

# BARRAGE

The RCA Museum News



October 2018

## Award of Excellence for the RCA Museum



On 12 September 2018, we were informed that the RCA Museum had been chosen to receive the *Award of Excellence* from the Association of Manitoba Museums. We are receiving it for our series of four temporary exhibits on WW1. In the received email, our “exhibits were well researched and organized... and thoroughly presented the impact of the First World War.”

Kathleen Christensen, our Senior Curator, accepted the award during the Association of Manitoba Museums Conference on Friday, 21 September 2018. These four temporary, in-house exhibits happened over a period of five years. On my end, I would like to thank Kathleen Christensen for all her hard work putting these exhibits together. I would also like to thank everyone on my team that helped put these together. I have been around for three of these exhibits and they take a lot of work, especially during the last two weeks before the opening. In the end, they are certainly worth it and they generate interest in the history of the Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery.

In early May 2019, we plan on displaying a large D-Day exhibit on Juno Beach. Over the coming winter, our curators will be busy working on this new project.

## Honest John

Has Canada ever had nuclear weapons? The short answer is yes. From 1963 to 1984, Canada used four nuclear weapon systems representing hundreds of US controlled nuclear warheads. While Canada had access to nuclear weapons, it never had sole possession of them. All the nuclear warheads were the property of the United States. One of these weapons systems was the 762-mm rocket, or Honest John free-flight rocket system that was used by Canada from 1960 to 1970. We have an example of one of these systems in our gun park shown to the right.

During the 1950s, Canada started the process of acquiring weapon systems capable of supporting nuclear warheads. These different systems were used by the air force, navy and army. The US government started developing the Honest John weapon system in 1950. They were designed as a relatively simple, robust, unguided 762-mm free-flight rocket that could carry nuclear warheads as well as conventional non-nuclear warheads, including high explosives and chemical. There was also a practice flash spotting inert training rocket. Canada regularly fired the training rockets. The rocket was transported in three parts, including the motor, fins and warhead. Assembly and placement of the rocket took less than 20 minutes before firing.



The Honest John was reliable, easy to train on, and had a range of 42,650 yards with nuclear yields from 10 to 40 kilotons. The impact of the Korean War and Communist threat advanced the need for these weapon systems. The US government sold the Honest John with nuclear capability to ten NATO nations as well as to France. Canada matched the British Army who also purchased Honest John systems. In 1962, the US introduced the updated M50 or MGR-1B rocket which Canada purchased. They also introduced the M386 launcher which Canada purchased.

Canada had two Honest John batteries within the Royal Canadian Artillery. The Surface-to-Surface Missile (SSM) Batteries were nuclear based artillery units within NATO. 1 SSM Battery and 2 SSM (Training) Battery were created on 15 Sept 1960. Initial training was completed by November 1961, and by December 1961, 1 SSM was deployed to Germany. 2 SSM remained in Picton, Ontario until moving to Shilo, Manitoba in August 1962. Initially, 1 SSM was composed of 250 all ranks, and 2 SSM 170 all ranks. Both batteries had similar training programs. However, the role of 2 SSM was to provide replacement soldiers for 1 SSM in Germany. Nuclear warhead training was only available in Germany and nuclear warheads were only available in Germany. In 1964, stationed in Germany, 1 SSM received certification as nuclear capable which granted them access to US nuclear warheads. In September 1968, 2 SSM was disbanded and 1 SSM was reduced in strength.



The photo to the left shows 2<sup>nd</sup> SSM traveling through downtown Brandon in two columns of 5 ton trucks, led by two Honest Johns. The photo likely dates from the late 1960s. In the background is the famous Prince Edward Hotel that stood on the corner of Princess Ave and 9<sup>th</sup> Street in Brandon until it was demolished in 1980.

Canada had a total of 4 MGR-1 Honest John's armed with a total of 16 nuclear warheads deployed with 1 SSM in Germany. In September 1969, the Canadian government decided to permanently stop the use of all nuclear weapon systems, including the Honest John. On 1 June 1970, 1 SSM was disbanded and ended with a final parade. As part of our history, the SSM was an elite organization with an exceptional reputation within the Canadian forces.

