

# BARRAGE

The RCA Museum News

THE RCA MUSEUM  
CANADA'S NATIONAL ARTILLERY MUSEUM



January 2021

## Brig General Todd Collection

We received four large packages from the extended family of Brigadier General P. A. S Todd, CBE, DSO, ED, CD (1898 to 1996). These packages contained over one hundred artifacts and keepsakes that belonged to a Great Gunner that served in WW2. His son, Alan, housed the artifacts in Toronto, Ontario. Brig Todd's service included several senior posts, including being the Commander of the Royal Artillery, 3rd Canadian Division during the Normandy Assault on Juno Beach (6 June 1944). He was second-in-command on D-Day, responsible for training, preparing, and coordinating artillery support, for which he received the Distinguished Service Order. In November 1944, he took command of the Royal Canadian Artillery, 2nd Corps. He later Commanded the 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade that entered Berlin and accepted the German surrender in May 1945.

Brig Todd started his military career during WW1, which extended 45 years into the 1960s, ending his service as the Honorary Colonel Commandant of the Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery from 1958 to 1962. Brig Todd opened the first RCA Museum in 1962 and accepted the 15 Pounder we have on display from the British Royal Artillery.



Above, uniforms packed in the original shipping trunk.



Above, photos of BGen PAS Todd.

The collection includes uniforms and boots from the 1940s and 1950s, along with many smaller artifacts such as armbands, belts, buckles, buttons, caps, dog tags, epaulettes, lanyards, patches, pips, ribbons, shoulder bars, spurs, and ties. Several items caught my attention, including an extensive photo collection, with autographs from General Crerar and General Simonds.

There are books, correspondence, a personal diary, plaques, a retirement cannon, and two shell casings fired from Brig General Todd's ship on D-Day. Small details make this collection very interesting! I would like to personally thank the family of Brig General Todd for this notable collection, which will go in our next temporary exhibit on Ubique 150. The exhibition will show advancements in the Artillery over the past 150 years and include artifacts that belonged to Great Gunners.

By Andrew Oakden

## Life at the RCA Museum During a Pandemic - Critical Level Red

Working at the front desk usually means interacting with visitors who have come to experience the history of the Canadian Artillery. Once COVID-19 shut down the world, our doors remained closed while citizens were encouraged to stay home. With lifted restrictions occurring over time, museum visitors returned.

It was a summer of little to no foreign travellers and fewer than normal Canadian visitors. For a time, Manitobans were the only visitors attending the museum. Visitors began coming from the West, while strict travel restrictions hampered visits from the East.

Being closed once again has meant that the only visitors attending the museum are the odd cricket and stray spider trying to take up residency. Maybe it's because of the pandemic that even the tiniest and most unusual visitors are a welcoming sight – including the random insect and arachnid.



The photo above shows the entrance to the Artillery Gallery at the RCA Museum.

The photo to the left, shows the RCA Museum main parking in December 2020. Sadly, we are not open for business these days.

Staff are busy updating exhibits in preparation for the return of museum visitors. Artillery pieces have been moved and exhibits rearranged, giving the museum a fresh look. Preparation for the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Canadian Artillery is underway, as we look to the future when visitors can enter the museum again.

While the museum is closed, please take time to visit the RCA Museum website ([rcamuseum.com](http://rcamuseum.com)). It's full of information and photos about the history of the Canadian Artillery. We look forward to welcoming all visitors once again when it is safer for us to do so.

By Anita Michelsen



## WW2 Gallery Update



Clive Prothero-Brooks, Collections Manager, took this photo of our updated WW2 Gallery, displaying a Field Artillery Tractor, 25 Pounder, M7 Priest, and the 5.5 Inch Howitzer.

The last significant change to the WW2 Gallery happened back in 2004. It was time for an update, and we made some substantial changes. First, we added the 5.5 Inch Howitzer that had been in our Gun Park, which will help tell the Medium Artillery story during WW2. We also reorganized the rest of the gallery and placed the Field Artillery Tractor (FAT), limber, and 25 Pounder together in the exhibit's center. It took some planning to work out a good fit for these three artifacts. After some trial and error, my staff managed to fit them prominently in the gallery.

We moved the Bofors to the north wall and added an 8-foot by 8-foot mural behind it. We adjusted the 6 Pounder, added a mural behind the gun, and added a text panel on the Italian Campaign. Staff placed the 5.5 Inch Howitzer along the east wall with a mural behind it. We moved the M7 Priest 105mm Howitzer and the Bren Carrier, and added a text panel on D-Day. We hope these changes provide value to the exhibit.



