

BARRAGE

The RCA Museum News

THE RCA MUSEUM
CANADA'S NATIONAL ARTILLERY MUSEUM



April 2021

UBIQUE 150 Exhibits



Our museum is ready for the UBIQUE 150 celebrations. Over the past two years, museum staff have spent hundreds of hours preparing museum elements and exhibits for this celebration. In 2019, we planned a travelling display incorporating the General Strange Medals and a touch screen photo interactive documenting 150 years of RCA history. Unfortunately, we cancelled the travelling exhibit due to COVID-19, yet we did produce a touch screen interactive which is available for viewing on our website. The interactive contains new content, covering a broad range of topics, including badges, campaigns, caps, decorations, field exercises, Great Gunner bios, guns, history, headwear, projectiles, shoes, small arms, sport, technology, training, transportation, and uniforms.

We opened a sizable, 200 square metres (2,200 sq ft) UBIQUE 150 temporary exhibit in the museum starting on 1 April 2021. In the exhibition, we have categorized artifacts covering 150 years, including decorations, flags and pennants, Great Gunner artifacts such as the General Strange medals, heritage guns, helmets, projectiles, vehicles, and uniforms. Additionally, we will feature this museum exhibit on our website as a 360 virtual interactive starting in April 2021, allowing all to experience it virtually. We also added information on heritage guns and new content on the history of A Battery's founding. Through these initiatives, we hope to capture the true spirit of the UBIQUE 150 celebrations. The temporary exhibit will run until 3 December 2021.

The M777 Howitzer Fragment



The photo above shows the M777 barrel fragment donated to the RCA Museum.

On Friday, 29 January 2021, we received a jagged, post-detonation, 23-inches by 5-inches, M777 Howitzer barrel fragment from 5 RALC in Quebec. In February 2020, during a field exercise, Gunners with 5 RALC got a live 155mm shell stuck in an M777 Howitzer barrel, which they could not extricate. Technicians tried to remove it with a hydraulic press and other equipment but to no avail. After exhausting all options, the order came to destroy the barrel. 5 RALC dismantled and transported the barrel to the Trois-Rivieres shooting range.



Note the M777 barrel loaded with explosives to the left and a large piece of barrel post-detonation to the right.

On Monday, 10 February 2020, they detonated the barrel with 36 blocks of C4 plastic explosive, neutralizing the shell and obliterating the barrel into jagged fragments. They sent this metal fragment to immortalize the unusual and unfortunate event. We will make arrangements to display this unique artillery artifact in the museum.

By Andrew Oakden

UBIQUE 150 Medallion

Big things often have humble beginnings. In July 2019, I noticed a 50th Anniversary of the Royal Canadian Artillery medallion for sale on Ebay. I managed to win the auction for \$14.98. I would have gone higher. They produced the medallion to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Royal Canadian Artillery in 1921. The medallion is in good shape and there are no obvious scratches, chips, nicks or dents. It's probably composed of copper or bronze. The surface has some discoloration, but that's expected after one hundred years. The initials of the last three British monarchs are included on the medallion. While our museum has no documentation on the 50th Anniversary, we do have this small medallion that connects nicely with the UBIQUE 150 celebration this year.



In 1871, Britain withdrew all Imperial troops from Canada, except for a garrison in Halifax. The Canadian Government responded by issuing General Order 24, which authorized raising A and B Batteries of Garrison Artillery. A Battery formed at Fort Henry in Kingston, Ontario and B Battery at La Citadelle in Quebec City. Both were to serve as Schools of Gunnery. British officers commanded the batteries, including LCol G. A. French and LCol T. B. Strange. Both batteries were manned by officers and men coming from local active military batteries. From these small beginnings, the RCA took shape; grew, prospered and became what it is today.



B Battery, RCA, Officers, 1890s.