## Operations in Afghanistan

The RCA Museum is short on artifacts related to Operations in Afghanistan. We need more Gunners to donate artifacts to create an outstanding Afghanistan display. Recently our Collections Manager, Clive Prothero-Brooks, came across a box of Afghanistan artifacts. The box contained 155mm casings, tactical sunglasses, empty cases, plaques and at least one notable photograph. It shows 2 RCHA firing an M-777 light 155mm howitzer during Operations in Afghanistan, shown below.



On 11 September 2001, al-Qaeda terrorists launched a series of attacks on the United States that resulted in the deaths of almost 3,000 people. 9/11 marked the beginning of a committed effort to dismantle al-Qaeda and end terrorism. The Taliban in Afghanistan harbored and trained al-Qaeda terrorists. In October 2001, the U.S. and its allies invaded Afghanistan to overthrow the Taliban government and demolish al-Qaeda.

In October 2001, Canada's first contribution to the war came from the Navy patrolling local waters in the region. Followed by commandos from the elite Joint Task Force 2. In early 2002, Canada committed a battle group to fight in Afghanistan. C Battery, 1 RCHA was deployed with the initial battle group and was equipped with four 81mm mortars. C Battery took part in airmobile operations which included defending Kandahar airfield from a potential Taliban attack.

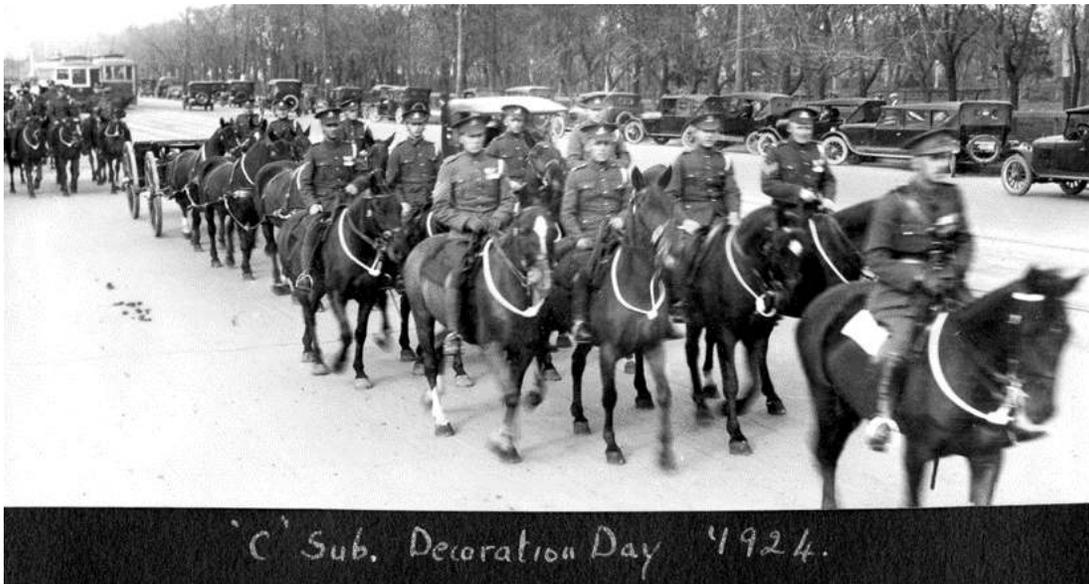
After the fall of the Taliban government in December 2001, the United Nations authorized a NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to help stabilize the country and create a new Afghan government. The initial ISAF Canadian contribution included over seven hundred soldiers in Kabul, the capital, and an additional two hundred stationed outside Afghanistan in Southwest Asia. CF troops patrolled Kabul and helped rebuild the Afghan Army.

From 2003 to 2004, 2 RCHA deployed the LG1 105mm howitzer in operations in Kabul. In late 2005, the Taliban underwent a resurgence in the Kandahar region. In response, Canadian troops were redeployed to Kandahar. The number of Canadian troops increased to 2,300. Canadian infantry, artillery and armour took part in ground operations against the Taliban in Kandahar. Canadians fought in large offenses and certainly became targets of attack.