Clive also took this photo, including the Bofor 40mm and the 6 Pounder Anti-Tank Gun.

From the center of the gallery, five different stories are on display, including anti-aircraft, anti-tank, field artillery, medium artillery, and self-propelled artillery. We also display a Universal Carrier, BSA M20 motorcycle, and small artifacts in display cases —together with the guns, they help tell the story of the Canadian Gunner during WW2. We hope these changes to the gallery help reflect the history and heritage of the Canadian Artillery. I want to thank each of my team members for assisting with this project.

By Andrew Oakden

## The First Commanding Officer of C Battery

A few months ago, Jules from the Shilo Stag took a photo of what appeared to be the grave of a high-ranking military officer in Victoria, B. C. In 1871, Colonel Josiah G. Holmes was one of the founding officers of A Battery in Kingston, Ontario. He had the distinction of being the first Commanding Officer of C Battery in Esquimalt, B.C. from 1887 to 1893. He was the last surviving officer of Canada's original permanent force. In part, Canada created A and B Batteries to protect Fort Henry and the Citadel, perform garrison duties after the British left, and serve as Schools of Gunnery. A and B Battery still exists today in sub-units of 1 RCHA.

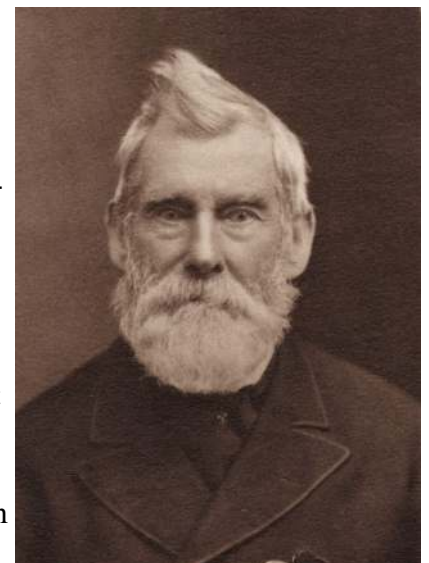
We should remember our great military past and the early trailblazers that helped make it happen. At the RCA Museum, we do not have much on Colonel Holmes. We have a few letters from family members, a photo from his 85th birthday, and an image of C Battery on the Skeena River dated 1888. Colonel Holmes is second from the left in the back row. There is more to this exciting story.

Josiah Greenwood Holmes was born on 10 November 1845 in St. Catharines, Ontario, and educated at Grantham Academy.

He grew up in a respected family. His father, Thorpe Holmes, was the owner and publisher of the St. Catharines Journal. Thorpe Holmes was the founding president of the St. Catharines Rifle Association. In the early 1860s, as a young volunteer militia soldier, Josiah joined the 19th Regiment Lincoln Militia. He fought in the famous Battle of Ridgeway as a volunteer militiaman on 2 June 1866. In November 1866, Lieutenant Holmes joined the St. Catharines Garrison Battery, which began his long career in the Artillery. He received the Canadian General Service Medal with two clasps for the Fenian Raids, 1866 and 1870. He married Elizabeth Kew from Ontario in 1870 and had two sons and three daughters.

In 1871, as a Lieutenant, he joined A Battery in Kingston, Ontario, the first regular component in the Canadian Armed Forces. During the 1870s and early 1880s, he served as one of the first Adjutants of A Battery. He was a keen rifleman and a member of the Dominion of Canada Rifle Association. Among his tasks at A Battery was leading the Riflemen during public shooting displays. He was a gifted essayist. In 1878, he won first prize from the Dominion Artillery Association for an essay on the organization of artillery equipment. He also published articles in British service journals.

From 1883 to 1893, Colonel Holmes commanded Militia District No. 11 in Victoria, B.C. In 1883, he started training four batteries of the Militia Coast Brigade, two in Victoria, one in Vancouver, one in New Westminster. The threat of a British war with Russia was indirectly responsible for the initial government consent to start C Battery in 1883, and the eventual formation in 1887. It took four long years of planning and implementing the required steps to inaugurate the third School of Artillery, C Battery RCA, in Esquimalt, B.C.



A photo of Colonel Holmes taken on his 85th birthday, from the RCA Museum.

