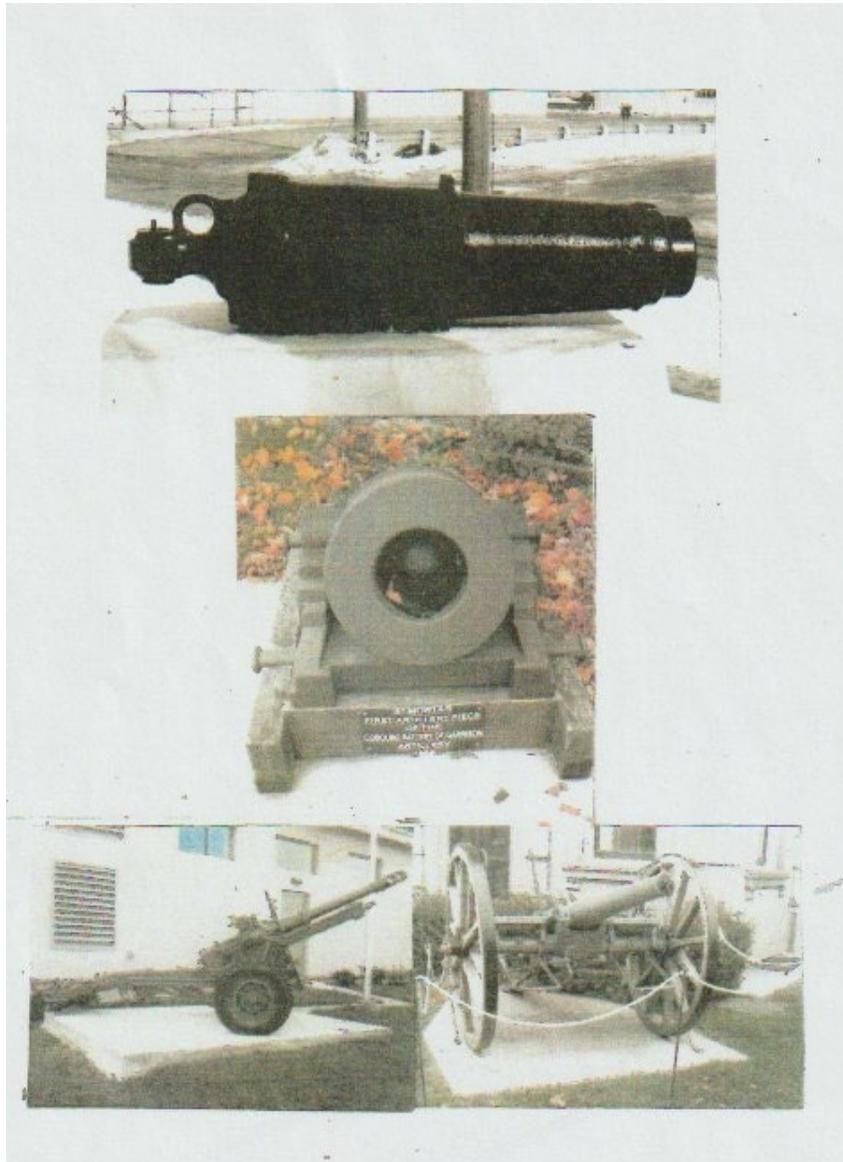


# Cobourg's Artillery Pieces



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## Introduction

Cobourg has four old artillery pieces. We start with the oldest and end with the newest. Each has its own characteristics and uses.

The carronades were brought to Cobourg by the town, whereas the mortar was part of the artillery, for the town's artillery unit. It was also used for training purposes.

Cobourg's gun did not see action. However, there were several of the same type in Britain, and others in Canada, that did.

The final part talks of the newest field piece placed at the Legion with its turntable.

So the book is divided into five parts:

- Part 1 – The Carronades – which provides its description and uses, its founder, and different carriages
- Part 2 – Carronade for Cobourg – talks about Cobourg's carronades in particular
- Part 3 – The Mortar – describes the mortar, its uses, and how it was used in Cobourg
- Part 4 – Victoria Hall Field Artillery – describes the gun's history and markings
- Part 5 – The Legion's Field Piece – discusses the gun's history, description and the turntable

## Part 1: The Carronades

The carronade is a short cannon. It is like a cannon, but it is used for close quarters. It is mainly a ship's gun. An ordinary cannon shooting at close range may go through one side of a ship and go right through the other, doing little damage.

