



UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

University of Calgary

PRISM: University of Calgary's Digital Repository

University of Calgary Press

University of Calgary Press Open Access Books

2020-02

Treasuring the Tradition: The Story of the Military Museums

Bercuson, David Jay; Keshen, Jeff

University of Calgary Press

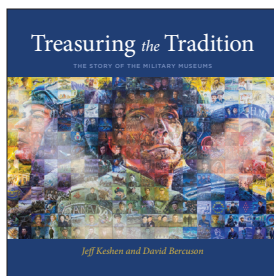
Bercuson, D. J., & Keshen, J. (2020). Treasuring the Tradition: The story of the Military Museums. Calgary, AB: The University of Calgary Press.

<http://hdl.handle.net/1880/111578>

book

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0>

Downloaded from PRISM: <https://prism.ucalgary.ca>



**TREASURING THE TRADITION:
The Story of the Military Museums**
by Jeff Keshen and David Bercuson

ISBN 978-1-77385-059-7

THIS BOOK IS AN OPEN ACCESS E-BOOK. It is an electronic version of a book that can be purchased in physical form through any bookseller or on-line retailer, or from our distributors. Please support this open access publication by requesting that your university purchase a print copy of this book, or by purchasing a copy yourself. If you have any questions, please contact us at ucpress@ucalgary.ca

Cover Art: The artwork on the cover of this book is not open access and falls under traditional copyright provisions; it cannot be reproduced in any way without written permission of the artists and their agents. The cover can be displayed as a complete cover image for the purposes of publicizing this work, but the artwork cannot be extracted from the context of the cover of this specific work without breaching the artist's copyright.

COPYRIGHT NOTICE: This open-access work is published under a Creative Commons licence. This means that you are free to copy, distribute, display or perform the work as long as you clearly attribute the work to its authors and publisher, that you do not use this work for any commercial gain in any form, and that you in no way alter, transform, or build on the work outside of its use in normal academic scholarship without our express permission. If you want to reuse or distribute the work, you must inform its new audience of the licence terms of this work. For more information, see details of the Creative Commons licence at: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

UNDER THE CREATIVE COMMONS LICENCE YOU MAY:

- read and store this document free of charge;
- distribute it for personal use free of charge;
- print sections of the work for personal use;
- read or perform parts of the work in a context where no financial transactions take place.

UNDER THE CREATIVE COMMONS LICENCE YOU MAY NOT:

- gain financially from the work in any way;
- sell the work or seek monies in relation to the distribution of the work;
- use the work in any commercial activity of any kind;
- profit a third party indirectly via use or distribution of the work;
- distribute in or through a commercial body (with the exception of academic usage within educational institutions such as schools and universities);
- reproduce, distribute, or store the cover image outside of its function as a cover of this work;
- alter or build on the work outside of normal academic scholarship.



Acknowledgement: We acknowledge the wording around open access used by Australian publisher, **re.press**, and thank them for giving us permission to adapt their wording to our policy <http://www.re-press.org>

2

A MUSEUM FOR THE REGIMENTS

By 1988, CMMS had an old empty school building in the middle of the Currie Barracks family quarters with no infrastructure, no exhibits, and no managing staff. More importantly, it had no money. Plans were laid to remedy all these problems. First came the money. Calgary had a long military history and housed two large bases. Many retired personnel stayed in the city after leaving the military and a sizeable number found their way into Calgary's burgeoning oil and gas business. Several large corporations were headquartered in the city and other companies had major branch offices there. These companies were targeted for fundraising as were wealthy individuals with military ties or military backgrounds. For some time, Lord Strathcona's Horse had put on "Businessmen's Lunches," known as BMLs, one Friday every month where local business leaders and members of the Calgary Garrison met and mingled over food and drinks. These BMLs drew in even more potential donors. The CMMS also sought to raise \$2.5 million from the federal government and the Department of National Defence, \$1.5 million from the provincial government, and \$800,000 from the municipal government. Calgary was just recovering from another one of its boom/bust cycles in the late 1980s, so fundraising was somewhat slow at first, but then the money started rolling in.

At the beginning of the campaign, the effort was headed by a committee of wealthy notables and military representatives chaired by Stan Waters, the former Commander of Force Mobile Command. The committee would meet every two weeks for a 7:00 a.m. breakfast at the Petroleum Club. Stan kept a "to do" list in his



(ABOVE)
1912 Pattern British Cavalry
Officer's sword and scabbard.