A and B Batteries are the original components of 1RCHA. From these initial steps came something immeasurable, including 150 years of regimental history. The origins mark the founding element of the full-time and regular army and the first Canadian Schools of Gunnery. They foster pride in our regimental roots in Kingston and Quebec City. It advances the esprit de corps in 33 communities across Canada with an RCA presence. At the RCA Museum we are proud to celebrate UBIQUE 150. We will promote awareness through our UBIQUE 150 temporary exhibit. The RCA produced a new 150th Anniversary medallion, shown to the right, that we will save for posterity. Maybe in a hundred years museum staff will rediscover it, and reflect upon these humble beginnings.



The General's Walking Cane

In the museum's early history corridor, we have a display that contains an authentic walking cane that belonged to Major General Thomas Bland Strange, the father of the Canadian Artillery. General Strange was the first Commanding Officer of B Battery starting in 1872 and came out of retirement to command the Alberta Field Force during the North-West Rebellion in 1885.

Major General Sir Sam Steele, CB, KCMG, reportedly gave the walking cane to General Strange. Steele presented the gift to Strange to commemorate the Steele Scouts. The unit was a cavalry force composed of 20 Mounties, 20 civilian scouts, and 22 members of the Alberta Mounted Rifles, in service from April to August 1885. Major Sam Steele, on a leave of absence from the North-West Mounted Police, commanded the unit.



Steele famously led the Yukon detachment of North-West Mounted Police (NWMP) during the Klondike Gold Rush (1896-1899) and was the Strathcona's Horse unit's commanding officer during the Boer War (1899-1902). Major General Steele commanded troops overseas during the First World War (1914-1918).

After the North-West Rebellion, General Strange recommended Major Steele for a CMG decoration for exemplary military service, which failed to happen. Steele did receive a promotion to the role of Superintendent, NWMP, in 1885.

Our museum records show that Mrs. Strange donated the artifact to the Shilo Officers' Mess before 1962. The officer's mess, in turn, presented the cane to the museum in 1962. The artifact has excellent provenance! Two men that helped build Canada owned it. Both men were legendary military leaders that helped develop the Canadian Military.

Retirement of Cheryl Van Der Raadt

Cheryl Van Der Raadt will retire from the RCA Museum effective 30 April 2021. I would like to congratulate Cheryl on her fifteen years of service at the RCA Museum and CFB Shilo. I enjoyed working with Cheryl and considered her an asset to the museum and a positive presence in the office. She will be missed and certainly deserves her retirement. Her hard work and dedication have certainly benefitted our museum, and we can learn from her memorable example. Her assistance handling the daily operations of the museum will be sorely missed. I am confident that she will find success and happiness in retirement and I wish her all the best. I asked Cheryl to write a biography included below.

Prior to her employment at the RCA Museum, Cheryl already had acquired an impressive resume. For many years she worked in the professional engineering field as an engineering clerk. After working in CFB Dundurn at the Medical Clinic, Cheryl moved to CFB Shilo, where she was employed at the Base Hospital before transferring to the RCA Museum 15 years ago.

Cheryl graduated from Confederation College Radio and Television Arts in 1976. She originally trained in broadcasting and worked in radio and television production at several radio and television stations. Her skills in broadcasting helped her with managing the RCA Museum Facebook page, taking photos for the RCA Museum newsletter “Barrage” and writing short articles and correspondence.

Cheryl has especially enjoyed her job as Administrative Coordinator at the Museum, since every day is different and poses interesting challenges. It’s surprising how often her problem solving skills were required.

Cheryl’s hobbies include photography and a newly revisited passion for oil, acrylic and watercolour painting. She hopes to perfect her technique, as she paints beach scenes when on vacation this summer in Manitoba. Cheryl has recently started taking ukulele lessons by Zoom and hopes to learn a few songs to play by the campfire. She has stated that “the coyotes may join her in unison when they hear her sing!!”

Cheryl enjoys travelling. In the past, she has enjoyed three cruises to the Caribbean. She hopes to enjoy more opportunities to travel as she anticipates visiting her adult children when safer travel resumes.

In the future, Cheryl plans to enjoy many sunsets with her camera and her dog, Farrah, in her tiny convertible.



