

PPCLI Collection 2

260th Battalion collection. - 1918-1919. - 12 cm textual records. - 85 photographs

The 260th Battalion was one of two Infantry Battalions within the 16th Canadian Infantry Brigade, Canadian Siberian Expeditionary Force (C.S.E.F.), formed by Order of Council 12 August 1918. They were part of an Allied Force of more than 120,000 men commanded by General Kikuzo Otani of Japan. The Allied Force was originally united to protect Allied war materials stockpiled in Russia and to reopen the Eastern Front. This priority later changed to that of rescuing the Czechoslovakian Legion, which was stranded in Siberia by the aftermath of the Russian Revolution. The Russian Revolution of 1917 necessitated the withdrawal of the Tsar's Army from the Eastern Front. This increased pressure on the already exhausted Allies in the West and put military stores at Archangel in the north and Vladivostok in the south at risk. The Czech Brigade, formed by patriotic deserters from the Austro-Hungarian Army, was no longer able to fight from Russian soil. Following the signing of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty between the Bolsheviks and the Central Powers in March 1918, the Czech Legion, now 60,000 strong and composed of pardoned POWs, displaced Serbs, Italians, Rumanians and Poles, found themselves essentially behind enemy lines. With the Provisional Government's blessing, the Legion's initial aim was to cross Siberia by rail to Vladivostok where they would sail to North America and then to France to resume the fight for an independent homeland. Following an incident involving the Czechs and repatriated Hungarian prisoners, the Bolsheviks decreed that any armed Legionnaire found along the railway would be shot on the spot. The Legion was reluctantly drawn into the Russian Civil War and forced to side with the "White" Russians. By late summer 1918 they controlled the Trans-Siberian Railway from Omsk to Vladivostok. This prompted the Allies to consider a possible Bolshevik defeat. The Canadian Government, hoping to establish favorable post-war trading opportunities with the Far East, agreed to be part of a "Mixed Brigade" to support the "White" Russians. This was the first independent military expedition that Canada was to undertake. The Armistice of 11 November 1918 clouded the issues. The Canadian people were reluctant to become involved in further offensive operations, especially in the East. This meant that the C.S.E.F. would serve only as a "stabilizing element". The 260th Battalion was composed of 42 Officers and 984 Other Ranks, 520 of which were drafted under the Military Service Act of 1917. Under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Frederick Jamieson of Edmonton, the Battalion trained at Willows Camp in Victoria from October through December 1918. The Spanish flu epidemic of 1918/19 landed 180 men in hospital and delayed departure. The Battalion finally embarked on the SS Proteslaus at Gordon Head on 26 December 1918, arriving in Vladivostok 15 January 1919. The Battalion was stationed at Gournestai Barracks (10 miles east of Vladivostok), with guards posted at East and Second River Barracks. During the 14 weeks in theatre no shots were fired in anger and, except for small parties of railway guards, the Battalion never moved east. A month after the arrival of the C.S.E.F., plans were underway to bring them home. Many of the men of the 260th were among the first to leave, departing Vladivostok on the SS Monteagle 22 April 1919. When they arrived in Vancouver on the 22nd of June, the wharf that 6 months ago was packed with a cheering populace was now deserted. In 1997 the PPCLI agreed to perpetuate the 260th Battalion and become the official "safekeeper" of the Battalion's heritage. Perpetuation is a

uniquely Canadian system that insures, when possible, the deeds and sacrifices of disbanded combat units that have gained an honour or distinction in the field are remembered. The PPCLI will now carry the Battle Honour "Siberia 1918-1919".

The collection contains research material, statistics, correspondence and photographs pertaining to the Canadian Siberian Expeditionary Force in general and the 260th Battalion in particular. Highlights include the diary of A. V. Ardagh and the 260th Battalion nominal roll. Photographic material depicts members of the 260th Battalion aboard the SS Protesliaus and at Vladivostok. Also included are images of civilians and members of the White Russian Army. Also included is a commemorative pamphlet and 3 photographs of the North Russia Expeditionary Force, consisting of units of the 16th Brigade, Canadian Field Artillery, which was dispatched to Archangel on the northern coast of Russia as part of the Allied Forces in 1918-1919.

The collection consists of the following files (C-2 = Collection 2):

- C-2-1 Introductory materials on the formation and history of the 260th Battalion. – 1918-2000.
- Consists of photocopies of newspaper articles, magazine articles and book reviews.
- C-2-2 Correspondence – 1998-1999. - Regarding loans of materials for exhibition on Siberian Expeditionary Force.
- C-2-3 Correspondence regarding perpetuation of the 260th Battalion. - 1994-1999. -
Picture, documentation and letters of request for materials
- C-2-4 Canadian War Museum photos, reproduction notes. – 1999. - National Archives photos.
- C-2-5 H.V. Ardagh diary. – Photocopied 1986. - (originally created 26/12/1918-29/1/1919)
- C-2-6 Checkov Cemetery. – 1995-1996. - Canadian War Graves – restoration and designation as a Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery- description, photos.
- C-2-7 Exhibit storyboards, 260th Battalion. – 1999. – War Museum Calgary
- C-2-8 Miscellaneous Information. - 1996-1998. - History of Battalion, perpetuation of the Battalion, French, Czechoslovak and American information, book written
- C-2-9 Canadian Siberia Expeditionary Force finding aid. – June 1997. - National Archives of Canada
- C-2-10 Nominal Roll : sailed for Vladivostok, PPCLI in Siberia, 259th Battalion (Canadian Rifles). – [ca.1999]

- C-2-11 Maps – Siberia. - November 11, 1918. - Approximate troop distribution, Trans- Siberian Railway
- C-2-12 Miscellaneous Photos - 1918-1919. - Major General H. J. Elmsley, Canadian Officers at Vladivostok, East Barracks Jail – Raymond Massey
- C-2-13 260th Battalion exhibit. -1999 - Grant application, material expenses
- C-2-14 Thompson, Sgt. Norman – 2000. - Pictures of the 260th, press conference bios of father and son Thompson
- C-2-15 John Nimmo. – 1918. - Vancouver pictures
- C-2-16 John Nimmo. - 1995. - Copies of service record
- C-2-17 Russia in 1918. – 1933. - War experiences of Mr. Eyford of Hudson Bay Junction Saskatchewan - The Rum Jar
- C-2-18 Gift of Mrs. Helen Stott. - 2002 Nov. 29. – 7 photos of 260th Battalion Canadian Forces 1918 Garnesty Bay near Vladivostok, Russia, Major Shortread, CO; day pass issued to Cpl. DA Benner, 1919; copy of attestation papers of DA Benner, 1918
- C-2-19 Copy of a book about the 260th Battalion in Siberia (title page missing). - [ca. 1990s]
- C-2-20 N.R.E. F. 16 Brigade Canadian Field Artillery, 67th & 68th Batteries 1918-1919 – Reunion 1938 booklet and pictures
- C-2-21 5 Floppy Discs. [ca. 1990s], 260th Battalion, 260th exhibit photos, Lt. BF Bainsmith, Massey, Thompson

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