(BELOW)
1908 Pattern Cavalry Trooper's
sword and scabbard. This
belonged to Trooper James
Elvin Cox, Lord Strathcona's
Horse (Royal Canadians). Cox
was wounded at the battle of
Moreuil Wood, one of the last
great cavalry charges of the
First World War. Very similar to
the 1912 Pattern, the 1908 was
less ornate and designed to be
purely functional. Collection
of Lord Strathcona's Horse
(Royal Canadians) Regimental
Museum.

head. At one such meeting he questioned a prominent oilman who had pledged to raise a million dollars. The oilman had just started to eat a forkful of scrambled eggs when Waters asked him where the million dollars was. The oilman said that he had collected \$700,000; Waters brusquely asked him where the other \$300,000 was—retired Lieutenant-General Waters was not afraid to confront any members of the committee.

The plan to operate the museum was to have a museum director set overall strategy, assisted by a managing curator and supported by a mix of civilian employees and military personnel. The four regiments would coordinate with the director, but still manage their own personnel—namely regimental members and volunteers—and individual collections.

For several years while fundraising was going on, different people tried to manage the museum as a single unit within the Department of National Defence. It was a difficult job, like trying to herd cats, and it did not work. Then Ian Barnes was hired as the museum's first paid director. Barnes began to cajole and convince

the regiments to work together on planning the museum infrastructure and prospective general programming, while independently operating their own facilities within the future building.

The changes and upgrades needed to transform the former school into a museum were substantial: flooring, lighting, ventilation, window coverage, security, fire protection, and the provision of proper storage and display facilities.

The museum was promoted for its ability to educate people, especially the young, about the centrality of military history to Calgary's, Alberta's, and Canada's past. It would also provide another major tourist attraction, taking advantage of the fact that in 1986 some 6.9 million people visited Calgary, a 17 per cent increase over 1985. Future growth was projected with the city slated to host the 1988 Winter Olympics.

Numerous groups expressed support for a new museum, including school boards, the Calgary Police Service, the RCMP, the Canadian Armed Forces, museum associations, management of the Calgary Stampede, and the city's Chamber of Commerce. Publicity and fundraising campaigns launched under the motto, "Treasure the Tradition." A mobile display of military artifacts travelled to schools and various public venues across Calgary to raise awareness and support. The campaign linked itself to what was cast as the entrepreneurial, optimistic, can-do attitude typifying the region, as promotional literature declared: "It took grit and determination to settle the west, co-operation to civilize it, perseverance to help it grow and prosper, and courage to help keep it free. We treasure traditions that reflect them in our collective consciousness. Our military heritage is integral to our Western heritage as is our pioneer tradition in which we take such pride."

The federal government initially provided money for an architectural assessment. CMMS leaders pressured for core funding, emphasizing that contributions from other levels of government would not come unless Ottawa provided its share. It took a year, but a \$945,000 grant from the federal Department of Communications got the ball rolling, convincing other public sources to pitch in according to the goals the CMMS established.

Numerous companies delivered large donations, many well into the five figures, including Shell, Husky, Trans Canada Pipelines, and Amoco Petroleum. Bingo games and benefit concerts, including a military tattoo, raised well over \$100,000. In October 1988, the CMMS borrowed \$78,000 to purchase a Mercedes Benz 560



PHOTO: JULIE VINCENT PHOTOGRAPHY

Coupe Roadster, a top end sports luxury car, which it raffled off for tickets costing \$100 each, making another \$100,000 in profit.

Those running the fundraising campaign emphasized the intent to create a dynamic institution, not a stuffy, staid, temple to the past. As the collections grew out of regimental activities, the preponderance of artifacts were strictly military in nature: weapons, uniforms, medals, maps, photos, and larger items such as artillery, motorcycles, jeeps, and even tanks. Many items were tied to individuals, like the Victoria Cross, on loan to the museum, posthumously awarded to Strathcona Lieutenant Gordon Muriel Flowerdew, who was mortally wounded while leading one of the last cavalry charges of the First World War at the Battle of Moreuil Wood in March 1918.

