

# BARRAGE

The RCA Museum News

THE RCA MUSEUM  
CANADA'S NATIONAL ARTILLERY MUSEUM



September 2017

## WW1 German Field Gun Restoration

The 7.7 cm Feldkanone 96 neuer Art was employed in every major theatre of action by the German Field Artillery during WW1. In 1914, Germany started the war with 5086 of these guns and ended the war with 3744 still in service. The RCA Museum has two examples of the German 7.7 cm FK 96 n/A.

Our first example of the 7.7 cm FK 96 n/A is currently on display in our temporary exhibit *In the Footsteps of Vimy* pictured to the right. The gun has substantial WW1 battle damage. Some component parts are either missing or significantly damaged. Long ago it was painted grey and likely used as a monument. Now significant rust deposits have accumulated.



Our second example is in better shape and for a number of years was displayed inside the RCA Museum, pictured to the left. Over time the original wooden wheels have deteriorated to the point of requiring new ones. About two years ago we contracted an accomplished wheelwright to make two new wooden wheels for this gun. We recently received the new wheels and placed them on the gun pictured to the left. There are not many wheelwrights around these days. We were very fortunate to find someone who could construct wooden wheels suitable for WW1 artillery.

The 7.7 cm FK 96 n/A was basically an older 7.7 cm FK 96 gun, with an updated breech, carriage and modernized recoil system that was similar in design to the French 75mm field gun or British 18 pounder field gun. The 7.7 cm FK 96 was the older model that did not have a modern recoil system. The updated n/A version was an early attempt to include a modernized hydro-spring recoil mechanism which increased the rate of fire and provided greater firing stability. The updated gun started production in 1904.

The 7.7 cm FK 96 n/A had a shorter range than the French 75mm or 18 pounder but was not as heavy as the other guns, which made it by comparison more mobile on the battlefield. During the early stages of WW1 the

7.7 cm FK 96 n/A served Germany well as a mobile field gun, which had similarities to the British 13 pounder. The 7.7 cm FK 96 n/A fired a 15 pound projectile with an effective range of 5,500 meters (6,000 yards) and a maximum range of 8,400 meters (9,200 yards).

The picture to the right shows our 7.7 cm FK 96 n/A after being sandblasted and painted with black paint. Rob Love, our Vehicle Mechanic, completed these stages. The new wooden wheels also received a coat of black paint. Later in the day the gun received a second coat of brown paint and the wheels received a coat of green paint. We decided the final coat would be in traditional camouflage.



Our Collections Manager, Clive Prothero-Brooks was tasked with painting the multi-colored camouflage pattern to the gun. Note the newly painted WW1 gun with a fresh coat of camo paint. At the current stage the front seats are not restored and require some new padding and external leather covering. The leather should last for a couple of decades. The last task will be to re-install the lateral breechblock. We were able to find the original breechblock and Rob has it ready to reinstall. This will add to the presentation of the gun. Once this is done it will be returned to the museum Gun Park.



As director of the museum, I have now had the opportunity to examine the restored gun. This project has been a long time in the making and it's exciting to see it come together. I am delighted with the high quality of workmanship on this gun restoration. Thank you Rob Love and Clive Prothero-Brooks for all your hard work on this project over the past couple of months. I am also impressed with the high quality of the wooden wheels produced by our contracted wheelwright. The restoration of the gun will only add to our impressive and varied collection at the RCA Museum. Additionally, I hope visitors to the museum will appreciate this gun for years to come.

### **Director's Note**

At the museum we hired two hard working summer students, Britney Weber and K. Solbeck, who helped manage our collection of artifacts. Almost weekly we receive new artifacts and over time we need help documenting, storing and preserving these items. I certainly hope Britney and K. enjoyed their time spent working at the museum.

I am delighted to report that visitor numbers to the museum are up 20% this year over last year. In July alone we had over 1,500 recorded visitors to our military museum. I would attribute these improved numbers to a variety of factors. We have added new content to the museum. Our in-house *In the Footsteps of Vimy* exhibit was very popular. We also had a traveling exhibit *From Vimy to Juno* that attracted media attention. Our website continues to receive a lot of hits each month. We had over one hundred thousand hits to our [rcamuseum.com](http://rcamuseum.com) website in the past six months. The weather this summer has certainly been favorable. We had many effective outreach displays this year that certainly drew attention to our museum, including at the Royal Manitoba Winter Fair, Brandon's Traveler's Day Parade and Summer Fair, Shilo's July 1<sup>st</sup> event, the Austin Threshermen's Reunion and Shilo Family Day.



