

BARRAGE

The RCA Museum News

THE RCA MUSEUM
CANADA'S NATIONAL ARTILLERY MUSEUM



January 2020

Santa Claus Parade

On November 16th, we participated in the Santa Claus Parade in Brandon. This year, we had good weather during the festivities. In past years, not so much. We believe our parade entry was well received.



The photo on the left was taken during the parade. The photo on the right was taken at our M101 storage facility.

For the third time in four years, we received the "Best Decorated Vehicle Award." This season, we included one of our military jeeps kitted out with lights, a reindeer, a sleigh, and the CFB Shilo mascot, Juno. Base Headquarters supplied us with the reindeer and sleigh. The vehicle made it through the parade intact which is always good. I would like to thank all my staff and volunteers that helped decorate and those who participated in the parade. We had our parade vehicle on display in front of building M101 during the Winter holiday season.

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Museum Volunteer Receives Colonel Commandant Award

Deanne Gilbertson, a museum volunteer, recently received a Colonel Commandant Coin from BGen Selbie on 26 September 2019. In attendance were dozens of soldiers. I managed to take a photo of the event shown to the right. Deanne has done an excellent job unearthing artifacts in our collection, relocating them to better storage locations and updating our database. Basically, she sorted and stored 25 tri-walls of artifacts at M101. She then sorted another batch of tri-walls and organized a storage area. As Museum Director, on behalf of the RCA Museum, I would like to thank Deanne Gilbertson for her excellent work within our collection. She is doing a great job conserving our collection.

In turn, we are always looking for new volunteers to help with our collection. If you would like to volunteer, please come in and speak to us.



A Gunner Wedding with a C1 105mm Howitzer



We occasionally receive requests to have our artifacts at outreach events such as military weddings, retirement ceremonies and funerals. Veterans or serving soldiers can request to have one or more of our artifacts at special events. We try our best to accommodate. We have a number of artifacts that are commonly used, including; an M109 A4+ 155mm Howitzer, C1 105mm Howitzer, parade Jeep, WW2 Field Artillery Tractor with limber and 25 Pounder, and a WW2 25 Pounder Wedding Limber.

Last September, a Gunner featured our C1 105mm Howitzer and parade Jeep at his wedding. Note the wedding photo of Ryan & Brittany Gilks dated 7 September 2019. They held their wedding just north of Brandon, Manitoba. We are glad that we could participate.

Construction at the Museum

A crew of construction workers built a new vestibule on the back of our archives in the museum. They also updated our air handling units and made a number of improvements to the building. This was a slow process that lasted roughly six months from March 2019 to October 2019. Back in March, we needed to move many of our artifacts so the construction crews could do their work. By early December, we were able to move all the artifacts back to their correct locations.

Note the photo to the right. The vestibule should make it easier to transfer artifacts from the archives to the museum in an air controlled environment.



The Dr. Gregg Collection

In 1986, Dr. Gregg donated hundreds of artifacts to the RCA Museum, including 40 excellent examples of Canadian inspired WW2 vehicles and guns. Dr. Gregg was a self-confessed history nut, a former professor and a veterinarian. Dr. Gregg started collecting in the mid-1970s and by the mid-1980s had amassed a massive collection of WW2 vehicles. His collection included dozens of significant examples of Canadian inspired or manufactured vehicles. He collected the artifacts from farmyards across Southern Ontario, from scrap dealers, and from Denmark.

In 1985, he looked for a museum or institution that would safeguard the entire collection. He graciously donated his entire collection to the RCA Museum in 1986. Our curatorial records from the time period are bursting with files on the Gregg Collection. At the time, the Base Commander, Col John-Arch MacInnis, and the RCA Museum Committee set the wheels in motion to make this transfer possible. Due to the immense size of the collection this was a very difficult and complicated transfer.



Moving this huge collection from southern Ontario to Shilo, Manitoba was a substantial undertaking. Ultimately, the military shipped these vehicles and guns by rail. Note the photos above.

Included in the collection were vehicles, armoured personnel carriers, maintenance manuals, and hundreds of parts and memorabilia. It is a significant, world-class artifact collection. In April 1986, the Canadian Cultural Properties Board confirmed the Gregg Collection as a cultural property which, in part, restricted the entire collection from being exported. The collection is certainly of national importance and worthy of this designation. Back in 1986, Dr. Gregg said: "These pieces are dramatic symbols of Canada's 'coming of age' both politically and militarily."

One of the great artifacts in the collection is the Crerar Caravan. General H. D. G. "Harry" Crerar, Commander of the First Army from March 1944, used this caravan during the European Campaign. The caravan includes his sleeping quarters and an office area. General Crerar received important guests in the caravan. Reputed guests include: General Eisenhower, General Montgomery, George VI and Winston Churchill. We will include the Crerar's Caravan in our next temporary exhibit on VE Day, opening early May 2020.

