but both promptly proclaimed themselves American citizens.

The true spirit of international brotherhood reigned supreme throughout the proceedings. Marshall and Hodges, present and former United States champions, spoke for their native land, and Janowski, in responding in behalf of France, referred to his internment in Germany at the Mannheim international congress and his subsequent escape to Switzerland. The French champion praised highly the hospitality he had experienced in this country.

It was also noted that Hudson Maxim, the famed inventor and chemist, who is today best remembered for inventing a variety of explosives, was scheduled for a speech, but he failed to make an appearance. Instead he sent an apology and fifty copies of *Defenseless America* (1916), a book he authored after one of his good friends died on *RMS Lusitania* when torpedoed by a German submarine. In the book, Maxim argued for an improvement in America's defenses and for an active war effort against Germany. Speaking on his behalf, George B. Sturrock commented:

Chess problems and games take a secondary position at the present time. The game of "War" is first. We all regret it was impossible for Mr. Maxim to be present. Maxim and his fame are praiseworthy examples of what chess means to men, as well as what chess means to war. Tonight we think of war as the one great game. Tomorrow, when peace shall have been restored, chess will claim our attention as one of the greatest games of peace. Chess, more than any other game, is dedicated to the strategy of war, and at the same time no other game is more likely to help bring about the end of war amongst civilized people.

Bismarck was one of our great devotees. If Bismarck was alive and in power today, perhaps this war might never have happened. In his chess mind he would have foreseen that the overwhelming wave of democracy, which today is apparent to even the most conservative mind, means a victory for the people, whichever side might ultimately triumph.

It was evidently a time when the American idealism impregnated the minds of the youth. Thousands of young men and women volunteered to go to Europe to fight what by then had become America's war too. Even Frank J. Marshall volunteered for his country through a direct address to Woodrow Wilson. According to page 112 of the same *Bulletin* issue, Hudson Maxim wrote the following to Marshall: "In regard to what you can do to help the country, I do not believe that you can do any better than just what you are doing. Don't go to the front and get yourself shot up. You must remember this, than when the war is over a large number of war cripples will have to find their mind solace and comfort in the war game and the games of chess and checkers. You cannot do any better than to stick to your present work."

While Marshall continued to offer exhibitions in America, Beynon's youthful zeal pushed him to volunteer to serve. The July-August 1917 issue of the *Bulletin* (Vol. 14, No. 6, page 176) noted that "F. P. Beynon, prominent in Metropolitan chess circles for the last six years, has left for Canada to join the Canadian Artillery. He was given a farewell reception at Marshall's Chess Divan, where he played simultaneously." According to his registration card held by *Canada, Soldiers of the First World War, 1914-1918 Online Database*, Beynon's volunteer papers were drafted on June 9, 1917. The document also reveals Beynon's declared occupation: "professional chess player."

The image shows two documents from the World War I era. On the left is a 'REGISTRATION CARD' for Frank P. Beynon, dated June 9, 1917. It contains personal information such as name, address (100 Blush St), date of birth (June 22, 1888), and occupation (Professional Chess Player). On the right is a 'REGISTRAR'S REPORT' dated June 5, 1917, signed by Herman Kahn. It includes details about the registrant's physical condition and the accuracy of the information provided.

Frank P. Beynon's War Registration Card

[Source: Ancestry.com. World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918 (database on-line). Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2005]

Further details were offered by the June 24, 1917 issue of the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. Beynon – no doubt acquainted with Hermann Helms – took a farewell from his American chess friends:

F. B. Beynon, a Canadian, but for many years a member of the Manhattan Chess Club and latterly of Marshall's Chess Divan at 118 West Forty-ninth street, Manhattan, has enlisted with the Canadian Artillery and will leave for the front by way of Canada next Monday. Through *The Eagle* he extends "greetings to all those friends I have met in the bloodless fight, and, at some future date, may fight against. Farewell."

An Attestation Paper of the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force dated June 19, 1917, (also available at [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com)) reveals that when faced with the question "What is your Trade and Calling?" Beynon wrote down: "Chess Master."

