

# BARRAGE

The RCA Museum News

THE RCA MUSEUM  
CANADA'S NATIONAL ARTILLERY MUSEUM



April 2020

## The RCA Museum Now Has Merchandise

For the first time, the RCA Museum is selling merchandise. Each item is adorned with our RCA Museum logo, making it a memorable addition for any collection. Our selection consists of various items from wearables to collectables. Whether you are looking for a souvenir or a gift, we have a variety of items to choose from.



We have coffee mugs and water bottles, for a convenient choice, along with shirts and baseball caps. We also have duffel bags, pens, mousepads, and so much more.

We look forward to seeing you at the RCA Museum, Canada's National Artillery Museum, in Shilo, Manitoba.

By Anita Michelsen

**The Royal Canadian Artillery Museum  
CFB Shilo, P.O. Box 5000, Station Main  
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**Website: [rcamuseum.com](http://rcamuseum.com)  
Facebook: The RCA Museum**

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

## The Crerar Caravan

In 1989, Colonel Walton, the CFB Shilo Base Commander, said the Crerar Caravan was “one of the most important Canadian military artifacts from the Second World War.” The caravan was the field living quarters of General Crerar, the First Canadian Commander of the Canadian Army during WW2.



General H. D. G. Crerar

Who was General Crerar?

General H. D. G. Crerar, PC, CH, CB, DSO, CD (1888 – 1965) was an outstanding military general who commanded the Canadian Forces during WW2. On 20 March 1944, “Uncle Harry,” as his staff called him, assumed command of the First Canadian Army. He was the first Canadian to achieve the rank of General while at the front.

General Crerar’s contribution to the war effort was immense. The battles that he led had a significant impact on the Allied war effort. He is one of the most decorated and revered military leaders in Canadian history. After fighting in two world wars and 35 years of military service, he retired from the military in 1946.



From his caravan, General Crerar conducted meetings with distinguished guests such as King George VI, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and General Montgomery. In September 1945, after the war was over, the Canadian military shipped the caravan to Canada. General Crerar planned for the vehicle to tour Canada to promote the military and then go to a major museum. Instead, the military processed the trailer for disposal. Note the photo of the caravan from 1945 to the right.



In 1980, Dr. Bill Gregg acquired the caravan from an auto-wrecking yard in Ontario. In 1986, Gregg donated the caravan to the RCA Museum, who then had the caravan refurbished. It was in bad shape with parts of the roof missing. In WW2, they placed the caravan on a Diamond T, six-wheeled, 4-ton chassis with a hard-topped cab. In the 1980s, during the restoration process, they used the same model of Diamond T chassis, but with the wrong cab. They used a soft-topped cab, instead of a hard-topped version. The RCA Museum now has a hard-topped cab to replace the soft-topped one. We plan to switch cabs when time and resources permit.

The caravan has its place in history – it’s notable and worth remembering. Regarding the caravan, Colonel Walton wrote: “it’s the memories of what happened inside, the ghosts of the past that make it so important.” It provides us with memories of General Crerar, and it helps us to make sense of the Allied victory during WW2. It reflects on many of Canada’s proudest moments and is an integral part of Canadian history and heritage.

By Andrew Oakden

## Brigadier Ziegler

Representatives from a small museum in Holland recently contacted us to ask for assistance with a display to honour a famous Canadian Commander that helped liberate Holland. Brigadier W. S. Ziegler, CBE, DSO, ED, BSc, had the distinction of accepting the surrender of 100,000 German troops in Holland on 4 and 5 May 1945. He accomplished this task at the age of 34. The RCA Museum has many artifacts that belonged to Brigadier Ziegler, including his medal set, a WW2 uniform, spectacles, photographs, letters and an unpublished autobiography titled "Why?"

I found a letter from Brig Ziegler to Major J. R. Fisher, the Regimental Major at the Regimental Headquarters in CFB Shilo, dated 13 May 1996. In the letter, Ziegler mentioned that he had recently completed "a very short resume" of his life. As a Gunner in the Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery, he considered the RCA Museum his museum. He mentioned donating his uniforms and accoutrements. He wanted to add a copy of his autobiography. He also offered to speak at the Junior Officers Course in CFB Shilo that year.

In early May 1945, Brig Ziegler learned the Germans were about to surrender. He stated, "I was given a segment of Holland to occupy... we settled in around Dordrecht, a sizeable city of 200,000 people." On 4 and 5 May, over two days and two visits, Brig Ziegler accepted the surrender of two German Corps Commanders.