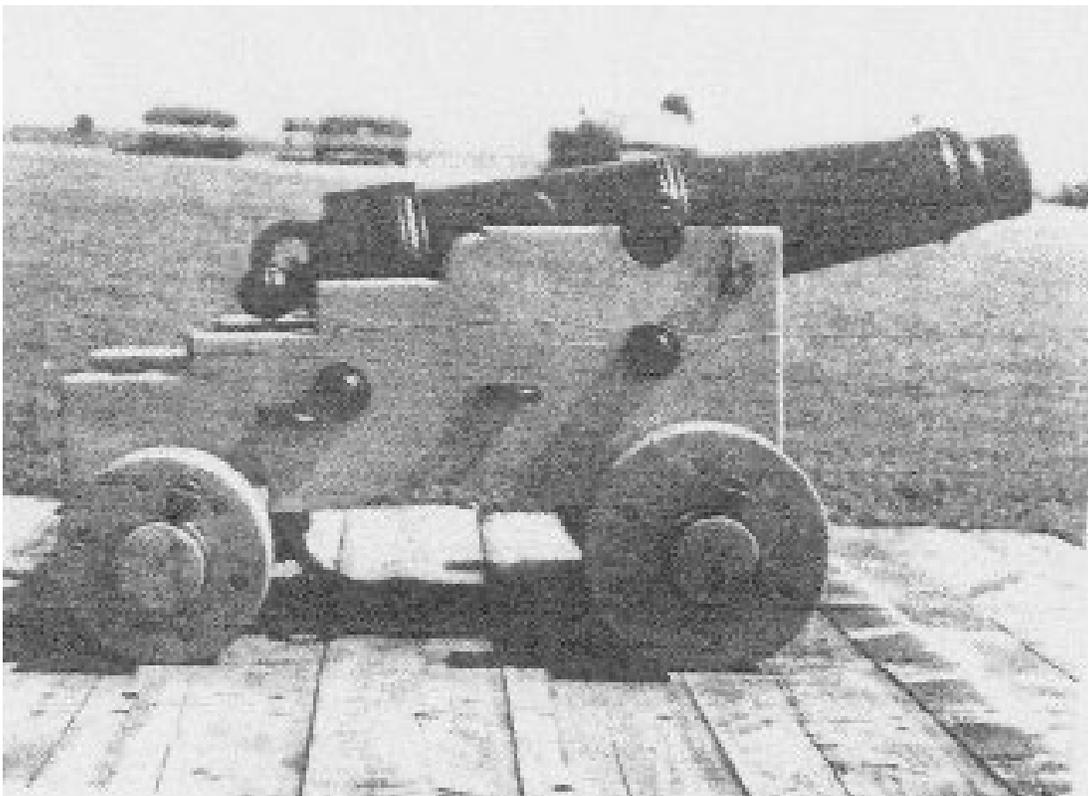
A carronade, on the other hand, will go through one side but stop inside the ship, causing more damage to the side of the ship and causing massive splintering, killing and maiming all close to it.

The disadvantage is that the enemy knows this and may choose to fight at a distance with big guns. Another disadvantage was that because of the short barrel and large load, it recoiled violently and uncontrollably when it was fired. The carronade's muzzle would go flying up and the breech went smashing down, putting great strain on the carriage. However, the accuracy made up for this.

They are much lighter than cannons and are much thinner.

Carronades are named after the foundry where they were cast. The designer, Thomas Blomefield, was appointed Inspector General of Artillery in 1782. The carronade also looks much like the Blomefield cannon with its breech loop. They were case in the Carron Foundry, at Falkirk, Scotland. The 32lb. ball was the most preferred, but larger calibres were available from 12 lbs to 68 lbs.

Some carronades were mounted by trunnions (Figure 1), but most were attached by a loop under the carronade to the carriage.

