

BARRAGE

The RCA Museum News

THE RCA MUSEUM
CANADA'S NATIONAL ARTILLERY MUSEUM



Oct 2021

The Geoffrey Jackson Donation



In September, Geoffrey Jackson came to the museum to donate a small collection of artifacts and present us with the published memoirs of his father titled *Muzzle Cover Jackson: The Memoirs of a Canadian Gunner in the Second World War*. The artifacts included one RCHA Warrant Officer patrol uniform with trousers and a folder with 14 black and white photos showing his father, WO1 (Ret'd) Geoffrey Jackson Senior, back in WW2. The photo on the left shows Jonathan Ferguson, our Senior Curator, taking a photograph of the collection for the museum accessioning paperwork. Geoffrey's father enlisted right after the outbreak of the Second World War, and fought with the Canadian Artillery in Britain, France, Belgium, Holland, and Germany. If you



would like to purchase your own copy of the book, please visit:

www.blurb.com/b/10760772-muzzle-cover-jackson-softcover

While Jonathan prepared the paperwork, Geoffrey toured the RCA Museum with the museum director. Jackson examined a 25 Pounder, the model of gun his father operated during WW2. Following the tour, Mr. Jackson spoke to newspaper reporter Jules for an article in the Shilo Stag at Canoe River Memorial Park, then visited our archives and gun park. Note the photo on the right of Mr. Jackson in front of a 25 Pounder at Canoe River Memorial Park.

The RCA Museum receives approximately sixty separate donations a year of various sizes and artifact types. We thank Mr. Jackson for his generous donation and will place his father's published memoirs in our library.

UBIQUE 150 Flags

Flags offer visitors the opportunity to interpret through exploration. Artifacts generally cannot speak for themselves without labels. However, flags and banners are novel examples of artifacts that can tell stories without additional text panels. These are visual representations of RCA history that are accessible to a broad audience.

Museum staff wanted to try something different from the norm when adding a collection of flags and pennants to the UBIQUE 150 exhibit. Decades ago, museum personnel placed the flag collection in crates for safe storage. Over the last few years, staff have evaluated and reorganized our flag collection, including banners, ensigns, and pennants.

We can only display a small number of the flags in our temporary display. Among them is an RCHA Band Standard with an embroidered RCA Crest with the word UBIQUE from the 1950s. Before 1926, the RCA used the word CANADA, and after 1926, they used the term UBIQUE. We have on display a red and blue Valcartier Camp souvenir pennant from 1914, likely bought as a keepsake by a Canadian soldier as part of the First Canadian Contingent for overseas duty in the First World War, shown below. The flags help demonstrate tradition and re-enforce the esprit de corps, regimental identity, and ethos.



We included a 1989 Airborne Gunner Reunion flag, signed by the veterans that attended the event, celebrating the 40th Anniversary of the first Canadian Airborne battery, B Battery, 1 RCHA, and the 45th Anniversary of Airborne Gunners in the Forward Observation Units, circa 1944-1945. Included are many WW2 pennants, including a small Canadian Red Ensign and a staff car pennant belonging to General A. G. L. McNaughton of the 1st Canadian Army, dated December 1943. We have hand-embroidered silk handkerchief from WW1 and WW2. The oldest flag on display is a Canadian Red Ensign with the Coat of Arms of the first six provinces of Canada, circa 1873-1896.

Flags help visitors understand the history of the RCA over the last 150 years. They call attention to the Regiment through imagery on fabric and provide meaning through branding and symbols such as the Coat of Arms. Flags have been everywhere with the RCA, sharing the same ubiquitous heritage. We hope these flags resonate with visitors and start conversations on UBIQUE 150.

By Andrew Oakden

A Manitoba Flag from Afghanistan

The RCA Museum is in the process of redeveloping our Afghanistan exhibit. In order to select suitable artifacts to illustrate the Canadian mission and experience in Afghanistan, we carried out an inventory and evaluation of related artifacts and media in our collection. One of the artifacts that has great potential for display is a Manitoba flag that was signed there. But reader beware: this is a cautionary tale of a curatorial dead-end.



