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# Swift & Bold: Relationship with Queen?s York Rangers subject of film, exhibition



**By Brock Weir**

They picked up their pens in a form of protest, scrawling their names on their rations rather than eating them on the journey home, a jab at the bland and unvaried diet they had to choke down while in a conflict zone.

It might have been a relatively benign form of protest when the soldiers essentially autographed a biscuit of hardtack in 1885, but now, nearly 135 years later, it's an evocative piece of history that is helping to tell a much larger ? and ongoing ? story in Swift & Bold.

Swift & Bold, an initiative of the Aurora Museum of Archives, is the name of a new exhibition charting Aurora's storied history with the Queen's York Rangers Regiment and a documentary of the same name, both of which will premiere this Saturday night, September 28, at the Church Street School.

The Aurora Museum & Archives has been working on Swift & Bold for several seasons, brainstorming the idea of a two-pronged approach to celebrate Aurora's enduring relationship with the Rangers to coincide with the renovation and re-opening of their one-time Aurora home, the historic Aurora Armoury, as the new campus of Niagara College's Canadian Food & Wine Institute.

For the Museum, it was a chance to revisit old, perhaps forgotten, local history as a new chapter begins.

?This really is a comprehensive project,? says Michelle Johnson of the Aurora Museum and Archives. ?The exhibition takes a deep dive

into the details of the origin of the regiment through to the current day. The documentary is as comprehensive in scope, interspersed with family connections to Aurora, which brings the personal touch into it.?

?We also wanted to show (viewers and museum-goers) that the Queen's York Rangers are still here,? adds curator Shawna White, comparing the Regiment's presence when they were at the historic Armoury abutting Town Park to the current Lt. Gov. John Graves Simcoe Armoury on Industrial Parkway South. ?They used to be a lot more visible in the community, especially after World War Two when they would drive their tanks down Mosley (to and from the Armoury) and people were a little ticked off with the damage that got done to roads. They were more visible with the cadets that were parading in the park but they are a little bit hidden away now.

?They are still here, they have been here in August since 1874, and that is a huge connection. It is bringing that back so the community is aware and they can celebrate with us.?

The community may have had a sneak peek of coming attractions in recent months as the Museum, and filmmakers Mountain Goat, took over various locations around York Region for historic re-enactments that feature in the documentary, including Shepherd's Bush Conservation Area here in Aurora, and the recreated First World War trench, which is now on display at the Georgina Military Museum.

Helping guide the process ? as well as secure some rarely seen artefacts from other museums for Swift & Bold ? has been Jeremy Hood, who comes to the Aurora Museum & Archives from the Queen's York Rangers' Regimental Museum at Fort York.

?They have a really significant collection and it felt like a really good opportunity to dive in and bring some really fascinating stories to life,? says Mr. Hood. ?Every time I am in the archive at Fort York I'm discovering new stories and a lot of stories that do relate directly back to Aurora because so many of the Battalion's activities took place here, even before the Armoury was established in 1874. In 1812, for example, a lot of the militia for the First York Militia was drawn from this area, all up and down Yonge Street.?

Mr. Hood's efforts have also helped the Aurora Museum & Archives achieve a long-held dream, at least temporarily, by bringing an important piece of local history out from the shadows: a bugle presented to the Regiment very publicly in Aurora following the Fenian Raids in the late 1800s.

?I was speechless about the breadth of the Queen's York Rangers, their history and how far back it went,? said Ms. Johnson. ?Just seeing all the stories, the history laid out and understanding the characteristics that these individual soldiers must have had to go into conflicts, enlist, and this [has allowed me to gain even more of] an incredible amount of respect for the Regiment as a whole and just everybody that has been

a part of it through time.?

Adds Ms. White: ?Aurora has a rich history I think a lot of people now might not necessarily be aware of. This is just another way to illustrate that and say, ?Wow, this is a really cool place and there is a lot going on here,' just bringing that back to the forefront for people.?

?This is not just a legacy piece, but an ongoing narrative,? notes Ms. Johnson.?

Swift & Bold: The Queen's York Rangers launches at the Aurora Museum & Archives (22 Church Street) this Saturday, September 28, from 7 ? 9 p.m. Invitation to the documentary premiere and exhibition opening is free, but RSVP to swhite@aurora.ca.