

BARRAGE

The RCA Museum Newsletter

THE RCA MUSEUM
CANADA'S NATIONAL ARTILLERY MUSEUM



January 2016

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR:

I am thrilled to lead The RCA Museum and help tell the story of the Canadian Gunner. It is an absolute privilege to be associated with a museum that for over fifty years has been a repository of artillery knowledge.

Indeed, I hope my involvement will promote the study and enjoyment of Canadian military history. Please feel free to contact me directly.

Andrew Oakden, Director

The RCA Museum

REACHING OUT AROUND THE PROVINCE:

In 2015, The RCA Museum went on the road to many communities, bringing the Artillery story and our collections to audiences as far as Selkirk.

Beginning with Heritage Days at the Manitoba Museum in May, the Acting Director brought our traveling exhibit and WW1 reproduction uniforms and gas masks to share with over 3000 visitors in Manitoba's Provincial Museum.

Six vehicles participated in Brandon's Traveler's Day Parade with staff, members of the Royal Canadian Artillery Regiment, our summer student, Nicolas Simonds, and volunteers driving and providing support to this event, which was seen by an estimated 10,000 from the Westman region.

In July, the museum was invited to the Commonwealth Air Training Plan Museum, to be part of their bi-annual Air Show of historic WWII airplanes along with our WW2 guns and vehicles brought along to the site with assistance from staff and volunteers.



Also in July, the museum hosted participants in the Brandon Open Doors event. It had its vehicle storage space at M101 open to the public for the first time since its opening in 2008. Visitors were awed by the scope of the museum's vehicle and gun collection laid out within the space as well as the workshop and equipment available to museum staff to care and restore this hallmark of its collections.

At the end of July, once again the museum took part of its gun collection to the Thresherman's Reunion at the Manitoba Agricultural Museum in Austin.

The display of the WW2 Field Artillery Tractor, Limber and 25 Pounder Gun, next to the M777 that 1RCHA brought along from the Base, drew a larger part of the 10,000 person crowd. The 25 Pounder, Fat and Limber then went on to Lower Fort Garry for their wartime commemorative event, We'll Meet Again, along with two trucks and White Scout Car as well. Nicholas Simonds, (our summer student) was dressed in a reproduction WW1 uniform in the 35 degree heat. He kept cool inside with water and admiration by the visitors and other interpreters. Clive Prothero-Brooks provided expertise at Parks Canada's version of The Antique's Road Show, answering questions about people's wartime and military memorabilia.

The museum was also proud to provide a UN Iltis and Provost Jeep for the Canadian Citizenship Ceremony hosted by the Base in August. Over 400 people attended the two ceremonies in which new Canadians gave their Oath of Citizenship. In honour of this occasion, The RCA Museum will now offer free admission to new Canadians in the first year of citizenship.

VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARD—BOB RIDDLE

Bob Riddle was awarded the Manitoba Museums Association's Volunteer of the Year Award for the year 2015.

Since 2008, Bob has regularly committed a day per week to a variety of projects that enhance the preservation of our collection, vital to the military history it is our mandate to protect. Due to his long term dedication to our museum, the museum is able to produce the award winning visitor experience we are known for.

The RCA Museum's role is: "to collect, preserve and display artifacts and memorabilia pertaining to The Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery". One of Canada's leading military museums, it houses the largest artillery collection in Canada. Building on the strength of our collections, the RCA Museum is an award winning institution, recognized by provincial and national tourism awards.



Bob Riddle has a personal interest in military history and in its' preservation. Averaging 200 volunteer hours each year, he devotes much of his volunteer time working with our curatorial staff in preventative conservation projects. One of his major tasks is the design and construction of custom artifact storage. Adhering to proper care and handling procedures and using archival quality materials, he builds specialized containers for some of our most delicate artifacts; including our historic military uniforms, some of which are over 100 years old. He has worked with our mannequins, upgrading their coverings to archival standards. This ensures that our uniform collection can be stored and displayed safely. Bob also sorted and packaged our photographic negative collection for cold storage, resulting in the exponential slowing of any deterioration. Often these "behind the scenes" projects are less recognized. However, they are at the very heart of what we do, with Bob at its centre.

Through the ongoing donation of his time and enthusiasm for military history, the many hours Bob has volunteered will continue to have an almost immeasurable impact. For his long term commitment to the preservation of our collections, his volunteer efforts will ensure RCA Museum's continued success in years to come.

DESIGNED FOR VICTORY: WOMEN, WAR AND THE VOTE

The RCA Museum is currently planning its first temporary exhibit developed in partnership with another Museum and the Brandon University History Department.