On 4 May, Brig Ziegler arrived by Jeep to Leiden, a small town in Holland, to accept the surrender of 50,000 men from General Bertrand. He stopped at an apartment building with the German Corps Commander upstairs. The following extract is from Ziegler's unpublished autobiography:

*"I knew that he was a Lieutenant-General and I was merely a Brigadier, two ranks his junior. So I, at the bottom of the stairs, thought to myself what am I going to do? He is my captive, but he's also my senior. Anyway, I walked into the room and I gave him a sharp British salute. "Brigadier Ziegler." With that he replied: "Hail Hitler" with a Hitler salute."*

Brig Ziegler had to react. He quickly walked out and went back to his Jeep. However, the streets were full of Dutch citizens, and he could not drive away. Then, the General's aide came outside and asked Ziegler to go back inside to meet with the General again. Ziegler responded: "You go back and tell the General that I will see him when he learns how to salute properly." The aide said the General knows how to salute correctly and they went inside. Ziegler did not salute a second time. He wrote, "I just stood there and he saluted me with a smart British salute. I felt that was a victory!"

The next day, 5 May, Brig Ziegler met General Diestl south of Rotterdam to accept the surrender of another 50,000 men. The German Corps Commander had asked for permission to transport some German troops by barge back to Germany. Ziegler gave approval for the German soldiers to leave the next morning. The following day, Ziegler surprised the Germans by arriving at the barge to inspect the men.



A WW2 photo of Brig W. S. Ziegler.



Brig Ziegler in Holland dated 1945.

However, from three hundred yards away, he could smell an unbearable stench. Upon inspection, with German soldiers standing shoulder to shoulder in rows of 20, the men were the source of the terrible smell. There were no toilets on the barge. Brig Ziegler told the German General: *"You will disembark all these men immediately and you will march them back to Germany."* General Diestl tried to argue and then complied. Ziegler stated, had they sailed many would have perished during the three-day voyage.

These stories show a different side of the war. They provide a fascinating and vivid perspective of the war in Europe and of the liberation of Holland. At the end of the war, in May 1945, Brig Ziegler was a Royal Canadian Artillery Commander tasked with the liberation of Holland. He was only 34 years of age and Commanded six Regiments composed of 6,000 men. On 4 and 5 May, Ziegler received the surrender of German forces totalling 100,000 men. He later commanded a victory parade of 12,000 men from the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division in The Hague.



To the left, General Crerar talks to soldiers during the full Divisional Parade on 10 June 1945. Brig Ziegler is standing to the right.

VE Day marks an extraordinary moment in world history, and Brigadier Ziegler had a surprising role to play. For more information about Brig Ziegler, please visit our website. We have more details on Brig Ziegler in our Great Gunner section. The RCA Museum will open a temporary VE Day exhibit this summer, marking the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the end of the war in Europe.



To the left, Brig Ziegler at the RCA Museum is reviewing a temporary exhibit on him dated November 1986.



## Gunners Wanted

Back in 1986, Mr. R. Masterman donated a WW2 recruitment poster for the 13<sup>th</sup> Winnipeg Field Battery. The Gunners Wanted poster ties in nicely with Canada's recruitment campaign during WW2. It connects with the military history of Manitoba, including the history of the 13<sup>th</sup> Winnipeg Field Battery. It also links to the history of Camp Hughes and Camp Shilo.

The poster is straightforward. At the top, it says **ARTILLERY**, followed by the RCA Crest, then **GUNNERS WANTED**. Followed by **Join the Historic 13<sup>th</sup> WINNIPEG FIELD BATTERY Royal Canadian Artillery (Mechanized) Apply Between 8 A.M. and 8 P.M. at MINTO BARRACKS – British Subjects Between the Ages of 18 to 41. Physically Fit.**

The 13<sup>th</sup> Winnipeg Field Battery has a long and distinguished history. It is the oldest artillery battery in Western Canada, founded on 13 October 1871. Of note, the Canadian government founded "A" Battery in Kingston, Ontario and "B" Battery in Quebec City seven days later, on 20 October 1871.



The Canadian military used posters such as this to recruit, encourage wartime productivity, and to raise money through Victory Bonds or other programs. During WW2, more than one million Canadians answered the call and joined the Canadian Forces.

