

Québec Artillery

By Richard Garon

(Translated from the French by Maurice René de Cotret)

Part 2 - "B" Battery



Archives nationales du Québec Philippe Gingras collection (*Lévis ex de tir et Lévis*). The Quebec Field Battery training at the military camp at Lauzon circa 1880.

The unit was mobilized again in 1855 to occupy the Citadel, replacing the permanent troops deployed in Western Canada during the North-West Campaign. When a special contingent was formed to join the Boer War from 1899 to 1902, Canadian militia units were not mobilized. Many volunteers, however, took leave from the 1st (Quebec) Field Battery to serve in South Africa.

As a result of this conflict, many changes were brought to the Canadian Artillery. 1905 was a pivotal year for the Field Artillery. While direct fire had been the norm until then, it is in that year's summer camp at Petawawa that indirect fire was adopted for field artillery units. In this wave of reforms, batteries were grouped into artillery brigades. Thus, the 1st (Quebec) Field Battery became, along with the 20th Battery, a sub-unit of the 5th Brigade, Canadian Field Artillery on May 9th, 1905.

In 1913, Major Thomas Louis Tremblay (later to become Commanding Officer of the 22nd Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, and eventually promoted to the rank of Major-General) assumed command of the 1st (Quebec) Field Battery. As was the case for other militia units, neither the battery nor the 5th Artillery Brigade were mobilized for service in the Canadian Expeditionary Force. Members of the unit therefore volunteered individually for service in other units, as did Major Tremblay, Captain Henri Chassé, and many others.

At the end of hostilities, the Canadian militia was reorganized. On February 2nd, 1920, 5th Brigade, Canadian Field Artillery was redesignated the 13th Brigade, Canadian Field Artillery, while the 1st (Quebec) Field Battery and the 20th Battery were respectively renamed the 57th (Quebec) Field Battery and the 94th Battery. This artillery brigade was itself reorganized on numerous occasions through the years. It was designated the 13th Field Brigade on July 1st, 1925, 13th (Quebec) Field Brigade on April 1st, 1941, 13th Reserve (Quebec) Field Regiment on April 15th, 1943 and, finally, 13th Field Regiment on April 1st, 1946, before being merged and redesignated the 57th Locating Battery on October 1st, 1954. Note that (Quebec) remained part of the 57th Battery's designation until 1946.

Following the First World War, the 57th (Quebec) and 94th Field Batteries formed the saluting batteries that welcomed distinguished visitors. Salutes were fired for the visits of King Georges V and of the Governor-General, for the opening of Parliament, as well as for numerous visiting Admirals.

On September 5th, 1939, the 57th (Quebec) Field Battery was mobilized as part of the 1st Anti-Tank Regiment to serve within the 1st Canadian Division. In that capacity, the unit was deployed in England, and briefly in France prior to taking part in the invasion of Sicily on June 24th, 1943, and then the Italian campaign until August 28th, 1945. This unit was demobilized and disbanded on August 28th, 1945.



The 57th (Quebec) Field Battery near Campobasso, Italy during the Second World War *Library and Archives Canada (17 pounder-anti-tank-gun-of-the-57th-Battery—1st-Anti-Tank-Regiment—RCA-near-Campobasso—Italy—25-October-1943—LAC-MIKAN-No—359*

Participation in the Second World War was not limited to the 57th Battery, the 94th Battery was also mobilized in defence of the Saint Lawrence River and the Île d'Orléans. It was subsequently reorganized as an anti-tank battery and joined the 3rd Anti-Tank Regiment at Debert, Nova Scotia, in February 1941 before shipping out to England and taking part in D Day, landing at Bernières-sur-Mer on June 6th, 1944, as part of the 3rd Canadian Division. The third sub-unit of the 13th (Quebec) Field Brigade, the 82nd Battery, was mobilized as well and reorganized as an

anti-tank battery deployed with the 4th Anti-Tank Regiment of the 5th Canadian Division, first in Italy in the winter of 1943, then in the Netherlands.

All the elements of the 13th (Quebec) Field Brigade being deployed, those elements that stayed in the country were redesignated the 35th (Reserve) Field regiment, under the command of a former commanding officer and long-standing member of the 57th Battery, Colonel J. V. Boswell. Reserve batteries were then recruited to provide replacements for the units at the front and designated 57th (R) and 82nd (R) batteries.

The end of the Second World War spurred yet another reorganization. On April 1st, 1946, the 35th (Reserve) Field Regiment was redesignated the 35th Anti-Tank Regiment », composed of the 132nd, 143rd, 144th, and 145th anti-tank batteries. This unit, as well as the 143rd, 144th, and 145th batteries were reorganized and merged with the 59th Field Battery of Lauzon on September 1st, 1954. The 59th Field Battery thus perpetuates these two units from the Quebec area, as well as the garrison artillery units formed in Quebec in 1878 and the unit formed on April 7th, 1893. The 59th Field Battery was relocated from Lauzon to Montmagny in 1965.

Moreover, the 132nd Anti-Tank Battery, part of 35th Anti-Tank Regiment located in Québec city, was merged with the 80th Field Battery headquartered in New-Richmond on September 1st, 1954. The latter was relocated to Montmagny in 1963, prior to moving again to Lévis and being redesignated as the 57th Battery, between 1965 and 1970. Today, the 57th Battery, as well as the 59th Battery are still part of the *6^e régiment d'artillerie de campagne* in Lévis and carry on the tradition of No. 1 Battery of Lévis Garrison Artillery formed on July 19th, 1878 in Lévis and designated the 57th Heavy Battery in 1925 and 57th Medium Battery in 1936.

On September 1st, 1954, the 145th Anti-Tank Battery of the 35th Anti-Tank Regiment located in Rivière-du-Loup was merged with the 82nd Field Battery from Gaspé. This battery, initially formed in Rivière-du-Loup on May 9th, 1905 under the designation of 20th Field Battery was reorganized on the same date as part of the *6^e régiment d'artillerie de campagne*. In 1963, the 82nd Field Battery was relocated to Beauport and was subsequently transferred to the supplemental order of battle in 1965.

Finally, in the post-war reorganization, the 57th (Reserve) (Quebec) Field Battery was incorporated into the 13th Field Regiment on April 1st and redesignated the 57th Field Battery. On

October 1st, 1962, the 13th Field Regiment and the 94th and 57th field batteries were merged and reorganized to form 57th Locating Battery. The latter was disbanded in 1965. As mentioned earlier, it was nevertheless re-formed as the 57^e batterie of the 6^e régiment d'artillerie de campagne in Lévis in 1970.

Thus, the tradition of the 1st (Quebec) Field Battery is sometimes confused with that of the 57th Medium Battery, although the 57^e batterie of the 6^e régiment d'artillerie de campagne perpetuates both lineages today. While the tradition of the 1st (Quebec) Field Battery goes back to 1824, the 57th Medium Battery carries on the tradition of No. 1 Battery of Lévis Garrison Artillery authorized on July 19th, 1878, disbanded in England on March 1st, 1944 when it was mobilized, reorganized and redesignated the 57th Light Anti-Aircraft Battery of the 7th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, this 57th Battery was converted and redesignated the 80th Field Battery of New Richmond and part of the 6^e régiment d'artillerie de campagne on April 1st, 1946. It is this 8th Battery that will adopt the designation "57" in 1970. Regardless of the designations, the proud tradition of the Québec area gunners is still very much alive, nearly 200 years after the formation of the Québec Artillery.