DUPLICATE  
Canadian.

1. *Card 66  
10-9-17*

**ATTESTATION PAPER.**  
2nd. Queen's Own Rifles.  
CANADIAN OVERSEAS EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

No. 2562 J16  
Folio.

QUESTIONS TO BE PUT BEFORE ATTESTATION.  
(ANSWERS)

1. What is your surname?	B E Y N O N.	
2. What are your Christian names?	Frank.	
3. What is your present address?	515 Brunswick Ave., Toronto, Canada.	
4. In what Town, Township or Parish, and in what County were you born?	Mississauga, Canada.	
5. What is the name of your next-of-kin?	Edith Beynon.	
6. What is the address of your next-of-kin?	515 Brunswick Ave., Toronto, Canada.	
7. What is the relationship of your next-of-kin?	Mother.	No
8. What is the date of your birth?	October 20th, 1888.	
9. What is your Trade or Calling?	Chess Master.	
10. Are you married?	Single.	
11. Are you willing to be vaccinated or re-vaccinated and inoculated?	Yes.	
12. Do you now belong to the Armed Forces?	No.	
13. Have you ever served in any Military Force?	No.	
14. Do you understand the nature and terms of your engagement?	Yes.	
15. Are you willing to be enlisted to serve in the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force?	Yes.	

DECLARATION TO BE MADE BY MAN ON ATTESTATION.

I, Frank Beynon do solemnly declare that the above are answers made by me to the above questions and that they are true, and that I am willing to fulfil the engagements made by me to the above questions, and I hereby engage and agree to serve in the Canadian Overseas 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 as long as the above the termination of that war provided His Majesty should no longer require my services, or until legally discharged.

*Frank P. Beynon* (Signature of Recruit)

Date June 19th, 1917

*John P. Beynon* (Signature of Witness)

OATH TO BE TAKEN BY MAN ON ATTESTATION.

I, Frank Beynon 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 loyally and faithfully defend His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, in Person, Crown and Rights, 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, to the best of my power.

*Frank P. Beynon* (Signature of Recruit)

Date June 19th, 1917

*John P. Beynon* (Signature of Witness)

CERTIFICATE OF MAGISTRATE.

The Recruit above named was examined 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 Toronto, Canada on 19th day of June, 1917.

*John P. Beynon* (Signature of Justice)

H. P. W. 21  
1917-1918  
R. C. (1917-1918)

Frank P. Beynon's Attestation Paper

[Source: Ancestry.com. Canada, Soldiers of the First World War, 1914-1918 (database online). Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2006]

[Click here to enlarge image.](#)

More than a year later Beynon was killed in action. The news was first published in the *Toronto Star* of September 20, 1918 and it was revealed that Beynon enlisted with Queen's Own Rifles (subsequently named the 54th Battalion) and was killed on September 2. The Canadian champion, J. S. Morrison, sent a newspaper clipping to the *American Chess Bulletin*. The latter's November 1918 issue (Vol. 15, No. 8, page 232) reprinted the news along with the fine illustration of Beynon that we reproduced at the beginning of this column:

The first chess player of prominence on this side of the water to fall victim to the ruthless warfare overseas was Frank Percival Beynon, well known in Metropolitan chess circles as a member of the Manhattan Chess Club, for which he played on a number of important occasions, and, subsequently, as a member of the Marshall's Chess Divan, where he was active at the time he answered the call.

Beynon, a "cheerful and magnetic personality," was survived by two brothers, two sisters, and his mother Mary Edith. The exact circumstances of Beynon's death remained unclear. According to [Veterans Affairs Canada](#), Beynon was buried in Dury Mill British Cemetery in Pas de Calais, France. The location of the cemetery is close to Dury Memorial, a World War I Canadian war memorial that commemorates the actions of the Canadian Corps in the [Second Battle of Arras](#) that took place on September 2-3. It is very likely that Beynon was one of the 5,600 Canadian soldiers killed in this heroic battle that pushed back the German defensive lines.



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