

# BARRAGE

The RCA Museum News

THE RCA MUSEUM  
CANADA'S NATIONAL ARTILLERY MUSEUM



LE MUSÉE NATIONAL DE L'ARTILLERIE DU CANADA  
LE MUSÉE DE L'ARC

January 2018

## National Certification for Medals Group of Brigadier Harold Seaman Griffin, DSO, ED, RCA



- Distinguished Service Order (George VI)
- 1939/45 Star
- France and Germany Star
- Defence medal (silver-Canadian issue)
- Canadian Volunteer Service medal and clasp (silver)
- 1939-45 War medal (silver-Canadian issue)
- 1953 Coronation medal
- Efficiency Decoration (GRI) top bar Canada
- Netherlands Order of the Orange Nassau Officer's grade with rosette



In September 2017, this impressive medal group was deemed and certified to be of National Importance and Outstanding Significance to the History of Canada by the Movable Cultural Properties Export Board. The medal group was first loaned by the daughter of Brig. H.S. Griffin, Jane Westropp, for display at the RCA Museum, then offered for donation in 2010.

The RCA Museum then went through a three year process of seeking National Designation as a Category A Institution under the Movable Cultural Properties Act which it received in 2013. The museum became eligible to submit holds on significant collections under threat of export, receive support to acquire artifacts and collections deemed to be of National Significance and to have donors receive exceptional tax benefit for their donation. However, in 2013 the processes and support of the Movable Cultural Properties board was frozen and therefore applications of

consideration for Collection Certification could not be submitted. This was lifted in 2015 and the process began to assemble the justification for Certification.

For this Certification a collection must have “A close association with national life, aesthetic qualities, value in the study of the arts or value in the study of the sciences.” The Griffin application focused on the first two criteria. The application was based on the biography of the original owner of the medal group, Brigadier Harold Seaman Griffin, DSO, ED, RCA and his association with the events of 6 June 1944 and the landings of the Canadians at Juno Beach.

**Harold (Hal) Griffin** was born in Truro, NS on 22 September 1904. In 1919 he was awarded the Scouts’ highest gallantry award, the Bronze Cross for life saving. In 1939, Harold worked with Wood Gundy in Montreal and was a Major in the Militia. He initially served with 1 RCHA and was Battery Commander of A/B Battery in France in June, 1940.

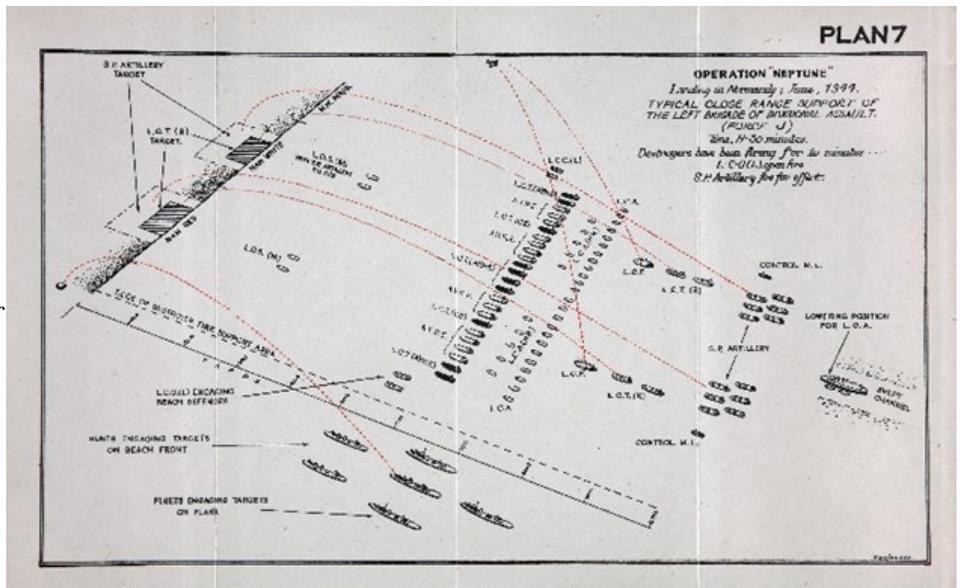
By 1944, Harold was a Lieutenant-Colonel (LCol) commanding 14<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment. For D Day he was appointed Commander of the 14<sup>th</sup> Artillery Group with 67 of the 96 105mm self-propelled guns or “Priests”, tasked to support the 8<sup>th</sup> Brigade landings. To do this he was landed on the beach with the CO of the infantry; his guns were supporting. As LCol Griffin came ashore he was shot in the head by a German sniper, being saved from injury by his helmet.