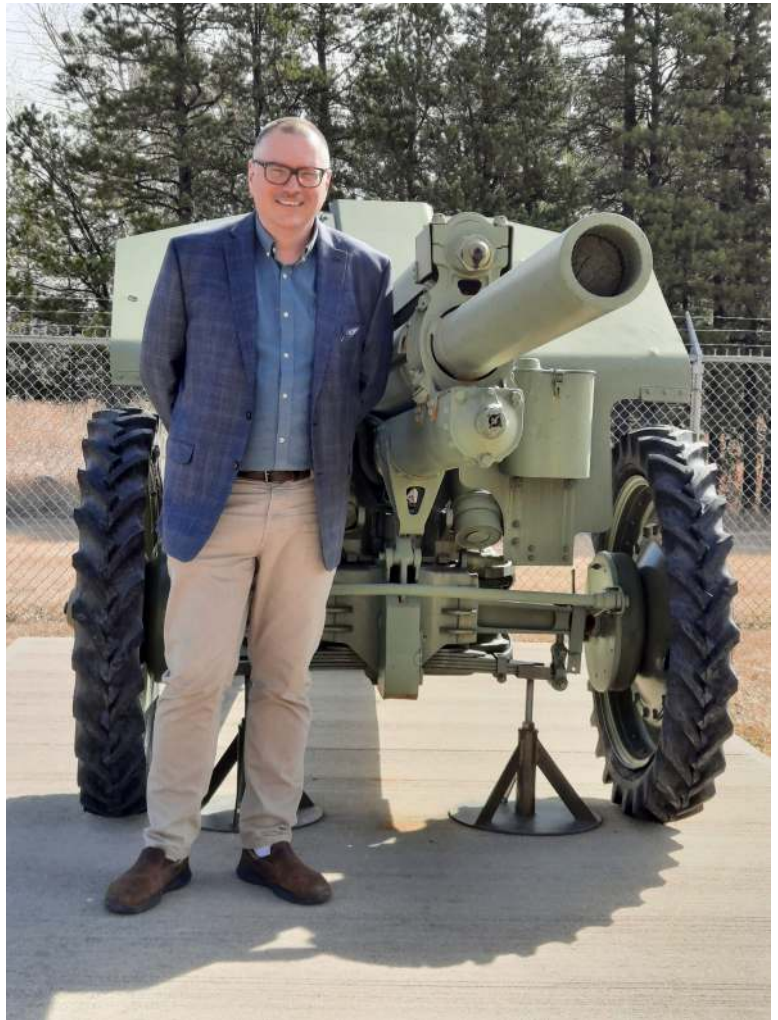
New Senior Curator at the RCA Museum

The RCA Museum has a new Senior Curator, Jonathan Ferguson. He started at the museum on 1 February 2021. We would like to welcome Jonathan to our team! Jonathan provided a short biography below.

I was born and raised in North Bay, Ontario. I was an Air Cadet in high school and I later served as a Civilian Instructor pilot with the Northeastern Ontario Gliding Centre at CFB North Bay.

I pursued my passion for archaeology at university and had to put off my plans to join the Reserves because my summers were spent on excavations in Ontario, England, Israel and especially Jordan. After my BA in Classical Archaeology from Wilfrid Laurier University, I completed an MA in Classics at McMaster University and an MA in Near Eastern Archaeology at the University of Toronto.

After a summer at the Callander Bay Historical Museum, I began working at the Royal Ontario Museum in 2004 with their public and school visits programs. This included teaching hands-on lessons with military artifacts ranging from the Boer War to the present day. I was most recently the Ontario Archaeology Inventory Technician, inventorying, cataloguing, and researching old collections. This work included gun worms, cannonballs, shells and other artillery artifacts from the 17th-18th century Hudson's Bay Company post at Fort Albany in northern Ontario. I look forward to using these skills at the RCA Museum.



A photo of Jonathan Ferguson taken in the RCA Museum Gun Park on 7 April 2021.

