

BARRAGE

The RCA Museum News

THE RCA MUSEUM
CANADA'S NATIONAL ARTILLERY MUSEUM



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Colonel D.T. Irwin's Tunic

Throughout centuries, armies and militia have always used standardized dress to express identity and belonging. Britain's Royal Artillery wore blue with scarlet facings and embellishments of embroidery and feathers – a look that encountered many changes over the years but kept its customary colours in the post-Confederation Canadian Militia.

Our museum boasts a tunic dating back to Canada's early army years. Our collection's dark blue, gold-trimmed jacket has a scarlet collar, shoulders, and cuffs. Six gold lace loops adorn the breast of the coat with caps and drops on each side with gold-worked olivet buttons for fastening. The epaulettes bear ornate silver-threaded pips of a crown and two stars. More impressive is the original owner of this intricate garment: Great Gunner, Col D.T. Irwin, CMG.

Colonel De la Cherois T. Irwin, born in Ireland, began his military career in London, England, and soon got sent over on exchange to Canada as part of the Royal Artillery. There, Irwin was posted to A Battery, the School of Artillery in Kingston, Ontario and received



Colonel D. T. Irwin.

the promotion of Major in the Canadian Militia. Succeeding Col G.A. French as Commandant of the School of Artillery and as Officer Commanding of A Battery, Irwin worked alongside modern Canadian Artillery founding father and Great Gunner Major-General T. B. Strange. Col Irwin was the first Commanding Officer of the Regiment of Canadian Artillery from 1883 to 1897. He is responsible for critical regimental reorganizations as well as significant improvements in matters of military rations and expansion of the artillery to different locations.

The Staff Officer's undress jacket is unique compared to the other uniforms we have in our collection dating back to that period. The sleeves showcase gold embroidery much more intricate than the one on the gunner's uniform, which features a simple Austrian knot. The reason for this difference is that Col Irwin was a Field Officer, and uniforms of the higher ranks were usually more embellished than those of lower ranks.



Colonel D. T. Irwin Tunic

The RCA Museum is fortunate to possess Col Irwin's tunic and other uniforms from the same era. These garments offer a glimpse into the early days of the Canadian Militia. Despite all the variations undergone by the military dress over the last century and a half, today's Canadian Army still considers the uniform an "outward symbol of its commitment, identity and ethos" that members should wear proudly.

By Venessa Léger

The Best Nickname in Shilo

Hugh Sinclair, also known as Mr. Shilo, championed community development for twenty years. From 1954 to 1973, Hugh was the townsite officer or civilian base administrative officer responsible for buildings and other infrastructure, including the 700-plus married quarters. Under his direction, the base flourished with excellent housing and recreational facilities. Hugh Sinclair received a Centennial Award in 1967, the Shilo Good Citizen Award in 1973, and an Order of Canada in 1979, all for making Shilo a better place to live.

Hugh was born in Virden, Manitoba, in 1916. At sixteen, he joined the Active Militia with the Manitoba Border Horse. He trained at Camp Hughes in the summer of 1933 and then at Camp Shilo in the summer of 1934. He said, "They paid the horses more than they did the soldiers" back then. "The Virden area farmers were paid \$1.50 a day for the use of their horses, while we were paid a dollar a day." He stayed with the Horse Calvary until 1940 when he enlisted for WW2 and married his longtime girlfriend, Violet Menser.

In 1940, Hugh trained at Camp Shilo, and then in 1941, he served in Great Britain with the XII Manitoba Dragoons, part of the Canadian Armoured Corps Regiment. He attained the rank of Major and commanded an armoured squadron in North-West Europe. He returned to civilian life and rejoined the Reserves with the XII Dragoons as the squadron leader in 1946.

Hugh rejoined the Permanent Forces as a training officer at Camp Shilo in 1950. He worked at Shilo Base Headquarters from 1951 to 1954, forming the backbone of the administrative corps. In 1951, he became a battery commander for the 79th Field Regiment, which became 3 RCHA, and assisted with their pre-deployment to Korea in the spring of 1954.