A Manitoba flag in the RCA Museum's collections, reportedly signed in Afghanistan.

This large nylon flag measures 72 by 34 inches, not counting its halyards. It was manufactured in Port Credit, Ontario, by Canadiana, a flag and banner company. It has some fading and water damage, and a hole in the top corner of the fly for hanging. The flag has been signed many times with black marker, and many of the comments are directed at “Bill” who was presumably its owner. Among the signatures text claiming that the flag was flown in Afghanistan. Our understanding was that it was displayed in a dining hall at Kandahar Airfield – one of the inscriptions mentions KAF – and that it was signed by Canadian service members. However, there are no ranks, units or rotation mentioned in the text.

The donation files for the flag were sparse, merely mentioning that it was purchased in a store on 10th Street in Brandon. With no further provenance of when it was in Afghanistan or of the identity of Bill, it was difficult to work this flag into our narrative for the new exhibit. Accordingly, we reached out to the donor and asked if he had any further information on the flag’s history. He was able to elaborate that he had seen the flag on display in a friend’s store and had purchased it from him. Unfortunately, he did not know the identity of Bill and the donor’s offer to ask his friend bore no results.

Our next step was to consider the names signed on the flag. Some only had first names or nicknames, but others had surnames. Sixteen signatures with a surname and a first name or initial were legible, and these were cross-checked against the CAF’s email addresses. Eleven names had no matches, but five did and eleven emails were sent to potential matches (some names had more than one). No-one wrote back to say they were the person who signed the flag, but six negative responses were received.

At the time of writing, we are left with a flag bearing multiple well-wishes for a Manitoban we can’t identify. There are a few possibilities for its background. It may have been displayed in a KAF dining hall and signed by Canadian troops as we initially believed, although it is puzzling that we haven’t made contact with any of them through the DWAN. The well-wishers may instead have been civilian contractors, and most of our inquires support this theory, although no contact has been made with anyone who signed it. On the other hand, it may have been signed by soldiers from different nationalities. Either of these scenarios would make research more difficult.

While the flag would still make a visually striking addition to the RCA Museum’s Afghanistan redevelopment, there is relatively little that we can say for certain about it. All museum artifacts are enriched by the stories connected to them, which transform ordinary objects into tangible witnesses of history. As such, plans for displaying this flag are being reconsidered. If any *Barrage* readers recognize this flag, we would be grateful for more information. And Bill, if you’re reading this, please contact the museum!

By Jonathan Ferguson

The 12 Pounder BL Gun and the South African War

The RCA Museum displays a 12 Pounder BL (breech loader), Mark I, that the Canadian Artillery used in South Africa during the Boer War. The 12 Pounder BL was the primary field gun for the Regular Force from 1896 to 1908 and remained in service with the Active Militia until 1943. Canadian Gunners trained on the guns during the First World War and the Second World War.

In 1892, with the emergence of cordite, a powerful smokeless explosive, gunmakers produced formidable artillery systems with long effective ranges using modern steel barrels, such as the 12 Pounder BL. The first 12 Pounder BL arrived in Canada for testing in 1892. Canada purchased sixty Mark Is and thirty-six Mark IVs in the 1890s. The gun was breech-loading, an improvement from the older muzzle-loading, wrought iron models, such as the 9 Pounder RML (rifled muzzle loader). Unfortunately, the 12 Pounder BL did not use fixed ammunition that would speed up the process of loading and firing the gun, nor did it incorporate a modern recoil mechanism that would allow for firing without re-aiming after each fire. It did include a unique retractable spade under the trail to reduce gun recoil after firing.

War broke out in South Africa between the British and Boer colonists in 1899. Soon after, Canada provided a volunteer force to aid the British. Among the Canadians were three batteries of Field Artillery – C, D, and E Batteries. Canada equipped them with eighteen 12 Pounder BL's, six per battery. After arrival in South Africa, Canadian troops did not have to wait long to engage Boer forces. C Battery helped relieve Colonel Robert Baden-Powell's garrison under siege at Mafeking. E Battery helped liberate Douglas on the Vaal River, fighting a defensive campaign against Boer forces.