I joined the Army Reserve in March 2018 as a Logistics Officer with 32 Service Battalion in Toronto. In addition to serving as a platoon commander and course officer, I was our unit's Monuments and Artifacts Officer. My transfer to the 26th Field Regiment, RCA is in process, but I have already begun training as part of the unit in Brandon and on field exercises.

My family is currently in Egypt, where my wife is helping to design the Grand Egyptian Museum on the Giza plateau. When it's completed, she and our three boys will be joining me here in Manitoba. We're looking forward to finding a home and settling into the area.

As I get established here, I'm looking forward to getting to know the collections and galleries of the RCA Museum and serving with the Gunners of 26 Field Regiment.

The Officers and Men of A Battery (Part 1)

In 2021, we will celebrate the 150th anniversary of A and B Batteries' founding with the UBIQUE 150 events across Canada. The original officers and men of A and B Batteries represent the first full-time and permanent Canadian military elements. In 1871, the officers and men came from across Ontario and Quebec to complete garrison duties and train in gunnery science. After training, they went back to militia units across Canada and spread what they had learnt. Through the formation of A and B Batteries and the transfer of knowledge, the Canadian Artillery became much more ubiquitous in Canada. Yet who were these original Gunners, and how did they help make the Canadian Artillery UBIQUE?

From the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, England and France at various times had Imperial soldiers in Canada. A major military shift occurred in 1853-54 when most of the remaining British regulars left the Canadian colonies to fight in the Crimean War or to defend other colonial outposts. In response, the Province of Canada passed the Militia Act of 1855, which authorized an active volunteer militia of up to 5,000 officers and men, including cavalry, field artillery, garrison artillery and infantry. In 1867, the Confederation of Canada started the process of establishing a responsible government. After Confederation, Canada as a self-governing nation, became responsible, in part, for national defence. The formation of new batteries of artillery and schools of gunnery became part of this required contribution. The first post-Confederation Militia Act of 1868 placed all the active militia on an equal footing. By 1869, no less than 28 batteries of artillery existed across Canada.



A Battery, circa 1870s.

In February 1870, the British started removing their Imperial troops from Canada which continued until November 1871. On 20 October 1871, Militia Order 24 authorized raising two garrison artillery batteries in Kingston and Quebec. The new units would provide for the care, protection, and maintenance of the two forts, perform garrison duties, and serve as gunnery schools. When the British left, they also closed the artillery school that had operated since 1864. The new garrison soldiers were also the students in the schools. The new roles created full-time and regular responsibilities at the two garrisons in Kingston and Quebec. Each battery had two divisions, the mounted field artillery with four 9 pounder smooth bore cannons, and the dismounted as garrison artillery with two 24 pounder smooth bore howitzers and dozens of older mounted 32 pound smooth bore cannons. For both A and B Batteries, the school's commander was an officer of the Royal Artillery qualified through Shoeburyness, England, seconded from the Imperial authorities. He would oversee instruction, drill, and discipline at the school. The first commanding officer of A Battery, Lt-Col (later Major-General, Sir) George A. French, was an energetic and imposing leader. He obtained his Royal Artillery (RA) commission in 1860 and was an adjutant with the RA in Kingston from 1862-66. Next to be appointed was the first surgeon at A Battery, O. S. Strange.



A photo of MGen Sir G. A. French.

In 1871, the military districts of Ontario and Quebec requested volunteers, officers and men, in the active militia to join A and B Batteries for instruction and duty. From the returns, they selected the top candidates. Among the requirements was to be in good health, at least 5 foot 6 inches tall, and at least a 34-inch chest. They also requested that they belong to the 1st or 2nd class of the Canadian militia. Upon arrival, they were to be examined by a medical officer. The officers initially joined for the short course of instruction totalling three months, with a reduced pay rate of \$1 per diem. If they showed an aptitude for future military service, the school retained them for the long course for an additional nine months. After passing the short course, they were paid the entire allotted amount for a given rank. In 1871-72, a captain received \$2.82 per day, the assistant surgeon received \$2.43, a battery sergeant major at \$1, a sergeant at .80, a corporal at .70, a bombardier .60, and gunners at 50 cents a day. In addition to the daily pay rate, each enlisted soldier received 1lb of meat and 1lb of bread. They also received barrack accommodations, which included fuel for heat and light. Those who had horses also received forage.