Colonel Holmes was the first Commanding Officer of C Battery from 1887 to 1893. Of note, he commanded the Skeena River Revolt in northern B.C. in 1888. In 1893, British soldiers took over permanent garrison duties at Esquimalt and C Battery returned to Quebec. The Canadian Militia reorganized C Battery into No. 2 Company R.C.G.A., and transferred Colonel Holmes to Winnipeg, Manitoba, to command Military District No. 10. He later went to London, Ontario. From 1898 to 1901, he commanded Military District No. 11 in Victoria, B.C., for a second time. He was the District Officer in command from 1901 to 1909.



A photo of C Battery during the Skeena River Revolt, 1888. Colonel Holmes is second from the left in the back row.

During his tenure, Colonel Holmes witnessed many early developmental and organizational changes in the Canadian Army. He was a part of the pre-Confederation Active Militia, whose purpose was, in part, local defence. He joined one of Canada's first regular and full-time army units in 1871. In 1883, Canada formed the Permanent Corps and the Regiment of Canadian Artillery. Colonel Holmes was also there for the formation of the Permanent Force in 1892. Additionally, he commanded the third regular and full-time army unit, C Battery, from its founding in 1887 to 1893.

Colonel Holmes was there when the Artillery changed names to "The Royal Canadian Artillery" in 1893. In 1895, he was present when the Active Militia field and garrison units joined the Regiment. In 1898, the Permanent Force reorganized into the Field Division and the Garrison Division. These names changed again in 1901 to "Royal Canadian Field Artillery" and "Royal Canadian Garrison Artillery." He was also there in 1905 when Canada formed the "Royal Canadian Horse Artillery." Colonel Holmes lived through many critical early developments of the Regiment and the Canadian Forces.

Colonel Holmes was a trailblazer and leader of change in the Canadian Artillery. As the first commanding officer of Military District 11, he established local defences and assisted with early law enforcement in B.C. He helped merge and organize the permanent force and laid the groundwork for future successors. The Formation of A, B, and C Batteries played a vital role in developing the Canadian Army. His full-time service with the Canadian Militia and later the Permanent Force lasted for 38 years. He retired in 1909.

After retirement, Colonel Holmes lived in Victoria, B.C., and was an active and respected community member. From 1909 to 1920, he served as the Honorary Colonel of the Rocky Mountain Rangers in Kamloops. In 1928, he died with full military honours.



## Don Cherry's Great Uncle

Don Cherry donated a collection from his great-uncle, Sergeant Thomas William Mackenzie, to the RCA Museum. Mr. Cherry stated he wished to donate to those "who would honour and feel the same as I do about these articles, and I thought of your museum and the RCA CFB Shilo." From my perspective as the museum director, the collection symbolizes the sorrow of war and pride for their sacrifice.

Sergeant Thomas William Mackenzie was a typical Canadian who felt the call to volunteer for the Canadian Expeditionary Force in World War I. William was born on 6 April 1888 in Kingston, Ontario. By trade, William was a plumber and enlisted in the Canadian military on 24 January 1916. On his attestation papers, he was 5' 8", medium build, with blue eyes and brown hair.



He completed basic training and made his way to the 82nd Howitzer Battery, Canadian Field Artillery, absorbed into the 1st Brigade.

The photo above shows the collection on display in our WW1 Gallery. The 1st Brigade fought in significant battles across France. William was a Canadian Gunner that operated the guns, which helped win the war. The 1st Brigade had three batteries of six 18 pounders and one battery of six 4.5 Inch Howitzers. They were the main field guns used by the Canadian Field Artillery, CFA, during WW1, with examples in the RCA Museum.

He was wounded twice in battle; once on 14 August 1918, where he remained on duty, and a second time on 1 October 1918, he incurred severe injuries to the left arm and head. His unit evacuated him to the base hospital, and he succumbed to injuries five weeks later. He died on 7 November 1918, just four days before the Armistice of WW1. He was thirty years of age and left all his possessions to his mother. Sergeant Mackenzie was one of the sixty thousand plus Canadian soldiers who gave their lives during WW1. We honour his service.

William recorded two acts of bravery that gained him a Military Medal with bar. His first award came on 6 August 1918, near the last hundred days of the war. After his death, he received a bar to his Military Medal for bravery in the field on 25 August 1919. The reverse inscription would say, "For Bravery in the Field," surrounded by a wreath. Only forty-four Gunners received the MM with 1st bar during WW1.