In our archives, I found an old newspaper clipping marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 13<sup>th</sup> Winnipeg Field Battery from 1921. The article mentioned that many of Winnipeg's most prominent businessmen and professionals served in the 13<sup>th</sup> Battery. It referenced that the 13<sup>th</sup> Battery served in the North-West Rebellion in 1885. Also, many from the 13<sup>th</sup> Battery served in the Boer War and WW1. The article mentioned that in 1921, the 13<sup>th</sup> Battery trained in Camp Hughes. In our museum archives, I found a photo of the 13<sup>th</sup> Battery training with an 18 Pounder from the 1920s, shown to the left.

At the RCA Museum, we have a permanent exhibit on Camp Hughes in our Manitoba Gallery. The original training camp opened in 1910. Over 38,000 Canadian Soldiers trained at Camp Hughes during WW1, including 25 thousand Manitobans. Camp Hughes held its last military training in 1933. In

1934, military training moved to Camp Shilo, approximately 10 km away.

The Gunners from the 13<sup>th</sup> Winnipeg Field Battery, like many others during WW2, trained in Shilo before being shipped overseas. I found a collection of photos of the 13<sup>th</sup> Battery in Camp Shilo. To the right, is a photo of NCO's from the 13<sup>th</sup> Winnipeg Field Battery standing to attention, dated November 1939.

Gunners have represented the 13<sup>th</sup> Winnipeg Field Battery since 1871. The poster is a reflection of this need for Gunners over the past 150 years. The 13<sup>th</sup> Battery has a long and proud history. I want to thank Mr. Masterman for this notable donation.



By Andrew Oakden

## 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Med. Regt. R. C. A.

At the RCA Museum, we have file cabinets full of WW2 regimental histories. We also have scrapbooks with regimental histories covering various periods. One notable collection is from the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Med. Regt. R. C. A. (1940 – 1945). When I first saw it, I mistakenly thought the “Med” stood for medical. However, the “Med” stood for Medium, or in this case, the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Medium Regiment, which was part of the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Army during WW2.

The 1st Med. Regt. sailed to England in late January 1940. From early 1940 to 1943, they remained in England. In October 1943, they fought in the Italian Campaign, landing in Augusta, Sicily. They fought in Italy with guns from the British 8<sup>th</sup> Army. They then went to Venafro, Italy and supported the American 5<sup>th</sup> Army. In December 1943, they moved to the Adriatic Front to support the Canadian 1<sup>st</sup> Division. In early 1944, they took part in the Battle of Monte Cassino and then back to the Adriatic Front. In March 1945, they left Italy and headed to France. They then crossed into Belgium and ended the war in Northern Holland.

The scrapbook is very impressive! It's the most thorough and comprehensive scrapbook in our collection. The album covers the full history of the regiment from 1940 to 1945. It contains hundreds of photos, illustrations, letters and artifacts, covering over one hundred and twenty pages.

The scrapbook opens with photographs and autographs of the regimental command team. It's upbeat and humorous at times. There is a photo of an overturned 18 Pounder Field Gun shown to the right, and invitations and acceptance letters to local garden parties. In England, prominent members of the community invited Canadian officers to social events. Included below is an illustration of one of the guns they deployed in England. In December 1941, the 1<sup>st</sup> Med. Regt. received new guns – the 5.5 Inch Howitzer.



Halfway through the scrapbook, the 1<sup>st</sup> Med. Regt. shifts to Italy. It starts with an original signed letter from Brig Brownfield to the Commanding Officer, LCol D. K. Todd. Dated 21 December 1943, he states: “I regret very much not having seen you in action... Best of luck—remember me to all your chaps and wish them luck from me.”



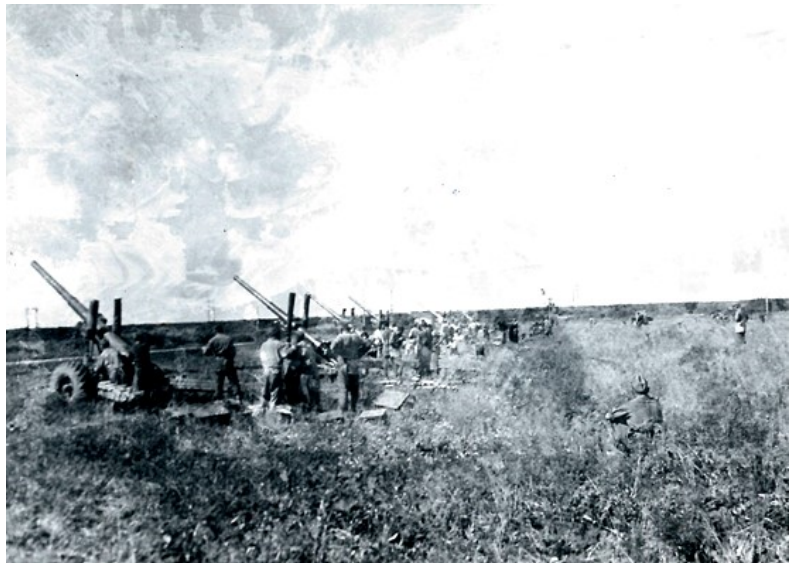
The scrapbook contains photos of Canadian Gunners in action. There is a full-page drawing of the Italian Campaign map, drawn by Capt. H. B. Trikes. Shown to the right, it shows the location of various battles across Italy and the location of the 1<sup>st</sup> Med. Regt. It's a fascinating snapshot of the history of the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Army in Italy. There is an exciting photo shown below, captioned: "picked up on outskirts of Pontecorvo 25 May 1944 the day the Recce Party took 38 prisoners!"