For his outstanding coordination of artillery support on that day, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order. His citation reads:

*Lieutenant Colonel Harold Seaman GRIFFIN landed at ST. BERNIERE, France, at H plus 25 minutes on “D” Day 6 June 1944. In spite of heavy mortar and small arms fire from beach strong points, he quickly and successfully deployed both Field Regiments in his artillery group and rendered effective and accurate support of the forward companies of the 8 Canadian Infantry Brigade. Later, on the same day, in spite of the strongly held radar station, which dominated his position, he moved his batteries forward under heavy shell fire to support the advance of the 9 Canadian Infantry Brigade through and beyond the objective of the 8 Brigade.(insert: See Plan 7)*

*Between 7 and 10 June 1944 in support of the 9 Canadian Infantry Brigade at LES BUISSONS, acting as the CRA’s representative, he so employed the available artillery resources of seven regiments that the counter attacks of 21 Panzer Division were successfully repulsed.*

*Throughout the first sixty days of the Normandy Campaign, Lieutenant Colonel Griffin has, by his consistent courage, cool judgement and quick actions, though constantly under fire, afforded effective and aggressive artillery support, materially contributing to the successful advances of the Brigades with which he has been concerned.*



Promoted to Colonel on 16 February 1945, Harold became Commandant of A3 Canadian Artillery Training Centre in Shilo in May. He was awarded the Order of Orange Nassau for his part in the liberation of the Netherlands and for his assistance to an orphanage run by nuns. In October 1945, Harold returned to civilian life. In 1947 he moved to Halifax as manager of a new Wood Gundy branch. Harold continued to serve in the Militia, retiring as a Brigadier. He passed away on 24 May, 1961.

By Kathleen Christensen

## M20 75mm Recoilless Rifle

The RCA Museum has two M20 75mm recoilless rifles safely kept in our M101 storage facility. Both rifles are in good shape and appear fully intact, minus the optical sights. The M20 is a single-shot, air-cooled, breech-loaded weapon. It was commonly mounted on an older WW1 M1917A1 stand. We also have one of these stands stored with our two M20's. The M20 typically could also be mounted on vehicles, often on Jeeps. It was designed as a lightweight weapon to protect infantry and light armored units.



The M20 is an American made and designed artillery piece. A small number were used in Europe and the Pacific during WWII. During the Korean War the M20 was mainly used for direct fire support. The US forces produced and deployed this weapon system in large numbers during the Korean War. In May 1951, during the Korean War, 2PPCLI replaced all older 17 pounder anti-tank guns with the American M20 75-mm recoilless rifle. The 17 pounders were cumbersome, weighing three tons, and were difficult to transport over mountainous terrain. Conversely, the M20 was very light, weighing only 114.5 pounds and could be easily transported over rough terrain. It was also used with some success by the US during the Vietnam War.

Similar to the 106mm Recoilless, the M20 75mm Recoilless used a perforated, paper-lined, metal cartridge case. The rifle was rear-vented, and upon firing, propellant gases would escape through the breech, greatly reducing recoil. This removed the need for any recoil system and greatly reduced the weight of the weapon. Due to the back-blast upon firing, the gun had to be installed with sufficient clearance to prevent any damage to the vehicle. It is 6 feet ten inches long. It has a range of 7,300 yards, with a caliber of 75mm and a cartridge of 75mm by 408mm. It fired three common rounds including High Explosive, HEAT (high explosive anti-tank) and Smoke. The round weight was between 9-10 kilograms.