The collection is significant to Don Cherry, and we understand that. We created a small display in our WW1 gallery for this collection. The exhibition includes two medals, gold cufflinks, a gold watch, a memorial plaque, a photo of William, and other articles from Don Cherry, including a letter, a photograph, and a Hockey Night in Canada shirt.

By Andrew Oakden

## A Photographic Examination of WW1

The RCA Museum has a photo album containing about two hundred photographs and postcards that belonged to Major F. M. Benson from A Battery, RCHA, covering 1913 to 1919. The photos show the mobilization of Canadian forces in August 1914, training at Valcartier, the voyage to England, the waiting at the Salisbury Plain, sport and rest periods in England during the war, and then the parades and departure from England in May 1919. The collection is an examination of the First World War from the perspective of one Canadian Gunner.

The album starts with garrison life at A Battery in Kingston, Ontario, before the First World War. There are several genuinely lovely photos, including a Canadian Gunner on a horse—an excellent shot of a Gunner of the period, shown to the right. There are also photos of the summer exercises at camp Petawawa in 1913 and 1914. Part 2 includes photos of A Battery mobilizing before heading to Valcartier in August 1914. There are excellent images of A Battery mounted reviewing the orders before mobilization.



On 4 August 1914, England was at war with Germany, which meant Canada was also at war. On 6 August, the Canadian government raised 25,000 men to form the First Canadian Contingent for overseas duty. When the war came, Colonel Sam Hughes, the Militia Minister, led the initial mobilization effort. The Director of Artillery was Lt-Col E. W. B. Morrison, who divided the Artillery portion of the First Contingent into three field brigades, each with three 6-gun batteries of 18 pounders. Canada also had ammunition columns, a Heavy Battery with an ammunition column, and another divisional ammunition column.

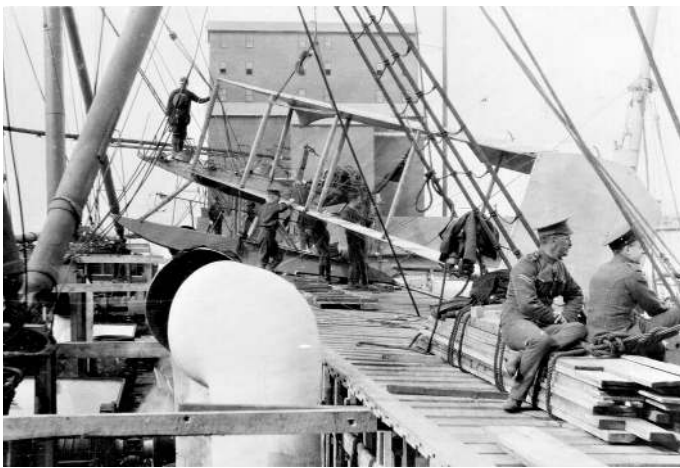
Part 3 contains rare photos of the troop transport to Valcartier, including pictures of the guns being transported by rail to Valcartier. Also, images of the men travelling by rail with their horses. Part 4 includes photographs and postcards of training at Valcartier, portraits of Officers, and the tent city. Major Benson provided a fascinating snapshot and examination of this short training period. The photo on the right shows Gunners loading horses on a train to Valcartier, dated August 1914.



Lt-Col Morrison selected 15 militia batteries to supply soldiers, horses, and equipment. For two weeks, battery headquarters across Canada were busy deciding who would participate. Units moved with their guns by rail to Valcartier, a sizeable new camp 16 miles northwest of Quebec City. Valcartier was 12,000 acres of sandy flats inhabited by 30,000 soldiers. When the Gunners arrived, they had to unload the 18 pounders, vehicles, stores, and horses. They integrated the Gunners into newly formed overseas batteries. Officers completed the task of reorganization with nine new field batteries in a matter of days.



A Battery at the Valcartier camp, dated September 1914.