We understand and appreciate Dr. Gregg's vision and commitment to Canadian history. He came to us because he trusted that the Canadian military and our museum would guard, restore, display and keep the collection together. It's a collection that could fill most museums and we house most of it in our M101 storage facilities or on display at the museum. Dr. Gregg passed away in 2000. We certainly thank him for this amazing donation.

One of our objectives at the museum is to tell the story of the Canadian military during WW2. This world-class collection helps us do that. This acquisition greatly improved our collection of WW2 military vehicles. Our WW2 displays contain Gregg Collection artifacts. This collection simplifies the process of making exhibits, due to the sheer number of excellent examples of Canadian inspired WW2 vehicles and guns. We are proud to have this collection and we will continue to showcase it in our museum exhibits and outreach events.

Dr. Gregg WW2 Vehicles

Below are five vehicles from the Gregg Collection, including tracked and wheeled vehicles. The Gregg Collection consists of hundreds of artifacts, including dozens of WW2 vehicles that were uniquely Canadian in character. The artifacts below garner significant attention.

Staghound



This 1942 Staghound version T17E1 was designed for armoured and reconnaissance regiments for both short and long distance operations. It was also used for special missions such as raids, securing tactical positions and the protection of headquarters and convoys. Variations of armament included the basic 37mm gun, 3 inch howitzer, 75mm tank gun and the twin .50 calibre machine gun for the anti-aircraft role. This vehicle was manufactured by General Motors.

The Grizzly Command Tank (M4A1) was the Canadian version of the U.S. Medium Tank M4A1, the Sherman. It was the most modern and successful medium tank type available to the Allies in WWII and was the standard medium tank from 1943-1945. Over 70 variants were produced. The Grizzly's armament consisted of a 75mm gun with a coaxial .30 cal machine gun, a bow mounted .30 cal machine gun and a .50 cal machine gun on the top of the turret for anti-aircraft fire. The Montreal Locomotive Works manufactured the tank. Total Canadian production: 188.

Grizzly Command Tank



Fox Mark 1



The Fox Mark 1 is a closed turret, mounted, 4x4, rear engine, armoured, wheeled vehicle designed for reconnaissance and patrol duties with armoured regiments. Armed with a coaxially mounted .50 cal and .30 cal machine guns, it was also fitted with smoke grenade dischargers which would aid in concealing its whereabouts from the enemy. A distinct feature of the Fox is the auxiliary rear facing steering wheel which allowed the crew to get out of trouble quickly. It was manufactured by General Motors of Canada Ltd. with a total Canadian production of 1,506.

The 25 Pounder Self-Propelled Sexton was designed as a field artillery piece with high cross-country mobility for use in the Armoured Division. Due to its mobility, armour, and firepower, it was able to give close artillery support to armoured brigades. The Sexton's main armament was a QF 25 pounder gun. Its secondary armament was a pair of .303 inch Bren Guns. Powered by a 9-cylinder radial engine, it developed 400 BHP with a maximum speed of 25 MPH. The Sexton included a detachment of six men. The Montreal Locomotive Works built the Sexton with a total production of 2,150.

Sexton



Stuart Light Tank



The Stuart Light Tank (M5A1) was used by armoured regiments and armoured reconnaissance (Recce) regiments. Because of its extreme mobility and good firepower, it was well suited for this task. Armaments included a gyro-stabilized 37mm gun, three .30 cal MGs (one fixed), and a .45 cal submachine gun. Powered by twin Cadillac V-8 engines, it rarely broke down, was easy to maintain and refused to shed its track no matter how many high speed turns it was subjected to. The American Car and Foundry Company manufactured the Stuart Tank with a total production of 3,427.

An Unexpected Letter

At the RCA Museum, we strive to honor the memory of those who have served Canada. Recently, I was reviewing an old scrapbook donated by Major H. R. Turner, who raised the 94th Anti-Tank Battery, RCA, part of the 3rd Division during WW2. Similar to other WW2 batteries, the 94th Anti-Tank Battery has a noteworthy history, which includes its share of sacrifice. The scrapbook is a great primary source on the time period with newspaper clippings, original posters, propaganda, hand-written letters, military documents and photos. To the right is a photo of Major Turner from the scrapbook.



You never know what you'll find looking through old albums. Major Turner saved two letters from the mothers of Canadian Gunners killed in action during WW2. Both letters are difficult to read due to the delicate subject matter. I will include one letter from Mrs. Amy Erickson of Creston, B.C., dated 17 June 1945 to Major Turner, who was Second in Command of the 94th.