Initially begun as a simple loan of the Costume Museum of Canada's exhibit of women's wartime vintage clothing of the 40s and 50s, The RCA Museum worked with their volunteers to expand this to include WW1 clothing as well as interior war period. In discussion of how war influenced the fashion and lives of women in Canada and particularly the Prairies, Kathleen Christensen, The RCA Museum Acting Director, and Maralyn MacKay Hussain of The Costume Museum, recognized that Manitoba is reaching a significant centenary of the first women gaining the vote, greatly accelerated by their contribution to the war effort. It was decided to pursue this storyline within the exhibit.

Necessity brought about a greater partnership. Research needed to be done to develop this exhibit and Dr. Gervan Fearon, President of Brandon University and Director on The RCA Museum Board, brought together the museum with the University's History Professor, Dr. Rhonda Hinthner. Dr. Hinthner and the History Department were seeking mentorships on behalf of their students for the Public History aspect of their study. Brooke Drummond, a student of this program, was selected to work with The RCA Museum and The Costume Museum of Canada, providing the detailed research and text for the exhibit.

The exhibit will open 26 February 2016 and will be on display until 24 June 2016.



Shown above are women factory workers in a munitions plant in Quebec during WW1.

WWI CADILLAC TRUCK :

In August of this year, The RCA Museum acquired an exceptional addition to its vehicle fleet from the Manitoba Automobile Museum in Elkhorn, Manitoba. It is a WW1 Army truck that was reputedly used at Camp Hughes. Although yet to be confirmed, in addition to attributed information in the records at the Manitoba Automobile Museum, there is some evidence of this history on the truck itself. Army paint is present and noticeable on woodwork, undercarriage and parts of wheel spokes and crank handle. The chassis shows early evidence of being modified from a touring car to its status as a truck. Many vehicles at Camp Hughes were modified in the same way in their mechanical workshops. It was most likely used move troops and supplies around the camp.

Cadillac made many vehicles for the American army during WW1. Only one other WW1 Cadillac was listed on the United States Registry of Historic Vehicles and has not been modified from a touring car. A website dedicated to this vehicle claims it to be the only WW1 Cadillac in existence.

After this use it was owned privately by and Chinese Laundry and Osbourne Garage whose name is still in evidence in the final paint layers on the rear box. It was acquired by Manitoba Automobile collector, Isaac Clarkson, the originator of much of the collection at the Manitoba Automobile Association. The Automobile Museum recognized that given its history and deteriorated state that The RCA Museum was in a better position to take on its care and restoration. After a few months of negotiation, the Manitoba Automobile Museum freely transferred ownership of the truck to The RCA Museum at no cost.



Here is a description of its current condition.

- Upholstery has burst and is missing a seat.
- One wood hoop on the box is missing.
- Most of the canvas is present, but its roof is gone.
- Cab woodwork has extensive weather damage, and it's cab windshield frame is gone. There are missing gauges, wiring and side lamp.
- Engine has minor missing parts; the engine is seized. Fuel system is present but requires a total restoration. Electrical system has been replaced inappropriately.
- Brakes, radiator, lighting, powertrain, exhaust systems are present but not functional. Some lighting have incorrect replacements.
- Tires are present but have irreparable damage/aging. Wheels are relatively solid with original spokes.
- Body work is stable, but damaged, especially the front fenders and battery box areas.

1912 CADILLAC TRUCK (PHOTOS)



Another view of the 1912 Cadillac Truck now moved to our Vehicle Restoration Center. The work has already begun. Within weeks of its arrival, our mechanic already sourced new tires for the vehicle.

When we first saw it at the Manitoba Automobile Museum in Elkhorn, Manitoba, we were told it was an ambulance. We have since determined that it likely was not an ambulance, and we are now calling it an "army truck".

The 1912 Cadillac "Army Truck" shown here as it arrived to us. Restoration has now begun in The RCA Museum Curatorial Center.



The RCA Museum is the home of an historic artillery scrapbook, entitled Souvenir of Dominion Artillery Camps, dated 1889-1912. The bound volume contained original watercolours, pencil sketches, historic photographs, original signatures and documentation from this formative period of The Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery (RCA).



Figure 1: Initial condition (2007): loose pages, brittle paper with minor tears along edges

Although revered and protected, the scrapbook was accessed regularly over the decades (for example, during Junior Officer Courses) and was in poor overall physical condition. The binding had deteriorated; some pages and items were detached at risk of loss. A number of previous repair attempts were of questionable quality. Any future handling could jeopardize both the scrapbook's integrity as well as the significant individual components.