## Canada Day July 1<sup>st</sup>



The RCA Museum was busy on July 1<sup>st</sup> with free admission to the facilities resulting in 363 recorded visitors. We also had two vehicle displays at the base headquarters parking lot. Also parked on the lot were 300 plus vehicles participating in a car show. Our light vehicle display had a 25 pounder with limber and FAT, our Ford Lynx, Bren Carrier, M38A1CDN2 Jeep and our 1912 Cadillac Truck shown in the image above. In this display the majority of artifacts came from the WW2 period. We also had two demilitarized Mark 2 Sten Guns and one Bren Machine Gun for public viewing. Children could take pictures behind the machine guns or next to the Bren Carrier wearing vintage WW2 uniforms and helmets.

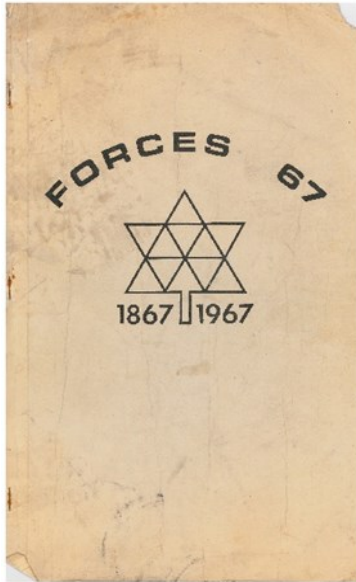


Our second display, shown above, had our M109, Grizzly AVGP, M113 ATV, White Scout Car and Stuart Tank. Our Stuart Tank is not currently running and had to be pulled into position by our newly acquired airport vehicle, a Clark mule. Additionally, to create an interactive experience, we opened the back of the M113 ATV for visitors to enter and stand behind the demilitarized 50 cal machine gun.

We hope that through outreach interactives we are able to inform large sections of the public about the military technology, culture and heritage of Canada, with special emphasis on the Royal Regiments of Canadian Artillery and the Province of Manitoba. Outreach activities give us a chance to reach visitors that otherwise may never see our artifacts and maybe then they will be inspired to visit our museum or website and find out more about the topic. We thank all of the visitors who came to Shilo's 150 Celebration event. We certainly enjoyed it.

## Forces 67

In our archives, I found a typed speech for 'Forces 67' - a parade marking 100 years of Confederation held at the Dryden Memorial Arena in Dryden, Ontario. Forces 67 was one of many celebrations that occurred across Canada in 1967. The event had music including the Lincoln & Welland Regimental Band and a trumpet band from the 8<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment RCA. It also had a Salute to the Veterans, military demonstrations including Ripple Fire, unarmed combat demonstrations and drill demonstrations which were all performed by the 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery.



Canada has changed a lot since 1967. Our lifestyles, attitudes and values are different. We are similar, but not the same after fifty years. In a handwritten note, on the inside cover of the document, it says, "In the past, we have found that small children are frightened by the firing of rifles during the Ripple Fire. If you think your child will be frightened, it would be beneficial if he or she was taken into the lobby." Also, in the notes, "smoking is permitted only in the lobby." These days the Canadian Forces rarely fires rifles in public and there is no smoking allowed in lobbies, especially next to frightened children. I will say what has not changed about Canada is our love for our country.

At the RCA Museum, we try to blend the history of The Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery with provincial and national military history. We also do our best to inform the public about the 200,000 plus Canadian Gunners that have served Canada since 1855 without glorifying the tragedy of war. As mentioned in the speech, while the 19<sup>th</sup> century was relatively peaceful for Canada, this certainly was not the case during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1900, Great Britain, with the assistance of Canadian troops, was engaged in a costly war with Boer farmers in South Africa. For the first time, Canada sent soldiers to fight in foreign lands.

In 1914, Great Britain still had Dominion over Canadian foreign policy which meant when Great Britain declared war on the German Kaiser, Canada automatically followed suit. Canada proved itself as a nation during WW1, contributing vast numbers of soldiers and supplies. Canadians fought under Canadian command which included the capture of Vimy Ridge. Certainly a strong sense of nationalism developed from Canada's participation in WW1. This nationalistic spirit fostered the Balfour Declaration of 1926 and the Statute of Westminster in 1931 which legally made Canada legislatively independent and self-governing with full control of domestic and foreign policy.

Forward 21 years and Britain, with the assistance of Canada and other nations, was once again embroiled in warfare; this time against Nazi Germany. In 1939, Canada declared war on Germany as an independent country. Similar to WW1, vast numbers of Canadians served on land, sea and air taking part in the Dieppe Raid in 1942, the Italian Campaign starting in 1943 and D-Day landing in 1944, just to name a few. Just five years after the Allied victories in Europe and the Asia-Pacific in 1945, Canadian troops, assisting the United Nations, fought bravely in the Korean War from 1950 to 1953.