To. Major Turner
 Dear Sir
 I am writing to thank you for the very kind letter you wrote to me explaining the death of my beloved Son.
 Your letter dated May 15 1945 was the first word I had since I received that awfull cable Aug 26 1944. but that is the fortunes of war, he was all I had, and his death leaves me very much alone, as my husband died five years ago. and I miss the both very much.
 again thanking you for your kind letter and wishing you the best of luck.
 I remain sincerely
 Amy Erickson

A humbling letter from a grieving mother. We should honor and remember this heartfelt sacrifice. Officers commonly wrote letters to the families of fallen soldiers. Major Turner surely provided condolence and insight after the death of her son. Her son was (K75301) L/Bdr. Edwin V. Erickson, killed in action on 8 August 1944, aged 26, near Caen, France. They buried Edwin in the Bretteville-Sur-Laize Canadian War Cemetery.

Major Turner raised the 94th Anti-Tank Battery in August 1939. The 94th trained in Canada until sailing to Liverpool in October 1941. Upon arrival, the 94th went to the south coast of England to carry out an anti-invasion role. On the morning of 6 June 1944, D-Day, they landed on Juno Beach supporting the 7th Brigade. Over the next eight weeks, they fought the Germans in Normandy resulting in heavy casualties. They continued the fight with the liberation of France, the Netherlands, and then the Allied invasion of Germany. During WW2, forty soldiers died from the 94th, including L/Bdr. Edwin V. Erickson.

Korean War Trophy

The RCA Museum has a post-WW2, 122mm M1938 (M-30) Howitzer originally designed in the Soviet Union. Our records say it was captured by the South Korean Army during the Korean War. It was eventually shipped to Canada and became part of our collection and is currently placed in our Gun Park. The story is hard to substantiate. However, this model of gun was used by the North Korean People's Army against Canadian and United Nations forces during the Korean War (1950-1953).



Photo of the 122mm M1938 howitzer from the RCA Museum Gun Park.

On 25 June 1950, the North Korean Army invaded South Korea. In response, the UN organized a multinational police force to defend South Korea. The United States led the action and Canada supported it. On 7 August 1950, the Canadian government authorized sending Canadian soldiers to Korea. The 25th Infantry Brigade Group, with support arms, went to Korea. 2 RCHA, raised in Shilo, Manitoba, provided the initial artillery component. In May 1951, 2 RCHA arrived in South Korea with the 25 pounder gun and saw action only weeks later. The war settled into a series of small incursions by both sides. By May 1952, 2 RCHA had expended over 300,000 rounds.

In May 1952, 1 RCHA replaced 2 RCHA in South Korea. By the spring of 1953, the Korean War developed into a period of static warfare. The 81st Field Regiment RCA, later named 4 RCHA, replaced 1 RCHA in April 1953. Canadian Gunners kept up a relentless bombardment of enemy positions. On 27 July 1953, the war came to a halt with the signing of the Korean Armistice Agreement. Over 25,500 Canadians had served in the Korean theatre of operations by the time of the armistice.

Canadian soldiers stayed in South Korea to maintain the peace. The 79th Field Regiment RCA, renamed 3 RCHA, took over for the 81st Field Regiment in April 1954. 3 RCHA served in South Korea until November 1954. The human cost of the war to Canada was 516 military personnel killed and 1,211 wounded.

19th Century Artillery

About one year ago, we changed our Heritage Gallery from a collection of military uniforms and medals to five nineteenth century artillery pieces. Updating keeps things fresh and exciting. The two smooth bore cannons, the 6 Pounder and the 9 Pounder, represent the early days of the Canadian Artillery. These muzzle loading cannons are steeped in history. They fired solid shot and fused shells, including the well-known Shrapnel shell that exploded on enemy lines. The British deployed them in the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1814), the Battle of Waterloo (1815), the Crimean War (1853-1856), the Indian Mutiny (1857-1859), and during various campaigns around the world. Colonists and British Regulars used them during the War of 1812.



Recent photo of our Heritage Gallery at the RCA Museum.

The other three artillery pieces, help explain the Boer War. The three pieces include: the 15 Pounder BL, the 1 Pounder “Pom Pom” and the French 75mm Field Gun. In 1899, the British entered the Boer War with the 15 Pounder BL. The gun had no recoil mechanism. After firing, the gun rolled backwards, requiring re-aiming. It also had no gun shield leaving Gunners exposed to enemy fire. The range of the weapon was rather limited. The ammunition was loaded in two steps, first the projectile and then the propellant charge. This process was slow and delayed the rate of fire.