In 1954, Major Sinclair left the Active Force and accepted the civilian position of Administrative Officer for



Hugh Sinclair pointing at a map of married quarters in Shilo, dated 1979.

CFB Shilo—a position he maintained for twenty years. Hugh spearheaded the development of married quarters for over seven hundred families. Shilo had some of the best facilities of any base for its size in Canada, and much of the credit should go to Hugh, shown in the photo above.

Hugh volunteered for many organizations on base, including as the Administrative Officer for the Shilo School system, the deputy mayor of Shilo, the Officers' Mess Council, and many sports executive committees, including at the Shilo Golf Country Club and Curling Club. He also advanced the RCA Museum in 1986, when the museum moved to the old Officers' Mess, Building A12.

After Hugh Sinclair died in April 2000, his family donated his Shilo photo albums, memorabilia, awards, and military decorations, including the Order of Canada. These items represent the life of a great individual who spent fifty years advancing the community of Shilo. We proudly display Mr. Shilo's military decorations in our new Gunner's Gallery.



Hugh Sinclair on the left, Club Championship Winners in Shilo, 1968.

By Andrew Oakden

Captain Alfred A. Farley

The RCA Museum has a striking collection of B Battery heritage photographs showing Captain Alfred A. Farley, a good-natured and ubiquitous soldier in B Battery and the Royal School of Gunnery in the 1880s. Captain Farley joined B Battery as an Active Militia soldier in 1882, then as a founding member of the Regiment of Canadian Artillery in 1883 and as a Permanent Corps soldier in 1884.

In 1880, Captain Farley was a reservist with the 15th Battalion, Argyle Light Infantry, in Belleville, Ontario. At this time, the Canadian Militia was a volunteer force organized for the defence of Canada. The Militia consisted primarily of part-time soldiers who trained during weekends and holidays. The volunteer force included contracted full-time teaching staff and leadership at the gunnery schools, the officers and non-commissioned personnel at A Battery and B Battery. At the schools, the federal government established a new system of training that emphasized marksmanship and field training. Despite improvements, the Canadian Militia remained an imperfect force, with low levels of funding and limited resources, which made it challenging to maintain readiness for potential threats.



Captain Farley in Kingston, circa 1882-84.

In 1880, Queen Victoria approved the Royal School of Gunnery's new title. Also, in 1880, B Battery exchanged quarters and provinces with A Battery. Major-General R. G. A. Luard, the General Officer Commanding the Canadian Militia, became disillusioned with the Royal Schools of Gunnery's low-efficiency standards and decided to have each battery switch location. Both batteries departed from their respective forts, with A Battery leaving Fort Henry in Kingston and heading to the Citadel in Quebec City, while B Battery went in the opposite direction. They stayed in their newly appointed quarters for five years, with the battery's triumphant return to their original forts and provinces starting in September 1885.

In 1883, the Commanding Officer of B Battery in Kingston, Ontario, was Lieutenant-Colonel Charles E. Montizambert, a veteran of the Fenian Raids and highly regarded military leader, taking over for Major-General Strange in 1881. Strange received forced retirement at 51. Major-General Luard said Strange was an "able and well-known officer of the Royal Artillery who has devoted ten of the best years of his life and has been like a father to the Artillery of Canada." The "able and well-known" phrasing does not adequately reflect Strange's prodigious, larger-than-life legacy as the father of the Canadian Artillery.



The Officers of B Battery at the Citadel in 1886, (Captain Farley, bottom right).

In 1883, the official regimental lineage of the RCA started with the authorization of the Regiment of Canadian Artillery by Militia General Order 18/83. The Commanding Officer of the Regiment and Inspector of the Artillery for all of Canada was the prior A Battery Commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Irwin. Irwin carried out with great insight and pragmatism much-needed reforms delegated by Major-General Luard. The reforms included adding a third training battery and a school of gunnery called C Battery on the West Coast (formed in 1887). Other reforms included combining the three batteries and Royal Schools of Gunnery under one brigade or regimental unit with standardized policy and efficiency standards.

