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PRISONER OF WAR EXHIBIT TO OPEN AT GALT MUSEUM MAY 10

ORGANIZED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE MILITARY MUSEUMS OF CALGARY

It is a little known fact that over 34,000 German prisoners of war were sent to Canada during the Second World War. Alberta's contribution to the war effort included housing four POW camps located in Kananaskis, Medicine Hat, Wainwright and Lethbridge. In Lethbridge alone, Camp 133 was designed to hold 12,500 prisoners, nearly doubling the population of the city.

For you the war is over. Second World War POW Experiences – a new exhibit at the Galt Museum & Archives opening May 10 – will bring WWII camp experiences to life with stories, photographs and artifacts from across the country. What was it like to be a prisoner of war in Alberta and in Germany during the Second World War? What was it like for the Canadian guards, and the Canadian families who worked with the prisoners? How and why were conditions different in the two countries?

"This exhibit shows the contrast and the similarities between what happened to German prisoners in Alberta and what happened to Canadians who were imprisoned after being shot down over enemy territory, or were captured at Dieppe," says Project Manager Wendy Aitkens, Curator at the Galt Museum & Archives.

For you the war is over is a partnership undertaking for the Galt Museum & Archives, The Military Museums, Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians) Museum & Archives, King's Own Calgary Regiment (RCAC) Museum & Archives, and Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry Regimental Museum & Archives. Artifacts from a variety of museums and archives in Canada and those contributed by surviving Canadian and German POWs, Veterans' Guards, area residents and family members are being brought together for the first time to help tell the story.

For you the war is over. Second World War POW Experiences will be on display at the Galt Museum & Archives from May 10 to September 21, 2008. Following this debut, it will open in the newly expanded Military Museums in June 2009 until December that year. It will then be available to travel across Canada. Additional information on the exhibit and related programming is available on the Galt Museum & Archives website: www.galtmuseum.com.

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The Galt Museum is located at the west end of 5 Avenue South, off Scenic Drive, Lethbridge, Alberta
Parking lot located at the north end of the building | enter through the sliding north doors
tel 403.320-3898 | info: 320-GALT | fax: 403.329-4958 | www.galtmuseum.com
MAIL 910 – 4 Avenue South, Lethbridge, Alberta T1J 0P6

EXHIBIT FACT SHEET

For you the war is over. Second World War POW Experiences

Sat MAY 10 - Sun SEP 21.08 | GALT MUSEUM & ARCHIVES

The Exhibit

Most of Canada's military involvement has been highly visible to the people of Canada – this exhibit focuses on a little known story from the Second World War.

During this war, nearly 34,000 German prisoners of war were sent to Canada where they were housed in internment camps. Alberta was home to four of the largest camps: **Camp 130** in the Kananaskis area, **Camp 133** in Lethbridge, **Camp 132** in Medicine Hat and **Camp 135** in Wainright. The camps – along with providing training centres for the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan and overall manpower for the war effort – were Alberta's most important contributions to the war effort.

The camps housed prisoners in a humane and respectful manner. The men performed work in the community and supported themselves by selling handicrafts. They developed friendships with their prison guards. Espionage and subversive actions were not unknown but the majority of prisoners felt they were in a much better place than seeing more military action on the European war front. Few tried to escape. Many returned after the end of the war to create a new life for themselves and their families in the areas near their camps. As new Albertans, their stories are thus Albertan stories.

Conversely, many Albertans who served overseas during the war were made prisoners in Germany. The two largest groups were those captured at Dieppe on August 19, 1942, and members of the Royal Canadian Air Force who were shot down over enemy territory. Several Albertans were involved in the most well known aspect of the PoW experience: the Great Escape from Stalag Luft III in March of 1944. 76 prisoners of war escaped through a 323-foot man-made tunnel from Stalag III, Luft Waffe Camp in Sagan, Germany (now Zagan, Poland). All but three of the escapees were recaptured and 50 were executed contrary to the Geneva Convention. Stalag III housed over 10,000 prisoners of war from around the world. It is interesting to compare their imprisonment experience to that of Germans in Alberta. Although they were humanely treated at first, as the Germans started losing the war and camp conditions deteriorated, many prisoners died as a result.

Artifacts, photographs, artwork and stories about the camps, prisoners, guards and local communities are abundant in museums and archives in Alberta. Sources are also numerous outside Alberta including at the Canadian War Museum and the Homefront Archives in Saskatchewan. This exhibition will provide access to these for many Albertans and visitors. Programming developed around this exhibit will show adults and children another side of war and military actions.