During the first fifty odd years of the twentieth century, Canadian troops fought on foreign soil in four wars that were remarkable events in the development of our nation. The closing remarks of the Forces 67 parade certainly fit with any Canada Day 150 celebration today:

"In these times of change, the Canadian Armed Forces remain as a bastion in the defense of this great country and will continue to distinguish themselves in our second century as they did in our first."

By 1967 Canada had a lot to be proud of. Fifty years later, after the Forces 67 parade has long been forgotten, and while our lifestyles, attitudes and values have changed, we remain patriotic, with pride for our nation, for our military history and for our Canadian Armed Forces.



## The Harold E. Wright Collection

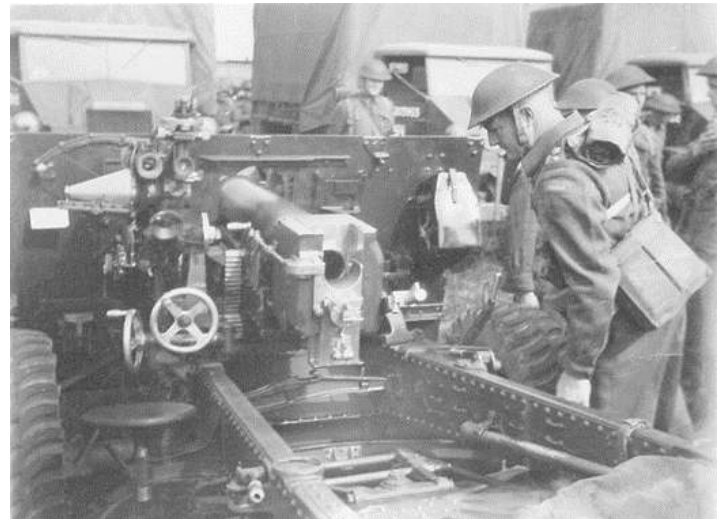
Years ago the RCA Museum received a box containing a significant number of artifacts that belonged to the late Brigadier General Harold E. Wright. The box was sent to us by his daughter, Marilyn Janay. At the start of the Second World War, then Major Harold Wright, served as second in command of the 6<sup>th</sup> Canadian Field Regiment part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division. The collection of artifacts we received contained hundreds of photographs mostly in three photo albums dated from 1939 to 1942. One photo album dating from March 1941 to July 1942 was particularly engaging. Major Wright was stationed in Britain when the photos were taken.

Great care went into constructing Brigadier General Wright's wartime photo albums. It seems that at any given time, he would take out his camera, point-and-shoot, and capture a quick snapshot of posed military colleagues, scenic urban or rural settings, or images of the war effort. Sometime after taking the pictures, either during the war or after, he packed these albums full of pictures, and then probably filed them away as a keepsake to his wartime experiences.

Looking back 75 years, these photographs tell a fascinating story. Each photo represents a mini-slice or thread to reveal a general theme. Together they become an animated, yet informal essay on one man's selective experiences during WW2. It is clear by the photo record, he took great pains to take photos that exemplified the Canadian gunner experience in Britain during WW2.



The RCA Museum has a rather large and varied collection of artifacts. A significant portion of our collection are WW2 artifacts, including many guns and vehicles. Many of the same guns and vehicles we use for outreach events to reflect the spirit of the WW2 gunner are photographed in Brigadier General Wright's album, such as a Bren Carrier, Field Artillery Tractor with limber and 25 pounder, Bofor 40mm gun, and 15 cwt trucks. Note the picture to the right of then Major Wright inspecting a 25 pounder gun. The gun in the picture is almost identical to our museum example housed in our National Artillery Gallery. Note the unique platform below the gun that allowed the gun to traverse 360 degrees. The initial issue of 25 pounder guns came in early 1940. The gun in the picture certainly appears brand new and ready for the war effort.



The majority of the photos show the RCA in field training. Of note, Brigadier General Wright took many photos of Canadian gun positions and gunners on the move. There are numerous pictures of Canadian soldiers competing in track and field, including sprinting and tug-o-war. He took a photo of bombed commercial buildings in Portsmouth dated 31 August 1941. He also snapped photos of various London streets, the Tower of London, and the Thames. He has numerous photos of grinning military associates, some with captions below the photos with nicknames, standing in front of local hotels, private dwellings, rural roads and farm fences.

To try and keep this article short, I can only show a few of the photos from the hundreds in the collection. The photo below on the left shows one of Canada's great wartime commanders, General Henry D. G. "Harry" Crerar dated March 1942. At the time of the photo, General Crerar commanded I Canadian Corps, later to assume command of the First Canadian Army in March 1944.