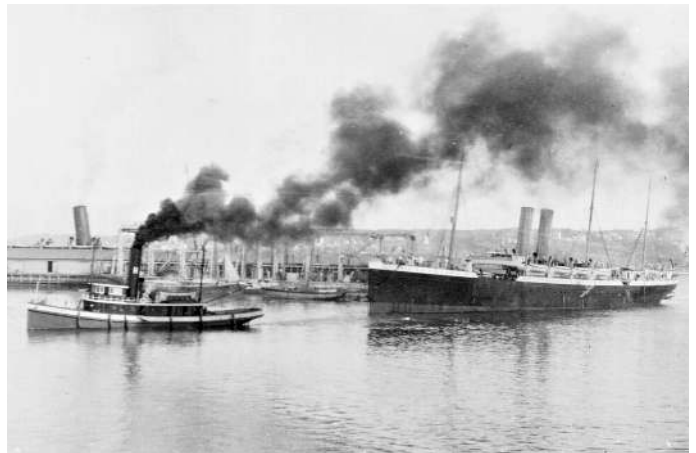


When Sam Hughes planned the first Contingent, he did so without Permanent Force units travelling overseas; he did not regard them fondly. He did, however, want them to train the troops at Valcartier and perform administrative functions. A and B Batteries came to Valcartier for instruction and administration. Thankfully, the War Office accepted two regular horse artillery batteries – A and B Batteries. On 26 August, they raised the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery Brigade for war service, under Lt-Col Henri Panet, the commander of the RCHA Brigade.

Part five deals with the voyage to England. There are original photos of the First Canadian Contingent on the ships, including one of a sea plane being loaded onboard dated 26 September 1914, shown above. Many of the images are probably one of a kind and never used before in publication. Next, there are photos and postcards of the Salisbury Plain in January 1915. Several postcards show the rain, flooding, and mud. There are also photos of the officers' mess and digging gun pits.

By late Sept, the entire First Contingent started the voyage overseas. The exodus began on 23 September and they chartered dozens of vessels to carry the thirty thousand men, with their guns, equipment, and horses.

The Artillery brought fifty-four 18 pounders, twelve 13 pounders, four 60 pounders, 198 ammunition wagons, and 1,500 rounds per gun. The crossing lasted 12 days, at a slow pace. They landed on Plymouth Sound on 14 October, and the last unit disembarked on 24 October. The locals greeted them with cheers. The horses were severely fatigued from standing in the ships for three weeks. 81 of the 7,679 horses died during the convoy. A special train brought the recruits to Salisbury Plain, where they stayed for almost four months. The soldiers marched nine miles from the local station to West Down North Camp.



The Caribbean leaving Quebec carrying Canadian soldiers, dated 26 September 1914.



The Canadian Army housed the men in tents on a vast expanse of green turf. On 20 October, the weather turned rainy and began a long period of heavy precipitation. From October to mid-February, 89 out of the 123 days it rained. On many occasions, the soldiers prepared for inspection from dignitaries such as His Majesty King George V. Mud was everywhere, making life difficult for the men and the horses. The situation improved in January 1915, when the horses had dry stables, and the soldiers had billets with the local community. They continued to train under hostile weather, overcrowding, and little space for the Artillery.

Part seven includes Canadian pride from 1915 and 1916. There are sports photos covering football and horse jumping. There are photographs of A Battery officers relaxing and posing for pictures in England. The last section shows victory parades, departing Arras, France, and England. The best photo in the collection is on the binder's end page - a fantastic group photograph of the RCHA Brigade from 1918 or 1919, shown to the right.

In early February 1915, word came that Canadian troops would be going to France. Troops started to prepare on 7 February. They packed them in the holds of ships. After many delays, the Artillery came ashore on 16 February. They received a warm welcome from French locals before a 500-mile train ride to the front. The journey to the frontlines took only two days and two nights. The frontlines had primarily been unchanged since October 1914. From January 1915, a five-hundred-mile trench formation stretched from Switzerland to the North Sea. This line would not significantly move more than ten miles over the next two years.



A photo of Major F. M. Benson.



A postcard of the Salisbury Plain dated January 1915.



The First Contingent's initial significant combat operation occurred at the Second Battle of Ypres in April 1915. They would fight in most of the war's later significant battles, including, in part, the Battle of the Somme, Vimy Ridge, Hill 70, Passchendaele, and the Last 100 Days. These men were the first Canadians to fight in the First World War. Eventually, 630,000 Canadians joined the war effort, of whom 425,000 went overseas. Many, of course, did not come home and died fighting in the war effort.

Photo collections generally include a few photos, namely hero shots or portraits of soldiers. Major Benson's collection shows soldiers' movement across Canada, across the Atlantic, into England, and then into France. It traces the activities of the Permanent Force, RCHA Brigade and the 1st Canadian Contingent. The collection helps humanize the men who fought in WW1 and is an exceptional examination of the Canadian Army during WW1.

By Andrew Oakden

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