The goal of every exhibit was to immerse visitors in the stories being told, having them interact with military history whenever possible, such as by walking through a trench, rather than only viewing items in locked cabinets. The museum would pay homage to past sacrifice, but not indulge in nostalgia. “We seek no glorification of war,” went one CMMS report, “but rather an attractive and tasteful museum where its means and consequences, military, economic and social, may be viewed and reflected upon by people of all ages.”

The Queen was anticipated to visit in 1990 to present colours to the Calgary Highlanders and review her other regiment, the King’s Own Calgary Regiment. Fred Mannix, the honorary colonel of the Highlanders, had long been interested and involved in military affairs. He was also a driving force behind the fundraising for the museum. As honorary colonel, it was his privilege to visit the Queen once a year to report on the progress of the regiment. He was anxious to see her in 1987 to also explain the museum project and issue a personal invitation for her to officially open the new museum while she was in Calgary in 1990. Fully decked out in his dress uniform complete with sword, dirk, and honours, he attended her at Buckingham Palace in 1987 and was surprised by her considerable knowledge of the Calgary Highlanders. Mannix was supposed to spend the customary seven minutes allotted to the Queen’s visitors, but the conversation ran on for three-quarters of an hour. Mannix showed her the regimental book the Highlanders were preparing and reported that they were commissioning official histories of the regiment in both World Wars. He also explained the museum project, which she was interested to hear about, noting they were having trouble getting money from the

(OPPOSITE)

M38 CDN Jeep manufactured in 1952 by the Ford Motor Company of Canada Ltd., as seen on display in the Army Museum of Alberta. This particular jeep served in the Korean conflict. It was very useful on the poor roads in Korea. Collection of the Army Museum of Alberta, donated by the Estate of Randall Anderson.

three levels of government and the private sector. At this point, the Queen said she would open the museum when she was in Calgary, and then all levels of government would put in money—and that he should make sure to ask for enough. When they were done, the Queen took Honorary Colonel Mannix by the elbow to walk him out of the room. He knew that he was supposed to remain two paces behind her; he struggled with his sword (which he had not worn before) and did his best to keep up. When they exited the room, a royal page told Her Majesty that she was quite late; she placed her face close to his and with hands on her hips declared, “We are never late.”

Now fundraising and construction of the museum had to proceed as quickly as possible. Indeed, those driving the project used the upcoming June 1990 visit to lobby governments for more money to speed things along. To some controversy, the municipal government contributed an additional \$400,000 to get the building to a state where the Queen could visit and dedicate the site, as initially the plan was to open it on Remembrance Day. When the Queen and Prince Philip arrived, their tour was confined to the main foyer since it was actually not until September 1991 that the interior of the building was finished.

With the Museum’s opening, a major addition had been made to Calgary’s cultural landscape. In its first year of operations, attendance at the new museum far

Korean “Souvenir” style Jacket.
This silk embroidered jacket was made for an unknown soldier of Lord Strathcona’s Horse (Royal Canadians) while serving overseas in the Korean War. Collection of Lord Strathcona’s Horse (Royal Canadians) Regimental Museum.



PHOTO: JULIE VINCENT PHOTOGRAPHY

exceeded the number of combined visitors to the previous four separate regimental facilities.

Each of the four regimental collections had common aspects; indeed, a theme running through all was to get visitors to appreciate the “concept of ‘the regiment,’” namely as an entity to which its members felt “loyalty, honour, comradeship, identity, family, [and] interdependence.” The four regimental collections followed a chronological approach spanning from their origins to peacekeeping operations, with the greatest focus being on the World Wars. However, there were many distinct aspects reflecting the fact that they each had different core functions: Lord Strathcona’s Horse (Royal Canadians) was primarily a tank regiment; Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry was a regular force infantry regiment; the King’s Own Calgary Regiment (Royal Canadian Armoured Corps) was an armoured regiment; and the Calgary Highlanders was a militia infantry regiment.