### Director's Note

I am happy to report that attendance at the museum is up substantially this year over the past four years. Attendance is up 27% from last year, and 30% from 2015. Total attendance for 2017 was 6,739 visitors, or 1,421 visitors ahead of last year. In 2016, we had 5,318 visitors, and in 2015 we had 5,184. While these numbers are positive, attendance numbers are roughly 10% short of attendance numbers from 2011 with 7,011 and 2012 with 7,772.

There are many reasons for these increased numbers. Our in-house temporary display on Vimy Ridge attracted many visitors. The Anne Frank exhibit has drawn in visitors during our off season which goes from October to December. Our website also received two hundred thousand hits over the course of 2017. More hits to the website means more visitors to the museum. In 2016, the museum updated our local road signage. Hopefully these road signs are more effective at drawing in visitors. Also, we had a large and effective outreach campaign in 2017 where tens-of-thousands of potential visitors saw our displays and then, hopefully, also came to our museum.

## On Display at the Museum – EX 1/2 Rifle

The EX series were the trial rifles bought directly from FN, Fabrique d'Herstal small arms manufacturers in Belgium, around 1954 for the Canadian military. Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia were working together to standardize a new automatic rifle. Each country did troop trials of the rifles and shared findings. After the troop trials, the early EX rifles became drill purpose rifles, meaning they were not to be shot. This likely entailed shortening the firing pin and marking of some parts, including the painted white band seen on the rifle and magazine shown below from our museum's example.



Canada procured 1700 EX-1 rifles, and a further 300 EX-2 rifles. The feedback from the troop trials, as well as the reports from the other nations, eventually led to the production of the FN (C1) rifle which was produced from 1956 to 1968. Some design failures led to changes in that rifle in about 1960, at which time the modified rifles were designated FN C1A1. Australia and the UK also built their own versions of the rifle, however the US, which had tested theirs under the T48 moniker, had decided to go in a different direction, instead adopting a magazine fed variation of their M1 rifle as the M14.

I had noticed a while ago that the museum's example was actually marked EX 1/2, as opposed to the normal EX-1. I asked various people who know the FNs, and no one had heard of this variation. I posted the photos on a credible website, and learned that the EX 1/2 designation may be indicative of an EX-1 that has had some of the variations of the US T-48 incorporated into it. That would primarily be the arctic trigger guard, which folds into the pistol grip: this was something which Canada did adopt into our small arms. I note the trigger itself is also different from the EX-1 and EX-2 series rifles. Clive Prothero-Brooks, Collections Manager at the RCA Museum, had noticed the arctic trigger feature when we were taking the photos.

This example from the RCA Museum's collection is a very rare and, up to now, publicly undocumented variation of the EX series of rifles. While 99.99 percent of people will never be interested to that level, and while three lines on a bilingual display sign in the museum cannot do full justice to this particular rifle's rarity, know that this one is very unique.

By Rob Love

## FWD Artillery Tractor 1920s

The RCA Museum staff are committed to completing accurate and professional restorations of guns and vehicles. They have advanced this commitment for more than fifty years. To that end, we currently have in our collection a 1920's FWD Artillery Tractor that requires restoration of the four wooden wheels and the cargo box composed of softwoods and hardwoods. A truck such as this could pull most WW1 Canadian artillery, such as the 4.5 Inch Howitzer, the 18 Pounder and even the 60 Pounder. Please note the picture to the right, of the tractor currently held in our M101 storage facility.



We contracted a wheelwright to construct the new wooden wheels which are rather complex. These wheels should be completed this winter. Rob Love, our mechanic, will need to build a new cargo box. A lot of expense is needed to fabricate the metal brackets that will hold the cargo box together.

We are happy to report that the RCA Senate has agreed to pay \$6,000 towards the cost of restoration. I would like to thank them for their generous support of this project.