In February 2006, 1 RCHA was reequipped with the M-777 light 155mm howitzer. From 2006 to 2011, each Canadian battery rotation would deploy four to six M-777 howitzers against the enemy. Each rotation would consist of Regular Force field regiments and supporting reinforcements from the Reserve Force. During a six to eight month operational tour, a battery would fire thousands of 155mm rounds. Two-gun deployments were the norm with each firebase providing support to Canadian and allied operations.

The Canadian combat role in Afghanistan ended in 2011. The majority of Canadian troops exited Afghanistan. Those that remained focused on retraining the Afghan Army and police force. In March 2014, Canada ended its military mission in Afghanistan. Operations in Afghanistan came at a great cost. In total, 159 Canadian soldiers died in Afghanistan, including nine Gunners. Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) caused the majority of the casualties. It was the longest continuous deployment of Gunners in Canadian history. More than forty thousand CF members served in Afghanistan from 2001 to 2014.

## RCHA on Parade



Probably the best way to display a saddle is to put it on a horse!

In August 2018, we had a notable museum curator visit our museum. He mentioned that he liked our military saddle which is prominently displayed on a life sized horse in our temporary gallery. The saddle is WW1 vintage and in excellent condition. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the RCHA relied on the horse to pull artillery and for general transportation. The horse also provided the artillery with fast moving mobile fire support. The horse was an integral and beloved part of the Regiment.

After WW1 there was a general trend to mechanize and remove the horse from the Regiment. Indeed, the advent of tanks during WW1 gave military planners a glimpse into the future. During the interwar years, there were major restrictions on military spending, which meant artillery batteries across Canada were slow to remove the horse. The outbreak of WW2 ultimately ended the use of the horse.

In our archives, I found a report from then Maj J. H. Roberts on mechanization and the future of horses in the artillery written in 1935. Maj Roberts, later to be Major General Roberts and one of our Great Gunners, certainly believed any future war would rely heavily on fast moving armoured vehicles. In part, he wrote, "In the past, horse artillery have been the most mobile branch of their arm and it is probable that the mechanized artillery embodied in their mobile division... will perpetuate the horse artillery tradition." The artillery needed self-propelled artillery and armoured vehicles of all types. The horse had served its purpose.

I found some photos of C Battery, RCHA on parade in Winnipeg dated 1924. These parades and photos are of a bygone era. The general public had the opportunity to see military horses in action during parades and musical drives which were common during the 1920s and into the early 1930s. During musical drives, 6-horse gun teams galloped with skillful precision pulling 18 pounders with limbers. They would crisscross through an intricate pattern all to the delight of large crowds. Military bands would play during these events. Parades and musical drives were excellent recruitment tools for the military. The last musical drive was performed in Winnipeg by C Battery, RCHA, commanded by then Major J. H. Roberts. It was a different time during which the horse played an integral role. While we still have a collection of saddles, the horse is no longer in the picture.



## Opening of Gunner Exhibit at Fort Henry

On Monday, July 9<sup>th</sup>, Fort Henry in Kingston, Ontario had their official opening of their new Gunner exhibit. Fort Henry is a superb historic fort that has a long artillery history going back to the War of 1812. These days Fort Henry is a busy tourist attraction with more than one-hundred thousand visitors entering the gates each summer. Note the picture of Colonel Commandant, Brig General (Ret'd) James Selbie and I, taken after the official opening.



Brig General (Ret'd) Ernie Beno started this project back in 2015. He forged a link between the RCA Museum and Fort Henry. Three years later, Fort Henry's new Gunner exhibit tells the story of the Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery from pre-Confederation to post WW2. In 1871, Canada created its first permanent artillery units, including A Battery at Fort Henry in Kingston and B Battery at the Citadel in Quebec City. These initial batteries would provide the framework of the RCA. Gunners in Kingston played important roles during both world wars. Post WW2, Gunners were trained in other parts of Canada. However, Kingston has a long and renowned artillery history.