The 1<sup>st</sup> Med. Regt. participated in the assault on the Gothic Line in 1944. Newspaper clippings from the period help to document these historical events. The 1<sup>st</sup> Med. Regt. supported the infantry and tanks from American, British and Canadian units. During the Italian Campaign, the 1<sup>st</sup> Med. Regt. fired artillery day and night, bringing "considerable headache" on the enemy.

There are many examples of wartime propaganda, such as the famous Sam Levy pamphlets dropped by the Germans. There are darker artifacts such as an original German shoulder strap with the quote, "he was pretty dead."

The scrapbook then fast forwards to the end of the war in Holland. Note the photo of the battery in action to the right. Victory in Europe marked the defeat of Germany by the Allies. At this time, about 200,000 soldiers of the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Army were still in Europe, with many in Holland on VE Day. During WW2, over one million Canadians served, notably in England, France, Germany, Holland, Hong Kong and the North Atlantic Ocean. Canada lost 42,000 soldiers during WW2, with tens-of-thousands wounded or in prisoner of war camps.



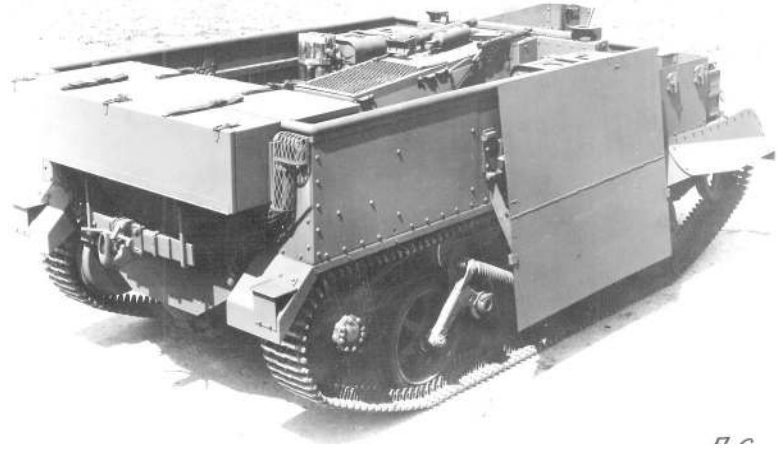
The 1<sup>st</sup> Med. Regt. represented the best of the Canadian artillery tradition. They received many honours and their share of loss and sacrifice. They were in Italy for almost two years and saw extensive action. They travelled across Europe and ended the war in Holland, which matched the experience of many regiments from the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Army. They both fought proudly and honourably.

By Andrew Oakden

## Universal Carrier

Kids call them tanks! But they are not tanks. They are lightly armoured, general-purpose carriers with a set of tracks instead of wheels. The tracks allow the vehicle to go almost anywhere. No roads were needed.

During WW2, Canadian manufacturers produced an estimated eight hundred and fifty-seven thousand military vehicles. This included approximately four hundred and ten thousand Canadian Military Pattern vehicles, three hundred and six thousand Modified Conventional vehicles, fifty thousand armoured vehicles and an additional ninety-one thousand miscellaneous vehicles. This last number includes 28,992 Universal Carriers produced in Canada. We currently have four of these Universal Carriers in our collection, with one on display in our museum and another 'runner' in our storage facility. We sometimes use the runner during outreach events, such as parades and fairs.