An A Battery Officer, RCHA, 1913.

The men signed up for 12 months of service. After twelve months, both officers and men could leave and return to their prior active militia, or on the commandant's recommendation, be retained indefinitely. Most of these officers and men performed garrison duty and attended artillery training for approximately one year. After the training, most of the soldiers would go back to their original militia units to transfer the skills they learned. This system kept most officers and men for a short duration and returned them to their prior militia units. It allowed for a steady flow of soldiers, which aided in spreading knowledge throughout Canada. However, there was another group of gunners at A Battery that trained the soldiers. Those who trained the incoming soldiers tended to stay at A Battery indefinitely as the first full-time and permanent militia elements.



A Battery Staff Sergeants and Sergeants, 1887.

The original soldiers who came to A Battery were not fresh recruits. Many of the early men to join A Battery were ex-British regulars that had taken part in the Red River Expedition in 1870. After the Wolseley Force disbanded, many decided to remain in Canada, while others came from British units that had disbanded or left Canada. A Battery had 37 men who had served in the Imperial Army (WO's and NCOs), who then enrolled in Ontario's active militia. The training provided modelled British gunnery principles and expectations, and the seasoned instructors ensured that the students did not receive inadequate training. The men from A Battery came from many parts of Ontario. Of the first 106 men, 63 came from the Kingston Field Battery, 19 from the Toronto Field Battery, and nine from the Wellington Field Battery. Other batteries and garrison included: four

men from the London Field Battery, three from the Ottawa Garrison Artillery, two from the St. Catharines Garrison Battery, one from the Hamilton Field Battery, four from the Toronto Garrison Battery, and one from the Cobourg Garrison Battery. The point is that they came from far and wide to join A Battery. They also were hand-picked, and the militia selected the best candidates. To be continued...

By Andrew Oakden

105mm Charge Bags

A museum volunteer recently unboxed a collection of 105mm charge bags used with the C1 105mm howitzer and the L5 PACK 105mm howitzer. Gunners burnt the unused charge bags in the field at least until 2010. It's outstanding that Gunners donated some of these charge bags to the museum. At the time, Gunners regarded these unused bags as trash.

In the museum, they are notable artifacts that help explain how artillery works. The RCA Museum has the C1 105mm howitzer and the L5 PACK 105mm howitzer in their collection. We also have many examples of compatible shell casings and projectiles.

These are the only charge bags in the museum collection. In this case, they are for the M14 series brass 105mm cartridge case.



In the Canadian Artillery, M2 and M4 artillery propellant came in seven conveniently sized charge bags. It was an adjustable-charge system used with most rounds except for Heat and TP.T. The Gunners added bags to achieve the required projectile range. The total weight of the propelling charge is 1.25kgs with each bag varying in weight. In the museum example, the military removed the explosive pellets and replaced them with safe material.

Charge 1 - 239 grams, Charge 2 - 41 grams, Charge 3 - 71 grams

Charge 4 - 97 grams, Charge 5 - 153 grams, Charge 6 - 244 grams

Charge 7 - 397 grams

The manufacturer marked each charge bag 1 through 7. Charge 5 also included a piece of lead foil as an agent for de-coppering. The Gunners would insert the required number of bags in the brass cartridge and then wrap them around the primer in the center. The manufacturer connected each charge bag with twine for ease of use.



The Canadian Forces classified 105mm ammunition as semi-fixed, with the most common round being the High Explosive (HE) round. We have many original and reproduction rounds on display in the RCA Museum and more in storage. Both the C1 105mm howitzer and the L5 PACK 105mm howitzer used the M14 series cartridge, which is also on display in the museum.

By Andrew Oakden

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