Figure 2: Initial condition (2007); binding disintegrated; detail of damaged spine and prior repairs

Museum staff decided a full conservation assessment and treatment was required to stabilize the scrapbook and preserve its historic contents. In the fall of 2010, we applied to the Canadian Conservation Institute (CCI) for a conservation treatment for the Souvenir of Dominion Artillery Camps. CCI is a centre of expertise in conservation and conservation science, located in Ottawa. It provides professional services to heritage institutions, conducts research and promotes the field of conservation through collaboration with Canadian and international clients and colleagues.

Fortunately, our proposal was accepted by CCI and a detailed examination and conservation treatment for the Souvenir of Dominion Artillery Camps was completed over the past 5 years. Under the direction of the Christine McNair (Book Conservator) and Greg Hill (Conservation Scientist, Paper), the volume was dis-bound and each individual element was examined and treated. All elements were surface cleaned, tears were repaired, and damaging masking tape removed. Due to the presence of iron gall ink throughout, washing and de-acidifying paper elements was not possible. In limited instances, photographs were lifted from the page, flattened and reattached. Constructed with a wide variety of media, each component presented inherent challenges to the overall preservation of the scrapbook. Our scrapbook proved to be an extremely complex project, requiring the collaboration expertise of CCI's conservators in books, photographs and works of art on paper. Seven interns also contributed to the project, totaling over 700 treatment hours.

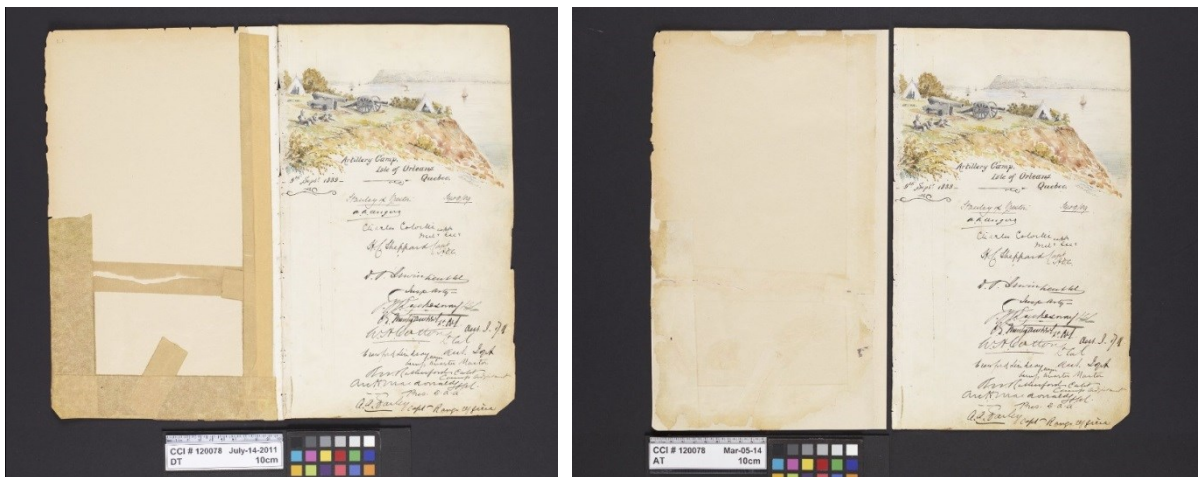


Figure 3: Before (2011) and after (2014); masking tape removed, title page (CCI)

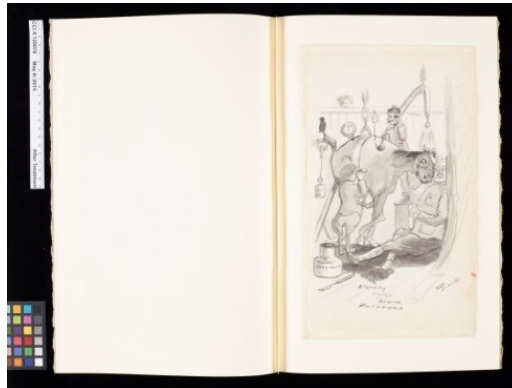


(CCI)

Figure 4: Before (2007) and after (2014); pages with photographs, inks and botanicals

After the pages were treated, the final step was rejoining them into a finished product. Due to the brittleness of the pages and narrow margins, rebinding the pages was not feasible. After discussing the pros and cons of our options, the decision was made to house the pages in a fascicule system. Each of the original pages is mounted on a new page, protecting them from further handling. The pages are bound in folders (fascicules) and stored in a custom built clamshell box. The original bound volume is stored along with the fascicules, to maintain the original integrity of the scrapbook as best we could.

Figure 6: Treated page mounted on new page; fascicules bound in folders, custom enclosure (CCI)



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