Ford Motor Company produced the Universal Carrier or Bren Gun Carrier, as it was commonly called. The carrier used a 4-cylinder V-8, 85 BHP engine. Fully equipped, this vehicle weighed about 9,800 pounds. Its most prominent feature was the tracks. In general, tracked vehicles had very low ground pressure and were suitable for soft surfaces such as mud and snow. The wide, low-profile carrier allowed for greater stability compared to a wheeled vehicle. During WW2, it was used by armoured reconnaissance units to transport troops, ammunition, and supplies. The infantry used it to deliver concentrated firepower to select-



ed locations. It also operated as a gun tractor for many weapons systems, including the 25 Pounder shown below.

Standard armaments, included: .303 Bren, .45 Sub MG, 2-inch mortar, smoke generator, three rifles, and grenades. The carrier had some armour protection, but not much compared to a tank. The front hull had 10mm of steel plate, and the hull sides had 7 mm. The rear also had 7 mm and bottom just 3mm. Other equipment, included: sig pistol, flags, tools, spares, camouflage net, wireless set, MG tripod, POW containers, rations, and anti-gas equipment.

By Andrew Oakden



## A Forgotten Campaign

One museum display that visitors overlook deals with the Aleutian Island Campaign. The display includes, in part, a 13th Infantry Brigade shoulder patch, Sergeant chevrons worn during the invasion of Kiska, a Japanese paybook, and two chopsticks. These items relate to the war against Japan during WW2. The shoulder patches and chevrons belonged to Canadian Sergeant Dick Diffenbaugh who participated in the Aleutian Island Campaign. He also recovered the chopsticks and paybook from the Aleutian Islands.



Everyone knows about the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941. This action brought the USA into the war. Yet the Aleutian Island Campaign is rarely mentioned. Five thousand Japanese troops occupied the Aleutian Islands for over a year. The Aleutian Islands are part of the Alaskan territory in the Pacific Theater. For the Japanese, controlling them meant the US could not mount an attack from the Pacific Northwest. For the Americans, controlling them meant the Japanese could not mount an attack from Alaska and then into the continental United States.

Japanese forces captured the islands of Kiska and Atta in June 1942. The Japanese were the first foreign power to occupy part of the continental US since the War of 1812. Back in 1942, the US only had a handful of men stationed on the two islands. The larger island, Kiska, functioned as a weather station. When the Japanese came, they took both islands, killing two, capturing seven, with one eluding capture. After the Japanese takeover, the US bombed the islands. They also established a naval blockade which sank Japanese warships. In May 1943, a minor US force landed on the island of Atta, surprising the small Japanese force and taking the island.

On 15 August 1943, Operation Cottage commenced to retake Kiska Island. The island was said to house a large Japanese force, over 5,000 troops. For three weeks, the US Air Force bombed the island. The US Navy also attacked with artillery. Tens of thousands of US troops landed on the island. In total, 34,421 soldiers landed, including 5,300 Canadians on the second day of operations. The US forces, included: 7th Infantry Division, 4th Infantry Regiment, 87th Mountain Infantry Regiment, and 1st Special Service Force. The Canadian 13th Infantry Brigade, which included Sergeant Dick Diffenbaugh, landed on the second day. The battle lasted for two days. The weather conditions were poor with thick fog. In the end, the US and Canada lost 32 men (28 US and 4 Canadian), with a total of 313 casualties. While the mission was successful, the island was unoccupied at the time of the invasion. The Japanese had vacated the island on 28 July 1943, three weeks before the attack.

Unfortunately, Allied intelligence was not reliable in this part of the world. Kiska Island was very remote and challenging to reach. The US believed the Japanese occupied the island and moved forward with the invasion. They did take the island, but it came with a hefty price: 313 casualties due to friendly fire, land mines, accidents, and booby traps. The operation was a complete embarrassment for both the US and Canada. The Allied soldiers ended up killing each other and not the enemy. Of course, history isn't all about victory. On occasion, there is failure. Sometimes, such as in this case, it's worth recounting the disappointments of the past. We have a small display honouring the men involved.

By Andrew Oakden

## DONATE

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I would like to support The RCA Museum with a monetary donation of:

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Payment Method:

Please send your donation by cheque payable to *The RCA Museum* – Box 5000 Station Main, Shilo, Manitoba R0K 2A0, Canada.

Your donation is important!

All monetary donations are appreciated and will be recognized in The RCA Annual budget.

Please check the following that apply:

1. I consent to my name being published on the RCA website.

☐ Yes ☐ No, I wish to remain anonymous.

2. I consent to be on The RCA Museum mailing list and receive the Quarterly Newsletter (Barrage).

☐ Yes ☐ No, I do not consent.

## Contact Us

## Pour nous joindre

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