The gunner exhibit is located in one room on the second floor of the fort, note the picture above. It contains many small artifacts from post-Confederation, WW1 and WW2. The RCA Museum provided guidance on the history of the Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery. On our end, we assisted with the text panels, which required many rewrites. We also provided photos, curatorial assistance and loaned 55 artifacts. We hope their exhibit will be well appreciated by hundreds-of-thousands of visitors over the years to come.

## CANADIAN INGENUITY IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

In WW1 Canadians often played a leading role in the development of military innovations that would later be used for civilian purposes. Many of these innovations are highlighted in the RCA Museum's latest temporary exhibit, 1918: The Last 100 Days.



### Communications

As Counter-Battery Commander, **General Andrew McNaughton** made use of his scientific knowledge from civilian life. His innovative use of early microphones for artillery "sound ranging", to identify and target enemy guns, led to improved audio transmission during the radio age that followed the war.

Continuing the legacy of Alexander Graham Bell and Guglielmo Marconi, **Reginald Fessenden** developed one of the early Continuous Wave Sets, leading to the development of radar and wireless telegraphy to modern wireless communication (ie. cell phones).



### Chemistry

Before the second gas attack at Ypres, **Sgt. Henry Knobel**, a civilian with a background in chemistry, instructed soldiers to soak a cloth in water or urine and then to cover their nose and mouth to protect them from the gas. That same month, **Captain Cluny MacPherson**, Chief Medical Officer of the 1<sup>st</sup> Newfoundland Regiment, developed the first gas protection of the war. His Hypo helmet or hood was chemically treated with glycerin and sodium thiosulfate which neutralized chlorine gas. Over 2.5 million were produced. This innovation saved millions of lives and contributed to civilian personal protection use after the war.



### Medicine

**Major Lawrence Robertson** of the Canadian Army Medical Corps performed some of the first direct donor-to-patient transfusions in the field. It is estimated that this technique tripled the survival rate of wounded soldiers in his care. **Norman Bethune**, a medic in the First World War, would develop the first mobile blood units in the Spanish Civil War.

The **Canadian War Amps** organization was an amalgamation of several war amputee groups from across the country. **Lt-Col Sidney Lambert** was an Army Padre from the Calgary Regiment who lost his leg at Ypres in 1916. He conceived the idea of a national association of veteran amputees who would help other amputees adapt to their new reality and advocate for the seriously disabled.



### War Art

The Canadian War Memorials Fund, begun by newspaper millionaire, **Max Aitken, Lord Beaverbrook**, in 1916, funded over 60 Canadian, Commonwealth and British artists resulting in 800 works. These works included scenes from the home front factories to the very front-lines, later affecting the development of modern and post-modern painting of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. It is a program that continues today.

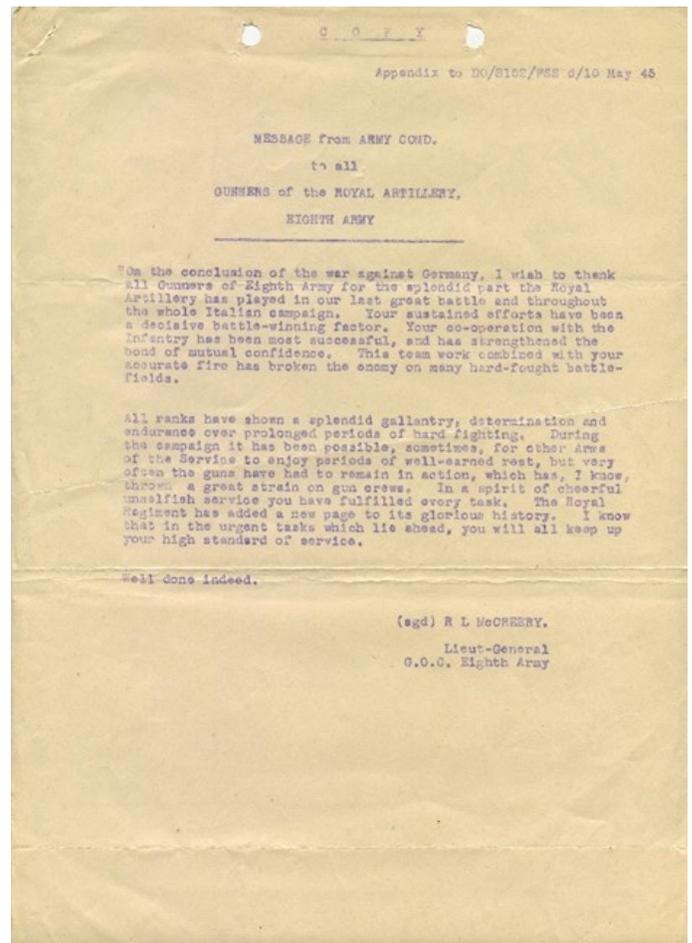
## VE Letter from Commander of 8<sup>th</sup> Army to all Gunners