In the 1980s we had this tractor running. However, the original wooden wheels have become brittle and unsound with age, and the cargo box has long since been discarded. Note the photo of the tractor from 1986.

Once complete, we can use this vehicle for outreach events. Restoring this tractor would certainly enhance our artifact collection and help us to better explain the history and heritage of the RCA. This restoration will add to the enjoyment of Canadian military history and act as a catalyst for remembering our unique military past.

## Lynx Repaint

We try to restore a number of vehicles and guns each year. Recently, we gave one of our Lynx vehicles a new coat of camo paint. The old paint was fading and it just did not look museum quality. Our mechanic, Rob Love, completed the task of repainting the vehicle which is located at the South Entrance of CFB Shilo. This is one of two, tracked Lynx's in the RCA Museum's collection. Rob added a traditional camo pattern in green and black. The attached machine gun contains a fake barrel but looks rather nice from a distance.



The tracked Lynx was the main Canadian Command and Reconnaissance Vehicle from 1968 to 1993. It is based on the M113 but with a much smaller hull. It was used by armoured and infantry reconnaissance units as well as artillery forward observers. Standard armaments included one .50 cal heavy machine gun and one 7.62mm machine gun. The maximum speed of this vehicle was 70 kilometers an hour. Our second Lynx is currently sitting in our main storage facility. We hope one day to get it running again. It would require a new engine, lots of small parts, and significant mechanical work.

## Early Canadian Gunner Medals

Confederation era military medals have significant historical relevance today. At the RCA Museum we are fortunate to have a wide variety of medal sets from Confederation to the present day. The majority of the medal sets in our collection cover WW1 and WW2, with notably fewer medal sets coming from before or after the two world wars.

The Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery was founded in 1871 and one of the first medals to be awarded to Canadian Gunners was the Canadian General Service Medal. It was awarded to Imperial and Canadian Forces that took part in the Fenian Raids of 1866, the Fenian Raids of 1870, and/or the Red River Expedition in 1870. This medal included three separate bars, one for each of the events above. The medal was not authorized for distribution until 1899, or twenty-nine years after the last event anniversary.



Left: The Canada General Service Medal with Fenian Raid 1866 and 1870 bars; Right: North West Canada Medal with Saskatchewan bar.



At our museum I found three examples of this medal. We have one Canadian General Service Medal on display in our National Artillery Gallery which includes the Red River 1870 bar. We also have two more medal sets which include the Canada General Service Medal. One is part of a six medal set that includes British medals from the Crimean War. The second collection is a pristine two piece medal set, including the Canada General Service Medal with Fenian Raid 1866 and 1870 bars, and a North West Canada Medal with Saskatchewan bar.

When I first looked at the two-piece medal set it appeared to be a reproduction. It seemed too perfect and pristine. However, upon further review, I found that this medal, along with an accompanying North West Canada Medal, belonged to one of the early founding members of the Royal Canadian Artillery, Lt Col. C. E. Montizambert. He was known as one of the most distinguished 19<sup>th</sup> century Canadian Artillery Officers, who Commanded "B" Battery in Kingston and was Commandant of the Royal School of Artillery. A photo of him from our archives is shown above and to the left.

Lt. Col. C. E. Montizambert's medal set was donated in 2013. They were professionally cleaned and lacquered by a silversmith. The lacquer should keep the medals from tarnishing for a number of decades. Some time ago these medals found their way to a collector in the UK, who later auctioned them off to a private collector in Canada. After noting the connection to the Royal Canadian Artillery, the Canadian collector donated the medal set to the RCA Museum. These medals certainly help document the early history of the RCA, notably the Fenian Raids from 1866-1871 and the Northwest Rebellion in 1885.

The RCA Museum has applied for funding to update our CF Heritage Gallery which is one of our permanent galleries. Part of the Gallery update includes adding a number of flat vertical display cases to showcase our substantial medal collection. This should provide an excellent opportunity to display a large variety of medal sets, including those that contain early Canadian Gunner medals, such as the two piece set originally belonging to Lt Col. Montizambert.