General Crerar is standing second from the left. At the RCA museum, we are fortunate to have a number of artifacts that belonged to General Crerar, including a number of field and mess uniforms, personal honors and awards, as well as personal photographs. Conversely, the picture above on the right, shows then Major Wright bunkered in an observation post.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Canadian Field Regiment was in part tasked with defending Britain from a possible German invasion. This began a long period of training and settling in to the routine. Gunners provided anti-aircraft defence as the Battle of Britain was fought in the skies from July to October 1940. Canadian gunners also helped deal with the aftermath of German bombing raids, the Blitz from September 1940 to May 1941, which are demonstrated in his photos below.



In 1942, Wright was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and took command of the 11<sup>th</sup> Army Field Regiment, RCA in Britain. He later led the 11<sup>th</sup> Army Field Regiment during the Invasion of Sicily and Italy, and during the liberation of North-West Europe. This collection of photos provides an excellent firsthand perspective on the experiences of one Canadian soldier. For more WW2 photos, please visit our museum website at [www.rcamuseum.com](http://www.rcamuseum.com).



## Austin Threshermen's Reunion 2017

The RCA Museum was fortunate to be asked again to participate in the Austin Threshermen's Reunion held from July 27<sup>th</sup> to July 30<sup>th</sup> – over four hot summer days.



The Threshermen's Reunion is a fun, family-oriented celebration of Manitoba's agricultural heritage. The event site covers many acres and visitors have lots to see. Every day there is a parade of historic agricultural tractors in front of a large crowd of a thousand or more. The parade lasts for over an hour and there is certainly a lot of community spirit and appreciation for our proud agricultural heritage. This year's theme was vintage John Deere tractors. Our RCA Museum display of Canadian artillery fit in nicely with this event and we certainly enjoyed the four days.

The day before the event started, Rob and I completed the setup which included constructing two sections of modular tenting with attached cam netting. With temperatures over thirty degrees we certainly needed a lunch break to cool down. After lunch we added a gun-pit using sandbags which housed a deactivated 50 cal. machine gun. We also positioned all the vehicles and guns; set up our signage, ladders, ropes and barricades.

We wanted our display to catch everyone's attention and show some artillery pieces that have never been brought to Austin before. Rob twisted my arm and I agreed to bring the M109 which certainly drew a lot of attention. We also brought crowd favorites such as one of our Jeeps, a 15 cwt WW2 truck, and a 25 pounder with limber and field artillery tractor. Rob also brought a few artifacts out of his collection to support the display, including a C1 105 Howitzer with Douce-and-a-half and a WW2 Bofors 40mm gun.

Our display was manned each day by two museum staff. Visitors certainly enjoyed viewing inside the M109 and going behind the 50 .cal in the gun pit. This year the event attracted about ten thousand visitors over the four days, and many of these visitors saw our rather extensive exhibit situated near the grandstands. The Austin event proved to be an excellent opportunity for us to reach visitors that otherwise might never see our museum. I would like to thank everyone on my staff that attended and made this an excellent outreach event.

From June 12<sup>th</sup> to August 25<sup>th</sup> 2017, the RCA Museum hosted the national travelling exhibit *From Vimy to Juno*.



## How will you remember?

In communities across Canada you can find monuments to fallen Canadian soldiers from past wars. They serve to remind us of the sacrifices made by Canadians long ago. In less than a generation, Canada fought in two world wars on foreign soil resulting in the death of over one hundred thousand Canadians – about half died on French soil. To remember this great sacrifice Canada built a number of monuments across Europe, including the Vimy Memorial located on Hill 145 at Vimy Ridge, that opened at the height of the Depression in 1936.

Today, exhibits such as *From Vimy to Juno* help tell the story of Canadian sacrifice and remembrance of those that fought for Canada during past wars. The exhibit focuses on the experiences of Canadian soldiers during two key battles: the Battle of Vimy Ridge and Juno Beach. These two battles are certainly part of our national identity.

On 10 September 1939, one week after Great Britain declared war, Canada declared war on Nazi Germany. Canada entered WW2 with a strong patriotic spirit. Canada's participation in WW2 was extensive with over 1.1 million Canadians wearing a military uniform out of a total population of 12 million. Canadians participated in all theatres of war on land, sea and air.

*From Vimy to Juno* contains a number of panels that address Canadian involvement during WW2, including D-Day. Canada was tasked with taking Juno Beach during the Normandy Landing on June 6, 1944. It was the job of Canada's Third Division, composed of fourteen thousand Canadian troops, to storm the beaches of Juno Beach while facing heavy machine gun fire and other arms. Ultimately, the Allied landing at Normandy paved the way for the liberation of France, the liberation of Europe, and the defeat of Nazi Germany.