Each exhibit hall contained numerous unique pieces. Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry’s hall included the Ric-A-Dam-Doo, its initial colour designed and hand sewn by Princess Patricia. Lord Strathcona’s Horse displayed large road signs brought back from peacekeeping operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina and a small Canadian flag Prime Minister Jean Chrétien autographed when he visited the regiment overseas. Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry focused more than the others on its significant role in the Korean conflict as well as Peacekeeping. The Lord Strathcona’s Horse placed more emphasis on its involvement in the Boer War; the King’s Own Calgary Regiment on its origins in the 103rd Regiment and its involvement at Dieppe, Sicily, and Italy in the Second World War; and the Calgary Highlanders on perpetuating the 10th



The Ric-A-Dam-Doo was designed and sewn by Princess Patricia and presented to PPCLI on 23 August 1914 to be carried into battle as the Regiment’s camp colour. Maroon, blue, and gold, it bears Princess Patricia’s cypher “VP”. One of the last colours to be carried by infantry into battle, it was officially consecrated on 28 January 1919, and was adorned with the Wreath of Laurel presented by Princess Patricia on 21 February 1919. PPCLI Archives.

Battalion (including battle honours) as part of the Canadian Expeditionary Force in the First World War, and as part of the 5th Infantry Brigade, as well as its role in the Battle of the Walcheren Causeway in October 1944.

The museum sought to remain current with academic trends in military history, namely the increasing focus on the social, cultural, and personal impact of war. Its treatment of Indigenous peoples—which expanded over time, both with permanent and temporary exhibits—dealt not only with First Nations participation in the World Wars but also the destructive aspects of interaction with European and Canadian colonizers, such as through the spread of the whiskey trade, the appropriation of Reserve land for military training, and unequal treatment in accessing veterans' programs. In covering the North-West Mounted Police, the museum

A display in the PPCLI gallery depicts Princess Patricia's in Sicily during the Italian Campaign in the summer of 1943.





exhibit showed that the NWMP not only brought law and order to the frontier, but also performed numerous other essential services including volunteer fire fighting, delivering mail, patrolling the international border, acting as customs agents, caring for the ill, while their posts served as community social centres. A re-creation of the Sarcee training camp allowed museum visitors to peer into army tents and to climb on board a replica of the streetcar that travelled between the city and the training facility. And when it came to the representation of Currie Barracks and Lincoln Park, it was thought that visitors, particularly children, would be attracted by the opportunity to enter a cockpit of an Anson Mark II, the standard aircraft used for preparing those seeking to qualify as pilots under the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan.

The Patricia's Memorial Hall of Honour at the museum, where the names of all of the Regiment's Fallen are stoically engraved in stone.

PRINCESS PATRICIA'S CANADIAN LIGHT INFANTRY IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR



(ABOVE)

Cartridge engraved with "taken from the 1st prisoner captured by the Princess Patricia's Reg't in Flanders January 6, 1915 by 1st Sgt H. Lofts."

(LEFT, ABOVE)

Collar belonging to PPCLI's first mascot, collie Bobbie Burns. Burns belonged to a PPCLI original, Lieutenant Jack Munroe; both survived the First World War.



(LEFT, BELOW)

Piece of a plane propeller scavenged from German aircraft shot down by PPCLI. The Regiment's original cap badge, the "Marguerite," is carved into the wood.

First World War tunic and helmet belonging to Andrew Hamilton Gault, who joined Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry in August 1914. Despite being wounded several times and losing a leg, he would remain active with the Regiment throughout and after the war until his death in 1958.

All items from the collection of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI) Museum and Archives.



PRINCESS PATRICIA'S CANADIAN LIGHT INFANTRY MUSEUM & ARCHIVES

(RIGHT)

Russian gold pencil case
designed by a workmaster to
Peter Carl Fabergé. Inscription
reads: "H.R.H Princess Patricia
from WO's [Warrant Officers],
NCO's [Non-Commissioned
Officers] & Men, PPCLI,
Xmas 1916."



PHOTOS: JULIE VINCENT PHOTOGRAPHY



(OPPOSITE)
Medal set of Private Wayne Robert Mitchell. He was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for his actions at the Battle of Kapyong, Korea, 1951. Collection of PPCLI Museum and Archives.

(ABOVE)
At the Battle of Passchendaele on 30 October 1917, Sergeant George Harry Mullin attacked a pillbox, for which he was awarded the Victoria Cross. Fellow Patricia Lieutenant Hugh McKenzie was similarly

awarded for directing this assault. Pictured are Sergeant Mullin's pistol, medal set, and engraved pocket watch. Collection of PPCLI Museum and Archives.



The anchor from HMCS *Protecteur* outside the Naval Museum of Alberta. Collection of the Naval Museum of Alberta.