The French 75mm Field Gun represented a major technological advancement and was the first modern artillery piece using hydro-pneumatic recoil and fixed ammunition. The Boer used a similar model against the British. After firing, the gun did not require re-aiming. It had a gun shield, improved range, and the ammunition was loaded in one step, increasing the rate of fire. The British found themselves out gunned by the quick-firing technology. The British learned from their experience during the Boer War. They designed new artillery for mobility, improved projectile ballistics, improved loading speed, added recoil mechanisms, and increased the shell weight for more firepower. They also added gun shields for protection. This led to the adoption of the QF 13 Pounder for the Horse Artillery and the QF 18 Pounder for the Field Artillery. Both are on display at the RCA Museum.

L5 105mm Pack Howitzer

The L5 pack howitzer is a popular attraction both in our museum and on our website. It garners a lot of attention at outreach events. It was termed 'pack howitzer' because it could be broken down into 12 or 13 sections and transported by pack animals. In Canadian service it was generally transported by vehicle or helicopter. After removing the gun shield it could be transported in the back of a M113, which the RCA Museum has in our collection. We have many photos of this gun in action. I have included some photos, mostly from the 1970s and 1980s.



The main benefit of the gun was that it was light compared to the C1 105mm howitzer. It could be easily broken down and manhandled by gunners. The total weight of the gun was 1,290 kgs, which is very light for a 105mm gun. The lack of weight also meant the gun was not very robust or built for continuous firing. In our museum archives, I located a number of original documents noting problems with cracks in the barrel. Generally, it was transported without the muzzle break. In our archives, I

found original documents mentioning when the muzzle break was transported on the gun, it tended to vibrate and damage the barrel. Another issue was the lack of range with this weapon, up to 10,000 meters, which made it vulnerable to counter-fire.

The L5 pack howitzer could be used for direct fire or indirect fire. At the museum, we recently added direct and indirect sights. Note the photo below of the Telescope NG No. 76 direct sight.



In Canadian Service, this was an airborne weapon. Canada actively used this gun from 1969-1994. During that timeframe thousands of Canadian Gunners trained on this gun and it gained a wide following. It's noted that both the L5 pack howitzer and the C1 105mm howitzer used the same 105mm ammunition with a 32 pound projectile. We have many examples of 105mm projectiles on display in our museum. Come and check it out!



The Earl Grey Cups

The Winnipeg Blue Bombers won the Grey Cup in November 2019. For all Blue Bomber fans this cup has renewed importance.

At the RCA Museum, we have an Earl Grey cup that predates the Grey Cup used in the Canadian Football League (CFL). Albert Henry George Grey, 4th Earl Grey GCB, GCMG, GCVO, PC, the Governor General of Canada, commissioned a number of cups, including the CFL Grey Cup and three Canadian Artillery cups.

Albert Grey, 4th Earl Grey was the Governor General of Canada from 1904 to 1911. He was a strong promoter of social justice and national unity within the British Empire. He heavily supported the arts, including sports such as hockey and football. Of note, Earl Grey ordered the Grey Cup in November 1909; which arrived in March 1910. The first Grey Cup championship game occurred on 4 December 1909 without the Grey Cup.

Mappin & Webb, a jewellery company from Birmingham, England, made the small cup pictured to the right which is on display at the RCA Museum. Earl Grey reportedly commissioned the cup as a trophy for the Canadian amateur rugby football association that became the Canadian Football League. The story told is the Earl was so unimpressed with the cup that he ordered another much larger cup which became the CFL Grey Cup.

From 1906 to 1908, Governor General Earl Grey commissioned and presented three cups to separate branches of the Canadian Artillery. Our cup is for 1st place in General Efficiency (Heavy and Siege Batteries). There was also a General Efficiency cup for Coast Defence and one for Field Batteries.

The second artillery cup is located at the Senior Mess in Red Deer, Alberta. The Canadian Artillery Association presented the cup to the 13th Winnipeg Field Battery. We are not sure where the third cup is located.

The Canadian Artillery has a long history of presenting General Efficiency cups dating back to the 1880s. Governor General Earl Grey added to the already large collection of military cups housed on military bases across the country. Our cup and the one in Red Deer certainly have charming pasts linked to Earl Grey and the CFL Grey Cup.



Visitor Survey

Museums need to meet changing audience expectations. Visitor surveys help us to understand our audience. We welcome any feedback regarding our museum. Please email comments directly to

Andrew.Oakden@forces.gc.ca

- What did you find most interesting about the museum and Gun Park?
- In the future, what exhibits would you like to see displayed in the museum?
- What improvements would you like to see made?
- Are there any areas that you would like to see more information and artifacts displayed? If so, what?
- Did you have any difficulty finding our museum? If so, what are your suggestions to make it easier to find our location?
- How likely is it that you would recommend the RCA Museum to someone else?

Contact Us

Pour nous joindre

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