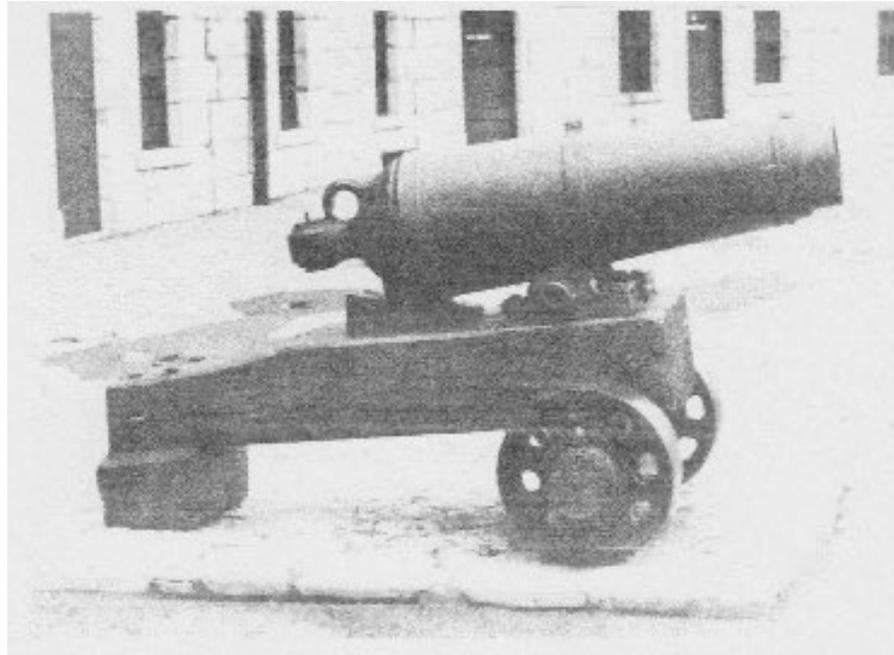


*Figure 1: Carronade Mounted by Trunnions, photo credit: David McConnell*

Figure 2 shows one on a cast iron carriage which was used at garrisons but was phased out because, if hit, it would shatter, killing anyone near it, or warp, making it unusable. Therefore, the wooden carriage was the most used (Figure 3).



*Figure 2: Carronade on Cast Iron Carriage, photo credit: James Gooding*



*Figure 3: Carronade on Wooden Carriage, photo credit: James Gooding*

Figures 2 and 3 would have been used at garrisons as the cast iron wheels, or trucks, would tear up the deck when fired. Figure 1 shows the wooded trucks used on ships.

## Part 2: Carronades for Cobourg

Cobourg received a gift of two carronades through the initiative by Mr. J. B. McCall, MP.

They were presented to the United Counties of Northumberland and Durham by the Minister of Militia, Sir Frederick Borden.

The carronades came from Fort Henry, in Kingston. They were to be placed on the terrace in the grounds of the new county gaol, now the King George Motel and Restaurant.

For the presentation, Warden McNeill accepted the gift on behalf of the Counties. County Clerk Lt. Col. N. F. MacNachtan was to have the gun put into place when they arrived by boat (Figure 4).

The Mayor at that time was Mr. Huyche. The carronades were to become the property of the Cobourg Artillery Battery.