The teaching staff at the Royal School of Gunnery, including Captain Farley, built friendly and engaging relationships with the Active Militia artillery students. The Canadian Militia regarded the staff officers and non-commissioned staff as paid instructors on short-term contracts rather than regular army soldiers. Their principal functions at the batteries were

managing British weaponry left behind and instructing the Active Militia. Until 1884, A and B Batteries of Artillery and Schools of Gunnery were treated no differently regarding status than the rest of the militia. Before this date, the staff were part of the Active Militia or Canada's part-time volunteer army, not the regular army or permanent force, which did not exist. In 1884, Canada updated the Militia Act and approved the formation of the Permanent Corps. The first reference to the Permanent Corps came from General Order No. 2 of 2 May 1884. In 1884, the Canadian Militia enlisted Permanent Corps personnel, such as Captain Farley, into the Regiment of Canadian Artillery for General Service, which excluded foreign service but not active operations in Canada.



The Officers of B Battery at the Citadel in 1886, (Captain Farley, front center).

The Regiment of Canadian Artillery, including Captain Farley, participated in active operations during the North-West Rebellion or North-West Resistance from March 1885 to July 1885. After the last battle and surrender of Big Bear, reservists or members of the Non-Permanent Active Militia returned to their homes. Still, regular units, including A and B Batteries, stayed in the West to maintain order and assist the NWMP. In the winter of 1885, married officers and non-commissioned personnel returned to their wives and family, but single soldiers stayed behind. Captain Farley remained in the West and returned in June 1886. After the conclusion of the active operations, the officers and non-commissioned personnel luckily and joyfully returned to their original forts - A Battery to Fort Henry and B Battery to the Citadel.

The heritage photos of Captain Farley and other soldiers reflect a stirring and dramatic period in RCA history. While historians appropriately mention the founding of A Battery and B Battery in 1871, representing the first full-time and permanent subunits of Canada's Active Militia, they routinely overlook the formation of the Regiment of Canadian Artillery and Permanent Corps in 1883 and 1884. Also, the punitive five-year transfer of quarters between A and B Batteries and the harsh 15 months in the West during the rebellion and subsequent return to their original barracks are worthy of further discussion. As for Captain Farley, he was promoted up the ranks to Lieutenant-Colonel and continued in Permanent Corps until 1905, and died of ill health the following year.

Canadian Artillery Boer War Photo

Staff at the RCA Museum found an excellent historical photo showing D Battery, RCA, and their six-gun teams deployed in South Africa during the Boer War (1899-1902). Canada raised and deployed three artillery batteries in the Boer War (C Battery, D Battery, and E Battery), each having six 12-pounders. Staff have looked for years for an image that properly represents the Canadian Gunner experience in South Africa but to no avail. In the collection, we have less than a dozen photos of the Boer War, and all are of poor quality. Thankfully, we stumbled upon this hidden gem, shown below.



The photo shows Lt E. W. B. Morrison (center) leading D Battery, RCA, in the Eastern Transvaal, South Africa, with all six gun-teams of 12 Pounders in late 1900. Each gun team included six horses, limber, 12 Pounder and 10 Gunners. During this period, D Battery took part in "the first all-Canadian overseas show," engaging the enemy thirty-two times, most notably at Leliefontein on 7 November 1900.

During the Battle of Leliefontein, the Boers launched a surprise attack on British and Canadian forces. Canadian troops included sections of the Royal Canadian Dragoons, the 2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles and D Battery, RCA. With two 12 Pounders, D Battery, under intense pressure and facing a sudden assault, provided cover fire while the infantry acquired high ground, halting the Boer attack. The battle included intense fighting, with three members of the Royal Canadian Dragoons receiving the Victoria Cross.

The D Battery, RCA, Boer War photograph is a reprint likely from the 1920s. Originally, this photo was framed and glued in place. The glue from the back has leaked to the front. There is damage to the bottom of the picture and many tiny scratches throughout. Our conservators will place it in a photo-safe plastic enclosure to protect against long-term degradation. Staff will convert a high-resolution scan of the photo into a 4-foot by 8-foot mural for our Boer War Gallery.