## Holiday Season



Our WW2 White Scout Car (which was decorated for Christmas), was on display in the Brandon Santa Claus Parade and the Carberry Santa Claus Parade. We also placed it in front of our M101 storage facility, next to Base Headquarters.

## On Display at the RCA Museum



We recently replaced our temporary Vimy Ridge exhibit with guns and vehicles that came into Canadian service during the 1950s to 1970s. We included, from the left a M38A1CDN2 Jeep, M113A2CDN Armoured Personnel Carrier (APC), C1 105mm Howitzer and Grizzly Armoured Vehicle General Purpose (AVGP). The earliest coming into service was the C1 105mm Howitzer in 1956 and latest was the Grizzly in 1976, with the Jeep and M113 coming in during the mid-1960s. These vehicles will be on display in The Gregg Gallery, until the end of April.

## JANUARY 27

### INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY

“On January 27, 1945, the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp in Poland— where more than one million people, most of them Jews, were murdered in its gas chambers during the Holocaust – was liberated by the Soviet Army. In 2005, that day was designated as the annual International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust. Each year, Canadians and individuals all over the world take this opportunity to remember the victims of the atrocities of the Holocaust and reflect on the dangers of anti-Semitism.” Government of Canada: Canada and the Holocaust.

In recognition of International Holocaust Remembrance Day, the RCA Museum has received permission from the Anne Frank House to extend the “Anne Frank: A History for Today” temporary exhibit until Friday, 26 January 2018 which will be free in honour of this day. This exhibit includes a 28 minute introductory video, historical and pictorial timeline as well as a number of related artifacts and a model of the Anne Frank House where Anne and her family hid for nearly two years.



The Anne Frank exhibit has been extremely well received with over 1300 visitors from 4 October to the end of December. The exhibit has also been particularly successful with schools as it fit directly into the Grade 5 and Grade 11 curriculum requirements for the study and understanding of the Holocaust in the Canadian and world context. Over 20 school tours were given involving more than 500 students. Students were shown the video, and toured through the exhibit. Tours also included the museum’s galleries with a focus on Canada’s contribution to the liberation of Europe and in particular of the Netherlands where Anne’s hiding place was located.

By Kathleen Christensen

## Contact Us

Telephone : (204) 765-3000 Ext. 3570  
 Fax: (204) 765-5289  
 Email: [rcamuseum@forces.gc.ca](mailto:rcamuseum@forces.gc.ca)  
 Website: [rcamuseum.com](http://rcamuseum.com)  
 Facebook: RCA Museum

**The Royal Canadian Artillery  
 Museum (The RCA Museum)**  
 Building N-118  
 CFB Shilo  
 P.O. 5000, Station Main  
 Shilo, Manitoba R0K 2A0

**Musée de l'Artillerie royale  
 canadienne**  
 (Musée de l' ARC)  
 Bâtiment N-118  
 BFC Shilo  
 C.P. 5000, succursale Main  
 Shilo (Manitoba) R0K 2A0

Telephone : (204) 765-3000 poste 3570  
 Facsimile : (204) 765-5289  
 Courriel : [rcamuseum@forces.gc.ca](mailto:rcamuseum@forces.gc.ca)  
 Site Web : [rcamuseum.com](http://rcamuseum.com)  
 Facebook: RCA Museum

## Pour nous joindre

Director/Directeur  
 Senior Curator/Conservatrice principale  
 Assistant Curator/Conservatrice adjointe  
 Collections Manager/Gestionnaire des collections  
 Admin Coordinator/Coordonnatrice administrative  
 Front Desk/Reception

Andrew Oakden  
 Kathleen Christensen  
 Dayna Barscello  
 Clive Prothero-Brooks  
 Cheryl van der Raadt  
 Kathy/Anita

Ext/poste 3763  
 Ext/poste 3531  
 Ext/poste 3577  
 Ext/poste 3076  
 Ext/poste 4563  
 Ext/poste 3570