



# 11th Field Artillery Regiment Featured Gunner General, The Honourable H.D.G. Crerar PC, CH, CB, DSO, CD

*A UBIQUE 150 Heritage Series*

General, The Honourable H.D.G. Crerar,<sup>1</sup>

## A National Gunner

General Crerar is recognized by the Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery as a national 'Great Gunner'. A veteran of both WWI and WWII, during his extensive military career Crerar was directly involved in or responsible for many of the defining moments of Canadian military history.

While Crerar is most often remembered for his tenure as commander of the First Canadian Army during the northwest European campaign of WWII during the final years of the war (1944-45), it was with 4th Battery in Hamilton that Crerar spent his initial formative years as an artillery officer.

## Hamilton Roots

Henry Duncan Graham Crerar was born April 28th, 1888 in Hamilton, Ontario. He was educated at Upper Canada College in Toronto, followed by Hamilton's Highfield School, and the Royal Military College (RMC) in Kingston.

Following his graduation from RMC, Crerar returned to Hamilton and took a job as a superintendent with the Canadian Tungsten Lamp Company Limited of Hamilton.

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## A Popular Officer



Lieutenant Crerar, 4th Battery, 1912<sup>2</sup>

In 1909, Crerar took a commission as a Lieutenant with 4th Battery in Hamilton. He was described in annual reports as "keen, active and energetic" and "one of the most popular officers of the old 4th field battery".

When war was declared against Germany in 1914, Hamilton's 4th Battery was one of nine militia artillery batteries mobilized to form the artillery component of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. Captain Crerar was one of the many 4th Battery Gunners that volunteered.

For the first 15 months of his deployment, Crerar kept a personal journal, detailing his daily routine, the nervous excitement and relief of battle, and the hazardous reality of the trenches. His first journal entry captures the atmosphere in Hamilton as the first mobilized troops depart by train destined for Valcartier:

*"...after many delays - reached the Hunter Street Station. I never saw such a crowd - and the few minutes we stopped there will long stop in my memory."*

Excerpt from journal entry dated August 31st, 1914, *Personal Diary of Captain H.D.G. Crerar*<sup>2</sup>

## Hamilton's General

It would not be the last time Crerar would be greeted by cheering crowds of Hamiltonians. Following the end of WWII, Crerar was invited by the city mayor to visit his hometown.

Thousands of citizens lined the streets and gathered at City Hall to welcome the General home - a son of Hamilton who had led the Canadian Army to victory in Europe.

General Crerar died on April 1st, 1965 and is interred at Beechwood Cemetery in Ottawa, Ontario.



General Crerar outside Hamilton City Hall during a welcoming ceremony, 1945<sup>3</sup>

## Historical Lineage of the 11th (Hamilton-Wentworth) Field Battery

- 1855 *Volunteer Militia Field Battery of Artillery of Hamilton* is established as one of seven batteries of field artillery in Canada

**11th (Hamilton-Wentworth) Field Battery is officially one of the oldest batteries in the Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery. Of the original seven batteries, only four remain - Ottawa, Montreal, Levis and Hamilton.**

- 1895 Re-designated *No. 4 'Hamilton' Field Battery*
- 1905 Re-designated *4th Battery*
- 1914 Mobilized for overseas deployment and re-designated *8th Battery* of the 3rd Canadian Field Artillery Brigade and Ammunition Column
- 1920 Re-designated *11th (Hamilton) Battery*
- 1925 Re-designated *11th (Hamilton) Field Battery*
- 1940 Mobilized for overseas deployment and attached to the 12th Field Regiment
- 1946 Re-designated *11th Field Battery* and becomes part of the 8th Field Artillery Regiment along with 40th Field Battery and 102nd (Wentworth) Field Battery
- 1970 Re-designated *11th (Hamilton-Wentworth) Field Battery* and becomes part of the 11th Field Artillery Regiment

**The battery's re-designation in 1970 was intended to maintain the historical name of "Hamilton" while also recognizing the "Wentworth" lineage.**