Jack's Wartime Photo Collection

Most museums are very good at collecting, caring for, and displaying objects; however, many museums, including the RCA Museum, struggle to identify the human element or stories behind each artifact. When artifacts enter a museum through the accessioning process, staff sometimes do not take the time to collate the shared experiences or notable stories that make the artifact meaningful. We need to share authentic stories, which may change how we interpret the past.

Our museum is full of Canadian Gunner-related historical photos and artifacts. Each Gunner had unique stories in the RCA; however, many of these experiences overlap and become similar experiences and stories. I recently came across one anonymous photo collection, part of a large donation from the 77th Battery Association back in the 1990s. The 77th Battery was part of the 3rd Field Regiment, with the 1st Canadian Infantry Division and the First Canadian Army during WW2.

The unidentified photo collection consists of dozens of photos from two Canadian Gunners. Our accessioning records revealed that in 1996, museum curators removed the images from a deteriorating photo album but could not locate the names of the two soldiers. Unfortunately, most of our archives do not include precise details on the Canadian Gunners in the photographs. I decided to research the collection, determine the names of the Gunners, and locate shared experiences and stories during WW2.

The Gunner in the photograph on the right was Sergeant Jack Anderson from Colborne, Ontario. I matched his photo with a 77th Battery unit photo in our archives. Also, the second Gunner on the left was Bombardier (Sam) H. A. Myles, whom I traced through the 3rd Field Regimental history. Both men were part of the 3rd Field Regiment and 1st Canadian Infantry Division. Sergeant Jack Anderson and Bombardier Sam Myles shared a family connection; Jack married Sam's sister, making them brothers-in-law.



Jack sent most of the photos and postcards to his wife, Sam's sister. Note the picture of Sam and Jack, captioned: "Likely you know these two, love – Jack XXXX."



The collection includes many images that were common to other Canadian soldiers. For example, it contains a published cartoon about Armistice Day 1935, portraying a WW1 veteran joking about politicians who supported ammunition manufacturers that profited from warfare, shown to the left. Likely, Sgt Anderson saved the cartoon for posterity. The Canadian government passed the Armistice Bill in 1921 to remember those who died in the Great War on 11 November annually, which we now call Remembrance Day.

Jack's wartime photo collection starts in the spring of 1941. Note the comic image to the right of Sgt Anderson in a robe, captioned, "somebody sneaking up," at Aldershot, UK. The Canadian Army required a large base in southern England to quarter hundreds of thousands of arriving troops. In December 1939, the first troops arrived at Aldershot, and six years later, over 330,000 Canadians had passed through the camp. The Canadian Army was the largest commonwealth force ever quartered in the UK.

Below to the left is an early photo of Sam Myles on the Salisbury Plain, dated 1941. During WW2, the Salisbury Plain was a primary training zone for Allied troops before embarking to North Africa, Italy or the invasion of Europe. It was a vital training area and one of the largest in the United Kingdom, covering 300 square miles. Canadians trained on the Salisbury Plain before the Allied invasions of Sicily and Italy in 1943.



The photo above to the right is a first-rate example of Gunners training on the 25-pounder at Lark Hill in 1942. Bombardier Myles is on the right of the picture with the caption, "Sam in Action, Looks cold, eh? It damn well is." Lark Hill is also on the Salisbury Plain, near Stonehenge. During WW2, the War Department used the area for artillery ranges, machine-gun ranges, and airfields. At the Lark Hill artillery ranges, the Canadian Field Artillery trained on 25-pounders and the Medium Regiments trained on 4.5 inch howitzers and 5.5 inch howitzers.

The photo to the right shows Canadian Gunners posing with the 25-pounder in 1942. Sam is second from the left in the image. Other Canadians would have had similar experiences at military training sites across the UK.