D Battery engaged the enemy along with the Royal Canadian Dragoons. At the Battle of Liliefontein, the Boers attacked and attempted to capture D Battery's 12 Pounder guns. The Gunners and Dragoons fought a desperate, daylong battle and saved the guns. Lieutenant E. W. B. Morrison, a Great Gunner, received the Distinguished Service Order for bravery. He went on to become the Director of the Canadian Artillery during WW1.

When Canada arrived in South Africa, they used the No. 56 fuses with a maximum distance of 4,000 yards. The Boer, in turn, fired at them from longer ranges. Later in the war, Canada used the No. 57 fuses that allowed the gun to fire up to 5,800 yards, which improved their chances of engaging the enemy. During the war, the Boers used concealment, long-range fire, and harassing fire to their advantage. They also targeted Gunners with long-range rifles. The Boer had changed how the Canadians and British deployed their guns on the battlefield. They no longer expected an adversary to duel over open sights. After the war, Gunners added optical sites for indirect fire, dug gun pits, and added gun shields to protect Gunners from small arms fire. Artillery would become the dominant weapon during the First World War.



The 12 Pounder BL Gun at the RCA Museum.



Photo of the RCA in South Africa, dated 1900.

The QF 18 Pounder during WW1

The Quick Firing 18 Pounder field gun was a wartime game changer, a pivotal artillery system, and one of the original modern field guns in Canadian service. It used a fixed cartridge, loaded from the breech, and had a 20th-century recoil system. It was the standard field gun used by the Royal Canadian Artillery (RCA) during the Great War and was in Canadian service from 1907 to 1945. The RCA Museum has one QF 18 Pounder MK II dated 1918 on display in the museum.

Late 19th-century artillery systems, such as the 12 Pounder BL, the forerunner to the QF 18 Pounder, incorporated wheel brakes and a spade under the trail. These additions helped with the recoil of the gun after firing, but they did not stop the gun from jumping after firing. Modern artillery systems, such as the QF 18 Pounder, included hydro-spring cylinders or hydro-pneumatic recoil mechanisms, to act as counter-recoil, which pushed the barrel back to the starting position after firing. It represented a giant leap in technological design and operation. The French 75mm field gun Model 1897 was the first modern artillery system, with the British QF 13 Pounder and QF 18 Pounder coming soon after.

The 1st Canadian Contingent left for England with fifty-four 18 Pounders. In early 1915, the Canadians joined the British in the trenches of France and Belgium. Canadians participated in battles across the Western Front. The Artillery directed bombardments against enemy trenches, machine-gun nests, and fortifications. Gunners fired a selection of rounds, including armour piercing, gas, high explosive, incendiary, shrapnel, smoke, and star. The 18 Pounder was an anti-personnel weapon designed to deliver large volumes of high-explosive shells. It could fire projectiles over six kilometres at a sustained rate of four rounds per minute. Gunners operated with speed and precision, while the guns were accurate and reliable.

In April 1917, the Battle of Vimy Ridge set a new standard for artillery support to deal with strong enemy positions and counterattacks. Canada had four divisions with Brigadier E. W. B. "Dinky" Morrison directing the Canadian Artillery. The pivotal gun for the battle was the 18 Pounder. Canada had 156 18 Pounders, and a smaller number of other field guns, medium guns, heavy guns, and mortars. They also had significant British artillery support. In total, for the campaign, the Allies deployed 480 18 Pounders, 138 4.5 Inch Howitzers, 96 2 Inch Trench Mortars, 24 9.45 Inch Howitzers, and 245 Siege and Heavy Mortars. The Canadian Corps also planned for the battle, stock-piled ammunition, dug trenches, and built support roads and subways systems to the front.



Canadian Gunners on an 18 Pounder firing platform, dated November 1918.



Canadian Gunners loading a round into an 18 Pounder, dated 1914-1919.