On 8 May 1945, the Allies formally accepted Germany's unconditional surrender that marked the end of World War II in Europe. In the RCA Museum archives, I found a copy of an original typed letter dated 10 May 1945 from the Commander of the Eighth British Army Lieutenant-General R. L. McCreery to all Gunners of the Royal Artillery, Eighth Army. In the letter, he vigorously thanked Gunners for their service during the Sicilian and Italian Campaigns. In his words, Gunners displayed "splendid gallantry, determination and endurance" during these campaigns. Adding, "in the spirit of cheerful unselfish service [Gunners] fulfilled every task" to become a "decisive battle-winning factor" leading to victory in Europe.

A little background, the Eighth Army was active from 1941-1945, and was a field army of the British Army fighting in North Africa and then in the Italian Campaign. After victories in North Africa, Allied leaders decided the next operation would be in German occupied Italy. A major Allied campaign was required to both push Italy out of the war and to tie up German forces which would relieve pressure on Russia and prevent a buildup of German forces in France before a subsequent Allied landing. Units within the Eighth Army came from a number of nations, including Canada; the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division fought in Sicily and Italy with the artillery playing a decisive role.

The Eighth British Army Commanded by General Bernard Montgomery, including the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division commanded by Major General G. G. Simonds, along with the U.S. Seventh Army commanded by Lieutenant General George S. Patton, would lead the fighting in Sicily on 10 July 1943. Fighting on the island was bitter and the Italian troops were first to surrender. On 25 July 1943, a coup drove Mussolini from power which subsequently resulted in the surrender of the Italian forces to the Allies. By 17 August 1943, after five weeks of persistent fighting the German forces were defeated in Sicily. During the operation, Canadian Gunners proved instrumental in breaking the Italian and German defences.

The combined Allied forces under Montgomery moved to liberate mainland Italy on 3 September 1943. The Eighth Army, including in part, the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division and the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Army Tank Brigade, fought well-trained, dug-in German forces. In December 1943, Canadian soldiers, including the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps Artillery, were instrumental in the Battle of Ortona. In August 1944, Canadians played a critical part in breaking German defences across the Gothic Line. Fighting continued in Italy until the end of April 1945. At peak strength, over 76,000 Canadian troops were in Italy. Over 25,000 Canadians were wounded in Italy, including 5,900 that lost their lives. During operations, Canadian Gunners fought bravely, upholding the great reputation of the Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery.



## Austin Threshermen's Reunion 2018

We had another successful year at the Austin Threshermen's Reunion from July 25<sup>th</sup> to July 29<sup>th</sup>. Note the photo of our vehicles loaded on transport ready to be delivered to Austin. This year we erected modular tenting and included four vehicles and one gun. We included our popular M113 with a 50 cal. machine gun on top, M37, Ford Lynx, White Scout Car, and an L5 105mm howitzer.



We always have a strong crowd of visitors that otherwise would probably not visit our museum. Our outreach exhibit is always well received by thousands in Austin.

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## Pour nous joindre