The 1st Canadian Infantry Division, including the 3rd Field Regiment, fought in Italy as part of the Eighth British Army. Both Gunners were part of the 3rd Field Regiment fighting in Italy. Note the photo to the right of Gunners in Italy dated October 1944. By this time, after 15 months in the Mediterranean, the men were seasoned and accustomed to warfare. Canadians played a vital role in the liberation of Sicily from July to August 1943, then on mainland Italy from September 1943 to February 1945. The peak Canadian strength in Italy was 76,000 soldiers.



During Christmas 1943, Canadians fought bravely against the Germans, often with hand-to-hand combat, in Ortona, Italy. Note the photo to the left of Sgt Anderson in Ortona dated January 1944. Canadians fought in the streets and smashed their way through with 6-pounder and 17-pounder Anti-Tank guns. The Allies took Ortona on 28 December 1943; over 5,900 Canadians died in the Italian Campaign. In February 1945, the remaining Canadians, including the 3rd Field Regiment, moved to Northwest Europe, joining the First Canadian Army and driving into Holland and Germany.

After the Germans surrendered on 8 May 1945, the 3rd Field Regiments and many other Canadians were in Holland. The collection contains 1st Canadian Division Sports program, dated 6 July 1945, shown below. After the surrender, leadership did their best to keep soldiers busy, such as sports days in Holland. The program of events lists Bdr Myles, from Colborne, Ontario, representing 3rd Field Artillery in the One-Mile Relay and 440 Yard Dash. He finished 1st in the One-Mile Relay and 2nd in the 440 Yard Dash.

The now identified photo collection depicts significant events with the 77th Battery, 3rd Field Regiment and 1st Canadian Infantry Division. Both Jack and Sam stayed overseas for four-and-a-half years, first in England for two-and-a-half years, followed by Italy for eighteen months, and then Northwest Europe for six months, before going back to Canada. Many of their experiences overlap with other Gunners as authentic and meaningful stories. Jack's collection of wartime photos provides valuable insight into the history of WW2 from a Canadian Gunner's point of view.



By Andrew Oakden

Regimental Photograph Collection

The RCA Museum received a collection of annual photo albums containing hundreds of images from the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s from 1 RCHA. Our museum holds roughly 5,000 artifacts that belong to the Regiment. Twelve photo albums show A Battery, 1 RHCA in West Germany in the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s, stationed at the Canadian Forces Base Lahr, Germany. Note the image below showing Gunners with their new M109A2s from 1986. The albums reflect a busy period for the Regiment with training exercises, parades, and other events, providing a visual record of their deployment in West Germany.

At the height of the Cold War, Canada had thousands of military personnel, with 4 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group, stationed in West Germany. From 1951 to 1992, the RCA had field artillery, air defence and anti-tank units spread across various Canadian bases in Germany, including Lahr, Baden-Söllingen, and Werl. The four RCHA permanent force units rotated deployments to West Germany from 1951 to 1966.



1 RCHA in Lahr, West Germany, 1986.

In 1967, 1 RCHA became the permanent artillery regiment in West Germany. Canadian troops trained to defend against a Soviet invasion of West Germany and supported Canadian and NATO operations in other parts of the world. After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Canada reduced its military presence in Europe. 1 RCHA left Lahr, Germany in July 1992, returning to Shilo, Manitoba and then deployed for peacekeeping duty in Cyprus. Canadian Forces Base Lahr remained open until 31 December 1993.



1 RCHA in Cyprus, 1992.

The remaining three albums show deployed 1 RCHA Gunners in Cyprus from August 1992 to February 1993 (Operation Snowgoose) as part of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP). In 1992, the Canadian Forces had approximately 850 personnel in Cyprus, including 1 RCHA. Canadians patrolled the buffer zone between the Greek and Turkish communities, monitoring the ceasefire and providing humanitarian assistance. Canadian military personnel continued to serve in the 1990s and 2000s in Cyprus. Canada still contributes personnel to UNFICYP, although in small numbers.

The fifteen photo albums show 1 RCHA deployed in West Germany from 1951 to 1993 and during Operation Snowgoose in Cyprus from 1992 to 1993. The collection improves our pictorial record of these deployments, advancing the Regimental narrative while reinforcing traditions and values.

By Andrew Oakden

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