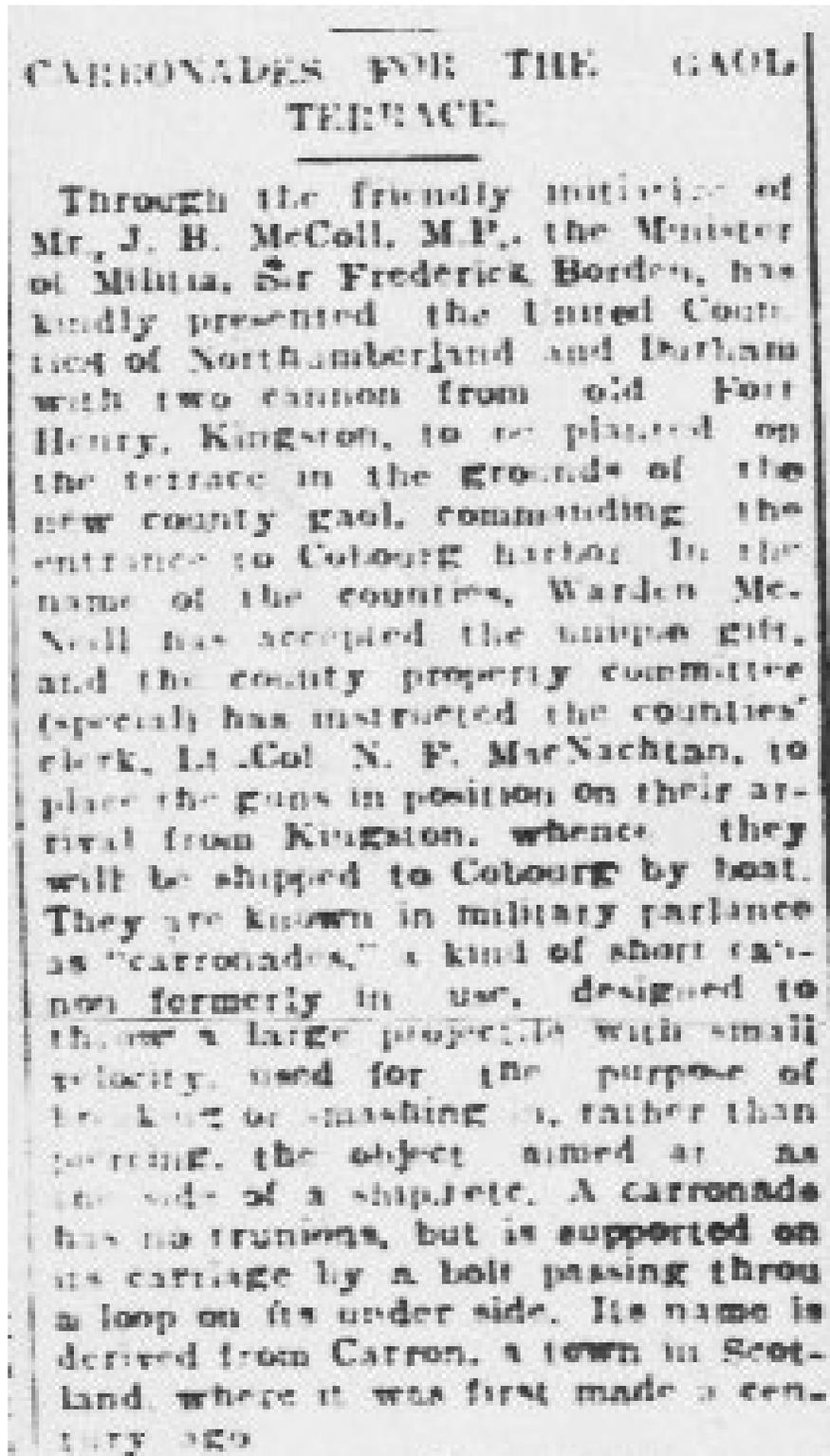


Figure 4: Article on the Carronade Presentation, Cobourg Historical Society

The photo of the carronade on the corner of Albert and Third Street (Figure 5) was taken in 1995 before the sign was installed. Figure 6 is of the second carronade at the side of the old gaol.



*Figure 5: Carronade on Corner of Albert and Third, author's own photo*



*Figure 6: Carronade at Side of Old Gaol, Stanley Isherwood photo*

The carronades themselves tell very little. They have the breech loop to help control the recoil. Sights are seen on its top. Markings only appear ahead of the vent field.

Carronade one at the front of the hotel has the numbers 17-3-0 (Figure 7). This is the weight. It is in the old hundred weight system. One hundred weight is 112 lbs. In this case, the weight is 17 x 112 hundred weight, three quarter weight and no pounds. So, we have  $17 \times 112 = 1,904 + 84 = 1,988$  pounds.



*Figure 7: Carronade One at Front of Hotel, author's own photo, Nov. 2, 2022*

Carronade two, at the side of the hotel, is basically the same. Being identical, the mass weight will be the same: 17 cwt; barely visible is three for 3 quarter weight, and again, 0 pounds. So, the weight is  $17 \times 112 = 1,904 + 84 = 1,988$  (Figure 8).



*Figure 8: Carronade Two at Side of Hotel, Stanley Isherwood photo*

Both carronades have a 6" bore, making them 32 pounders.

### Part 3: The Mortar

The second oldest gun in Cobourg is the 8" mortar in front of the Legion (Figure 9). It also tells us it was cast in 1866.

Mortars are cast with their trunnions, or pins, at the rear. Their carriages, called beds, are substantial blocks of wood hollowed out to receive the trunnions and breech of the mortar. It is designed to absorb the downward thrust of the recoil when the mortar is fired.