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Examples of Artifacts & Stories

- SS Officer **Paul Richter** made a hand-hammered **personalized cigarette case** as a gift for camp guard Private **Walter Degenstein**.
- **Clandestine shortwave radio** discovered in the public address system from Camp 133. The radio is made of scrounged and manufactured parts and was likely used to hear news from Germany. The prisoners often taunted the guards with receiving information about the war before local people did.
- Each prisoner was issued and restricted to two **duffle bags** in which to carry their personal belongings on their return trip to Europe. **Alfred Weiss** and some other enterprising prisoners stole a postal bag, cut it up and inserted pieces into their kit bags to increase the capacity of each bag. The bag in the exhibit went to Germany with Weiss and when he immigrated back to Canada he used it to bring some of his gear to southern Alberta.
- A last minute acquisition for the exhibit is related to **Charles Suffel**, a Canadian soldier taken prisoner at Dieppe. His daughter recently donated his uniforms and POW art without knowing about the upcoming exhibit. Her father had died when she was 6. Dick Roach, curator at the King's Own Calgary Regiment (RCAC) Museum & Archives, provided her with information on the unit her father had served with, and his particular service. He also connected her with two veterans who had served alongside her father.
- **Paul Foerger** was captured on his first voyage away from Germany. He spent the entire war as a POW in Canada, including time in Camp 133 Lethbridge. His letters home to his parents and to Liane, whom he courted by mail and then married after the war, capture the loneliness of the prisoner far from home, and the remarkable acceptance of the situation in which he found himself. These letters come to the exhibition courtesy of the late Mr. Foerger's wife, Liane, and daughter Mrs. Erika Foley of Wainwright, Alberta.
- **James Plant** of Calgary had long, narrow feet. His family sent him some **custom-made boots** because the standard issue boots didn't fit very well. Late in the war, when the Germans forced the prisoners to make the long march away from the camps in Poland, the boots may have saved "Pappy" Plant's life.
- At Camp 130 in Kananaskis, a German-Canadian civilian internee named **Otto Ellmauer** drew a series of **cartoons** showing camp life and some of the characters at Kananaskis. One called "Mr. Sawley's Blitz-Fencing Crew" refers to Veteran's Guard member Sawley, who had to convince unwilling prisoners to erect a fence to hold themselves in. While the prisoners did many kinds of work, their representative complained that asking them to build a fence was against the Geneva Convention. He was overruled, although we do not know if that made the fence building go any better.
- Several pieces of **poetry** were written by an **unknown prisoner of war** who was captured in North Africa and sent to the Ozada tent camp before arriving at Camp 133 in Lethbridge. The small journal that held 14 poems was given to Private Cornelius (Casey) Plomp, a guard at the camp. Below are the first and the last of those poems:

Like the bird in its cage, which had nothing left
of its freedom, except longing, and its song.
I also have nothing left,
since I've been imprisoned in the land of the pyramids.
When, in the evening, a song begins to sound
everybody is filled by longing again.
But this book shall tell you
of my thoughts one day – of my life.

HELUAN – KAIRO, MAY 10, 42.

Gentle words are ringing
across the ocean, such a long way.
Dear words penetrate
my loneliness.

Blue waves carry
memories to me
of happy days in spring
in the evening, at dusk

The first blue stars
are flashing on the firmament
I really would like to go to sleep.
Again, a day is over

(Lethbridge), 31.12.44

The Partnership Project

The POW exhibition project started a year ago in May, when five partners came together to pool resources, research, documents, photographs, artifacts, and the stories told by servicemen from both sides of the Atlantic of their experiences in Second World War prisoner of war camps.

Rory Cory, Senior Curator of the Military Museums (previously the Museum of the Regiments) in Calgary was chosen as Curator for the exhibition.

Wendy Aitkens, Curator at the Galt Museum & Archives in Lethbridge assumed the responsibilities of Project Manager, where exhibit designer **Brad Brown** created the physical exhibit.

Museum Warrant Officer **Ted MacLeod** of the Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians) Museum & Archives, Curator Rt'd Lt. Col. **Dick Roach** from the King's Own Calgary Regiment (RCAC) Museum & Archives, and Archivist Sergeant **Bruce Graham** of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry Regimental Museum & Archives joined many other staff and volunteers from all the partner museums to develop this exhibit.

