

Museum's film examines close ties between Aurora and Regiment



By Brock Weir

Muskets on their backs, they marched through what is now Sheppard's Bush Conservation Area prepared for enemy fire.

Their forest green uniforms contrasted against the sunlit leaves as they took their positions and waited until they got the signal.

In this case, however, the signal they were waiting for was not a sign from a commanding officer to draw their muskets; rather, it was the call of "Action!" as they relived key moments of the War of 1812.

Joggers and soccer players making use of Sheppard's Bush on Saturday afternoon could have been forgiven for thinking they fell through a wormhole into a bygone era as re-enactors took over portions of the green space to film sequences for a new short film examining the history of the Queen's York Rangers.

Commissioned by the Aurora Museum & Archives, the short will shed a new and innovative light on local links to the Aurora-based Regiment and explore stories that have remained in the background for generations.

The film, produced by Mountain Goat Film Company, has been commissioned to coincide with a new physical exhibition being mounted by the Museum this fall that takes a deep dive into the Queen's York Rangers' storied history — both here in Aurora and

in conflicts around the world.

Saturday's shoot saw

re-enactors breathe new life into the 1st York Militia, a precursor to today's Rangers and their service for King and Country during the War of 1812. Previous shoots have included walking in the footsteps of their forebears at the Battle of Stoney Creek and the retreat from Fort George, but this past weekend ?really homed in on the Aurora connection,? said Michelle Johnson of the Aurora Museum and Archives.

?We have been able to

recover some names and some of the names are tied to different land grants from the late 1700s, so this is really helping us make that connection to actual people who were residing in this area, who went and served under General Brock during the war, and it is fantastic to know how this lineage ran,? she explained ahead of the shoot. ?Before, we weren't really sure about the specifics of people from this community who went and fought in 1812, but there were some documents where this was clearly spelled out.?

Production on the documentary began last year.

Impressed by Mountain Goat's work with other museums, the Aurora Museum & Archives thought a short film would be the perfect accompaniment for their upcoming exhibition.

The Regiment is a

topic they've long-considered worthy of a closer look as previous exhibitions ? including those on the history of Town Park and Aurora's built history, both of which featured the historic Aurora Armoury ? just touched upon the history that was available. Given the Armoury's ongoing restoration work, the Museum felt now was the perfect time to take that dive.

Helping them along

the way has been the Queen's York Rangers Regimental Museum, which has opened up the archives for both records and artefacts ? including a bugle presented to the Regiment following the Fenian Raids in the 1860s.

?The Museum's

assistant curator has been a lifeline for us [in] just understanding the language and complexities of the [Regiment and its name changes over the years], the ins and outs of military language and the right titles of uniforms,? says Ms. Johnson. ?We're really relying on a wider network to do that research, source locations and just bring it all together. There has been extensive research to get it right and we're vetting that at each level we can. The [filmmakers] have all of our research and all of the information available, and we're really trusting their vision of how they can bring this to fruition through the medium of film in a way that is compelling, intriguing, and makes best use of that medium.

?As a museum, we're

constantly trying to go beyond our walls and reach people in different ways to advocate for these stories throughout Aurora's history. Last year, we used the medium of theatre with the re-staging of The Temple of Fame to draw people in

and get some investment in Aurora's history and different narratives. This is just another example of how we're trying to use different media and be a bit innovative in going beyond our physical space to bring these stories out to the community and to residents and visitors alike.

?The Queen's York

Rangers have an incredible history and they have very strong ties to Aurora. Being able to showcase that in an exhibit is fantastic, but not everybody can come and see it. Our hope is this little moment from Aurora's history can be accessed by people far and wide.?

The Aurora Museum & Archives exhibition on the Queen's York Rangers, along with the associated documentary, will both be unveiled in September.