The campaign started with a preliminary attack from 20 March to 9 April 1917. Canadians bombed German batteries, trenches, and fortified positions. They eliminated barbed wire, notably with the introduction of the 106E MKII fuse. During the second week, they rained artillery on German positions, taking out 43,000 yards of enemy trenches, 10,000 yards of barbed wire, and harassed 83% of the located German guns. The Germans referred to this period as “the week of suffering.”

On 9 April 1917, the Allies began the attack by firing almost one thousand guns and mortars. Allied counter-battery fire pounded German gun positions, creeping barrages moved up the battlefield, and standing barrages focused on the key enemy positions. Canadians pulverized the German trenches and destroyed most of the remaining German guns before the infantry advanced on the hill under creeping barrages. Due to the destruction caused by the Canadian Corps, in many sections, the Germans were unable to mount serious resistance. On 12 April, Canadians retook the strategically imperative high ground from the Germans.

At the Battle of Vimy Ridge, all four Canadian divisions of the Canadian Corps fought together for the first time. It became a symbol of nationalism and Canadian pride - a Canadian military success story built on tactical innovation, extensive planning, and substantial artillery support. During the Battle of Vimy Ridge, about half the guns involved belonged to the British, which increased the firepower of the Canadian Corps. By 1917, ammunition was no longer in short supply for the Allies, which led to a massive stockpile and issuing of artillery shells for the battle—the Allies allotted 1.6 million rounds of ammunition.

During the Last 100 Days in 1918, the Canadian Corps also used the 18 Pounder for short-range, mobile artillery support. It is worth noting, alongside the infantry in forward units, the field artillery selected targets of opportunity over open sights, such as machine-gun nests.

By the end of the war, the Canadian Corps had five divisional artilleries, each with two brigades. Each brigade had three batteries of six 18 Pounders for a total of 180 guns. It was common to have three batteries of 18 Pounders for every one battery of 4.5 Inch Howitzers. They also had medium, heavy, and mortar batteries but in smaller numbers. Canada used the 18 Pounder more than any other gun during WW1. The 18 Pounder was a key component of Canada’s success. It proved to be an effective weapon in modern warfare and formed the backbone of the Canadian Corps. It was one of the most famous artillery systems, if not the most significant wartime gun in Canadian history.



The 33rd Battery, Canadian Field Artillery bringing up the guns to Vimy Ridge, dated April 1917.



Sir Robert Borden reviewing the artillery in Bramshott, England, dated 1917.

The Gunner Orange Album

Occasionally, notable bits of history are in the margins of less trodden places. Sometimes the backside of a photo provides more insight than the front. That is the case for the Gunner Herbert Orange photo album. When I first looked at the collection, I did not see anything unusual or worth documenting. It was not until I looked at the backs of some of the photographs that I realized that Herbert had a story to tell.



On the left is C Battery RCHA in the Gun Park at Camp Petawawa, dated 1937. On the right is Gunner Orange in England, dated 1940.



The first photo that caught my attention was of a young lady named Grace in a fashionable dress, shown to the left. The image reminded me of my grandmother, who once told me a story about when she wore a new dress to meet my grandfather. It made me wonder who was Grace, and why was the photo included? I checked on the back of the photograph and got my answer. It read "Love Grace XX." With more checking, it was an image of Herbert's wife before they got married. I then realized his wife Grace put this album together as a cherished family keepsake.

The album is like a jigsaw puzzle. You may need to rearrange the pieces to create meaning. After reviewing the photos, Herbert was at Osborne Barracks in Winnipeg from 1933 to 1940. He then went overseas and stayed in Britain with the 1st Canadian

Army, before going to Italy with the 1st Division in late 1943. Herbert remained in Italy until November 1944 and then returned to Canada. He likely left the military after the war ended in late 1945. On the right is a photograph of Herbert with his father, dated December 1944.