Jill Brown of Calgary, a practicum student in the Cultural Resource Management program at the University of Victoria, joined the project as Assistant Researcher. She dedicated over 600 hours to the project as she scoured archives and museums across Canada in search of research materials, artifacts, original documents and photographs. With the completion of this project she will achieve her final requirement for graduation.

Partner Backgrounder



The Military Museums, when fully complete in 2008, will be a compendium of 7 museums situated on 13 acres, encompassing 107,000 square feet of viewing area displaying Canadian Forces' history and heritage from the beginning to present day. It was originally opened as the Museum of The Regiments by Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II on June 30, 1990. It has recently been expanded to become the largest tri-service museum in Western Canada. The expansion will facilitate a relocated Naval Museum of Alberta (the largest Naval Museum in Canada), a newly created Air Force Museum, a 4,200 sq ft interactive Discovery Centre and a new 19,200 sq ft military history and strategic studies library and archives, an adjunct to the University of Calgary Library. Although some areas of the museum are currently under construction, the original founding 4 regiments are open: the Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians), The Kings Own Calgary Regiment, the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry and The Calgary Highlanders museums. www.themilitarymuseums.ca



The King's Own Calgary Regiment (Royal Canadian Armoured Corps) has been in Calgary since April 1, 1910. The founding unit was the 103rd Regiment "Calgary Rifles." Two existing Calgary units trace their lineage to the 103rd: the King's Own and the Calgary Highlanders. The 103rd Calgary Rifles formed several battalions, including the 50th Battalion (Canadian Expeditionary Force) for overseas service in World War I. The King's Own is descended from the 50th Bn, CEF. For World War II, the Regiment was reorganized and had several names including the 14th Armoured Regiment (Calgary Regiment) RCAC, commonly referred to as "The Calgary Tanks." The Regiment was renamed to the current designation in 1958. The King's Own has been organized as infantry, machine gun and tank but is currently tasked as a reconnaissance unit, and equipped with the Canadian Command and Reconnaissance version of the Mercedes Benz Gelandewagen (G-Wagen). The unit is prepared to assist with domestic operations (natural and manmade disasters, aid to civil power, or security) in Canada and for overseas operations. Soldiers from the King's Own have served with, or are deployed on, numerous United Nations and NATO operations. The gallery is built around the corps d'esprit that is still the essence of the King's Own Calgary Regiment.



Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians) Regimental Museum is located at the Museum of the Regiments (4520 Crowchild Trail S.W.) in Calgary. A 2500 square foot gallery relates the history of the Regiment from 1900 to present. The collection holds thousands of artifacts waiting to be displayed, while the Archives has thousands of photographs, records, documents and diaries and conducts research for personal and professional institutions around the world on a daily basis. On average, the Museum hosts 40,000 visitors annually and educates the public with stories of cavalry history and traditions from western Canada's only regular force Armoured unit.



Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry Regimental Museum takes the visitor through the history of the Regiment beginning with *The Founding of the Regiment* on August 10, 1914. The visitor is next plunged into a *First World War Trench* complete with duckboards, sandbags and sounds of an artillery barrage. The visitor can then view a model of the Battle of Frezenberg while listening to an account of the famous battle of May 8, 1915. Walking past a typical post war *Barracks* scene the visitor next enters the *Second World War* complete with lifelike exhibits and videos on the *Battle of Britain* and the *Sicilian and Italian Campaigns*. Next, learn all about the Korean War and the Patricia's involvement through an interactive computer exhibit, or activate the Kap Yong diorama and listen to the battle unfold. Since the *Korean War* the Patricia's have been involved in Peacekeeping missions all over the world. Experience mediation between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots or view the devastation caused by the Balkan conflict. The visitor is confronted with the terrible cost of war by entering the *Hall of Honour* and viewing row after row of names etched forever in stone. The *Medals* Exhibit reminds us of the sacrifice in terms of youth and the bravery of the Canadians who have served in the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry.

Exhibition Supporters

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Related Exhibit

The Archives Exposed... Camp 133

*Community Savings Learning Studio & Friends of the
Galt Board Room, main level*

The photographs in this exhibit are selected from the Archives holdings by guest curator Trish Purkis, Archives Assistant at the Galt Museum & Archives.

HIGH RESOLUTION IMAGES CAN BE OBTAINED BY CONTACTING

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