The national traveling exhibit originated from the Juno Beach Centre that opened its doors in 2003. Located on Juno Beach, this centre stands as a monument to Canadian soldiers that died in France. The closing panel in the exhibit asks visitors to remember and reflect upon Canadian wartime involvement and recognize that this could happen again. The exhibit certainly added to the visitor experience and we will miss having it in our museum.



## THE BEGINNING OF MODERN CAMOUFLAGE

Kathleen Christensen

In the RCA Museum's collection there are rare examples of original camouflage from the First World War. In addition, two guns have recently undergone restoration to the colours of that conflict.

Camouflage today is scientifically designed and includes equipment from fatigues, to netting, to vehicles. Canada is known for highly scientific and effective digital design of the camouflage pattern on its soldier's combat fatigues or "Cadpat" (Canadian Disruptive Pattern). This design is considered military equipment and its use is protected by Section 419 of the Criminal Code.

However, at the beginning of the First World War, some armies still wore highly visible uniforms. The French Army went into the field with blue tunics and red trousers, the Germans with their distinctive pickelhaubes. This quickly changed as the war went into the trenches with all combatants adopting a "drab" colour for their uniforms. Keeping hidden from enemy fire, whether at sea, across the land or in the trenches became a matter of not just victory but survival.



(17cm German Trench Mortar)

The question was how to disguise anything from the frontline soldier to a battleship; the innovative answer was with art. New painting methods of pointillism and cubism became militarily useful in the "art of concealment". Artists, known as "camoufleurs", were recruited by both sides to design and construct these special projects. These included those already famous; French gunner and artist Lucien-Victor Guirand de Scévola, British Naval Officer and artist Norman Wilkinson, American artist Barry Faulkner and sculptor Sherry Fry as well as German artist Franz Marc.

*This (camouflage) process had a very useful purpose: to make artillery positions invisible to reconnaissance planes and aerial photography by covering them with canvases painted in a roughly pointillist style and in line with observation of the colors of natural camouflage (mimicry) (...) From now on, painting must make the picture that betrays our presence sufficiently blurred and distorted for the position to be unrecognizable. The (D)ivision is going to provide us with a plane to experiment with some aerial photographs to see how it looks from the air. I'm very interested to see the effect of a Kandinsky from six thousand feet.*

**Franz Marc, Letters from**



(7.7cm Feldkanone 96 neuer Art)

Large equipment including guns, vehicles and tanks were painted in muted and confusing patterns to allow them to blend into the muddy landscape. With the use of aerial photography in counter-battery, camouflaging whole gun batteries became more important. This concealment was particularly important at Vimy Ridge where "silent" forward 18 pounders were concealed until the attack was under way.

The best known artist-rendered camouflage of the war was that of the “Dazzle” ships. The artist credited with this successful design was Norman Wilkinson. “Wilkinson used distinctive colors—black and white, green and mauve, orange and blue—in geometric shapes and curves to make it difficult for the U-Boat gunner to determine the ship’s actual shape, size and direction.” (The Smithsonian) The art term for this confusion of colour and design was called “reverse perspective”; and it worked!

Camouflage for the Forward Observation Officer was also a matter of survival. The only thing of height in “No Man’s Land” were shattered trees, so hollow dummy trees were made to artist’s specifications. The real stump would be taken down at night and replaced with this hiding spot for the observer. Creating camouflage for snipers also became an art, often involving much creativity on the part of the sniper. Often they painted their own uniforms and equipment, resembling soldiers’ uniforms today.



**Anne Frank**  
A History for Today  
Une Histoire d'aujourd'hui

**Exhibition from Anne Frank House**  
**Une exposition de la Maison Anne Frank**  
**Amsterdam, The Netherlands**

1 August 1944  
*"My lighter, more superficial side will always steal a march on the deeper side and therefore always win."*  
Anne Frank

1 août 1944  
*"Mon côté insouciant, superficiel, devancera toujours mon côté profond et c'est pourquoi il aura toujours le dessus."*  
Anne Frank

4 October 2017 to 12 January 2018  
4 octobre 2017 au 12 janvier 2018

**anne frank house**

 THE RCA MUSEUM  
CANADA'S NATIONAL ARTILLERY MUSEUM  
LE MUSÉE NATIONAL DE L'ARTILLERIE DU CANADA  
LE MUSÉE DE L'ARC

 Anciens Combattants Canada  
Veterans Affairs Canada

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