Mortars are only suitable for high angle firing. They were designed to drop a shell behind earthworks, or walls, that other guns couldn't breach. They were especially valuable in sieges. They fired solid cannon balls or shells full of small shot that was ignited by a fuse that exploded just before, or over, the target.



Figure 9: 8" Mortar in Front of Cobourg Legion, author's own photo, Nov. 2, 2022

As mentioned earlier, the Cobourg mortar is an 8-inch gun. It was the first artillery piece of the Cobourg Battery of Garrison Artillery. The mortar was first used by the 1<sup>st</sup> Northumberland Regiment in the 1830s. That was a militia unit in the Cobourg area. The mortars were turned over to the Artillery in 1867, after Confederation. This became the 1<sup>st</sup> Artillery Unit in the area. These were all militia units and continued on through the First and Second World Wars as artillery units.

A funny story was told to me during my research. When the mortar was turned over to Cobourg's Artillery Unit, they became the proud owners of one cannon ball to go with it. No matter, it was put in use. They fired the mortar, retrieved the cannon ball, reloaded, and repeated the process. Never let it be said Cobourg's Artillery Unit lacked ingenuity.

So, to find out more about the mortar, we look at the marking. At the base of the mortar is the range: Ra 2000 y (Figure 10). Also, on the back is 8-1-4 which is the mortar's weight in the old English system of hundred weight (Figure 11). Therefore, we have 8 hundred weight, 1 quarter weight, and 4 pounds. A hundred weight is 112 lbs, so we have  $8 \times 112 = 896 + 28 + 4 = 928$  lbs.



Figure 10: Markings Indicating Range of Mortar, author's own photo, Nov. 2, 2022



Figure 11: Markings Indicating Mortar's Weight, author's own photo, Nov. 2, 2022

There is a broad arrow above the weight, telling us the mortar was in government service. The broad arrow is also on the side rail (Figure 12). Facing the muzzle of the mortar, on the left trunnion, or pin, is the serial number 198 (Figure 13). It is also on the rail.



*Figure 12: Marking Indicating Government Service Use, author's own photo, Nov. 2, 2022*



*Figure 13: Serial Number, author's own photo, Nov. 2, 2022*

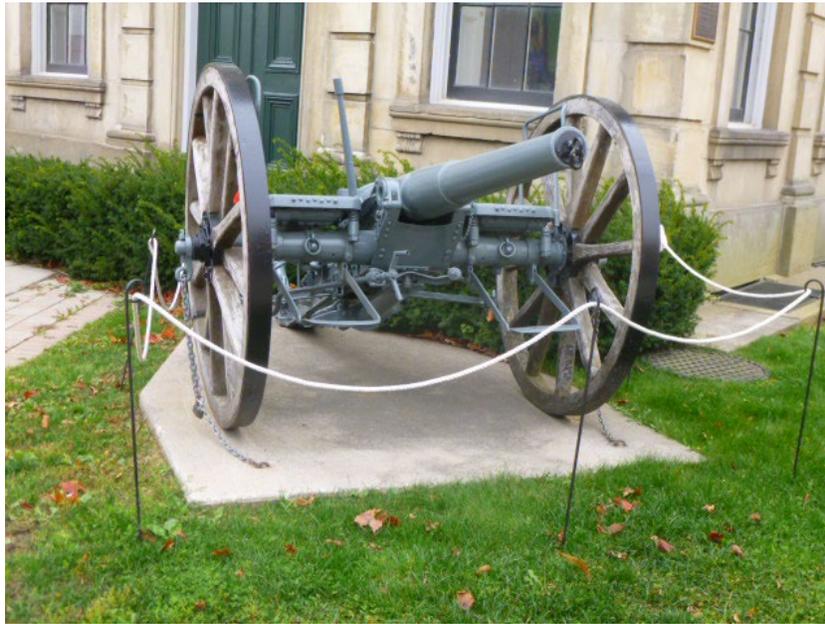
On the right trunnion is S Bowling, the foundry where it was cast (Figure 14), which was in East Bowling Township, South Bradford, in Yorkshire, England.