The album is a remembrance of happy times during the 1930s and of serious times during the war years. Most of the earlier images from the 1930s, of training at Fort Osborne, Camp Shilo, and Camp Petawawa are intact. The year 1937 was notable for Herbert. He took about half the photos in the album that year. The two main topics were ice hockey and summer training in Camp Petawawa. At the RCA Museum, I have seen many photos of Camp Petawawa, which generally are not personalized. Herbert customized his photos by adding subtitles, which helped to provide context and insight. Note the photograph on the right showing a convoy at Petawawa dated 1937. Herbert was a driver.

Herbert took many photographs of vehicles, accidents, fires, and even military funerals. It is the first album I have seen with images of a military funeral. He also took a lot of photos of guns. It is interesting that his album only includes images of the outdoors. The photographs show an active young man that trained hard throughout the year and enjoyed military life.



Herbert played on RCHA hockey teams throughout the 1930s. He also had the distinction of being on the Canadian military hockey team that played against the English team in 1940. The collection includes a photo of that match won by Canada, shown above. On the back, he wrote, "Put in album please (to show to my grandchildren) Love Herb." In this case, he acquired the photograph and mailed it to Canada.



A photo of the Garrison Cup Finals 1936-37 RCHA vs LSH (RC). RCHA won the game with a score of 2 to 1.

The last war photo came from Italy, dated November 1944, shown above on the left. On the back of the photograph are the names of each of the soldiers, twelve names in all. It appeared he did not want to forget his wartime experiences. Herbert did his time overseas and came back to his family. At the end of the war, he had a young family to raise. The Royal Regiment has always been a family-oriented organization. This album tells the story of the Orange family during the 1930s and in WW2. It is part of the Regimental story which deserves remembering.

By Andrew Oakden

The M1A1 75mm Pack Howitzer

The RCA Museum has one example of the M1A1 75mm Pack Howitzer that was in service with Canadian airborne batteries from 1949 to 1956. The 75mm Pack Howitzer was a portable, lightweight artillery piece designed for field and airborne support roles starting with the British and Americans in WW2. It was a 75mm calibre weapon with a weight of approximately 700kg and a range of 8,500 metres. It included an adaptable carriage that separated into six parts for para-drops.



The US developed the gun in the early 1920s, with the first model coming out in 1927, called the M1. A trough held the barrel in place, which gave the gun its unique appearance. The original model incorporated wooden-spoke wheels designed for usage in rough and mountainous terrains. In the early 1930s, a new model came out, the M1A1, which included the M8 carriage intended for airborne use and included metal-spoke wheels and rubber tires. During WW2, the British and Americans used it for airborne and infantry support, and dropped it in nine parts from a plane or glider.



A photo of a March-Pass of B Light Battery at Camp Shilo with Major G. D. Mitchell and Lieutenant P. J. A. Tees, members of the battery and inspected by Colonel L. G. Clark, Director of the RCA, dated 14 Oct 1949.

On 26 July 1949, Canada formed its first airborne battery, B Light Battery, 1 RCHA. A year later, in July 1950, the Active Force in Canada had approximately 1,900 personnel, including 1 RCHA in Shilo, which included the renamed 1st Light Battery (Paratroop), RCA. This battery included qualified paratroopers that provided airborne support for the Canadian Army. They armed this battery with the M1A1 75mm Pack Howitzer and multiple variations of the 4.2-inch mortar. The Canadian airborne element ceased in September 1956, remaining dormant until the creation of the Canadian Airborne Regiment in May 1968.

On an exciting note, Canada's involvement with the 75mm Pack Howitzer predates the gun's service in the Canadian Artillery. Back in 1944, a small number of Canadian Gunners were members of the British Airborne Forward Observation Units (1, 2 and 3 FOU), which called down artillery fire on enemy targets. 2 FOU saw action in December 1944, sealing off the German break-through in the Ardennes Offensive, followed by participation in the jump beyond the Rhine in March 1945. While Canadian FOU's did not fire the 75mm Pack Howitzer, they did call down artillery fire from the 75mm Pack Howitzer starting in late 1944.

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Thank you for your support! Donations help us to fund curatorial projects and pay the salaries of summer students. In 2022, we currently do not have funding for summer students.

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