*Figure 14: Mortar's Foundry Marking of S Bowling, author's own photo, Nov. 2, 2022*

## Part 4: Victoria Hall Field Artillery

The third oldest piece of artillery is the gun at the Victoria Hall corner. The gun is a 12-pounder, long-range field gun (Figures 15 and 16). It has been displayed in Cobourg since 1982. The gun was made in England in 1881 and used by the Royal Artillery in 1894. By 1897, there were six Canadian Batteries that used this type of long-range gun. The Cobourg gun did not see any action in WWI.



*Figure 15: Front View 12-Pounder Long-Range Field Gun, author's own photo, Nov. 3, 2022*



*Figure 16: Rear View of 12-Pounder Long-Range Field Gun, author's own photo, Nov. 3, 2022*

The Department of National Defence in Montreal restored the gun in 1981. They then shipped it to Cobourg in 1982. The Cobourg Garrison Artillery Association took care of the gun and were responsible for bringing it to Cobourg.

They say the gun is of excellent workmanship. It is an excellent symbol of Cobourg's long artillery heritage. In 2004, the Garrison Association turned the gun over to the town's care as maintaining it was now too much for them to do.

The field piece is a MKIV, or a Mark 4 gun, and is a BL 12-Pounder. The gun weighs 6 cwt. A hundred weight is 112 lbs, so 6 cwt is  $6 \times 112 = 672$  pounds. Its registration number is 261, and the carriage's registration number is 7616. The gun was first produced by the Armstrong's Elswick Ordnance Company in England, in 1881. It is known as a RBL or a Rifled Breech Loading gun.

It was taken into service by the Royal Artillery in 1894 and into Canadian service in 1896. They remained in service until 1914. The 12-pounder was last used in 1938 when it was used at the Dominion Artillery Competition.

## Part 5: The Legion's Field Piece

In Part 5, we look at the newest of the war trophies. It was presented to Cobourg in 1971 and is an ordinance of 25 pounds, or a 25-pounder (Figure 17). This was a major British field artillery gun and was extensively used during WWII.

On the brass plate is QF, which stands for Quick Fire. The 25 pounds stands for the weight of the shell. It is said to be an outstanding field artillery piece, in terms of operation.



*Figure 17: Cobourg's 25-Pounder, author's own photo, Nov. 2, 2022*

The gun was put into service in 1940. It remained the British Army's primary artillery piece until the 1960s. The gun came with an easily read elevation system (Figure 18). It had a platform underneath to raise the gun, allowing the gun to swivel. The Cobourg gun lacks the platform as it rotted away.



*Figure 18: Elevation System, author's own photo, Nov. 2, 2022*

There are three main brass plates explaining parts of the gun. Plate #1 says CRADLEP CNo4. The cradle is a large piece supporting the barrel that with its trunnions, or pins, allows the barrel to be elevated or lowered.

Plate #2 reads CARR25PR, SILLT 1942, Reg. No CA10475. Line 1 stands for the carriage, or frame, the gun sits on and is designed to hold a 25-pounder gun. A 25-pounder is (87.6 mm) or 3.45-inch shell gun. Line 2 stands for Silsorel Industries, Quebec and was produced there in 1942. Line 3 is the registration number often used as the serial number.

Plate #3 says SADDLE 25Pp, CNo2 MK1. The saddle is the main part holding the cradle, or the whole gun, to the frame or carriage. Line 2 and the 25Pp means these parts fit only a 25-pounder. The same is for all the numbers; they are all interchangeable with this company's models of 25-pounder CNo2 MK1. It also sits at Legion 133 Building and Hall.

## Summary

Cobourg can be called a town supporting the history of artillery through four eras. Its history is shown through the four well-displayed pieces for generations to come.

## Resources

David McConnell, Environment Canada Parks Service, Author, *British Smooth-Bore Artillery: A Technological Study*

S. James Gooding, *An Introduction to British Artillery in North America*, Museum of Restoration Service, Bloomfield, ON

Artillery of Canada, Master List Ontario, website

Cobourg Museum Heritage Centre, Stanley Isherwood photos

Cobourg Public Library

Cobourg and District Historical Society, Carla Jones Resources

Leona Woods Resources

Retired Cobourg Garrison Artillery Association, John Aitkens, Lt. Col. Gordon King (passed), W. D. Cockburn (passed)

The Royal Canadian Artillery Museum, Shilo, Manitoba, Keeper of Collections