



The Royal Hamilton Light Infantry (Wentworth Regiment) 150th Anniversary Committee

BACKGROUNDER

THE ROYAL HAMILTON LIGHT INFANTRY (WENTWORTH REGIMENT)



During the War of 1812, parts of Wentworth County area were the territory of the 2nd Regiment, York Militia. Today's RHLI are in that same territory. On 22 May 2012, they were awarded the battle honour – “*Defence of Canada 1812-1814*” to ensure the efforts of the citizenry in defence of their land would not be forgotten. In early August 2012, the RHLI, again in perpetuation of the 2nd Yorks, was awarded the further 1812-15 battle honour, “*Detroit*”.

On 11 December 1862 the RHLI came into being as the XIII Battalion, Volunteer Militia of Canada (Infantry). The name changed over the years: 1900 - XIII Regiment; 1910 - XIII Royal Regiment; 1920 - The Royal Hamilton Regiment; and in 1927, The Royal Hamilton Light Infantry.

The Wentworth Regiment was raised in 1872 as the 77th (Wentworth) Battalion of Infantry. In 1900, it was renamed the 77th Wentworth Regiment, and in 1920 it became simply the Wentworth Regiment. In 1936, all but one company of the Wentworths merged with the RHLI and the unit became The Royal Hamilton Light Infantry (Wentworth Regiment), their name today.

The Regiment first saw action at the Battle of Ridgeway, near Fort Erie, in 1866 against Fenian invaders from the US. In 1870, a contingent served in Manitoba in the Riel campaign. During the Boer War 1899-1902, sufficient members volunteered for the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment and the 1st Canadian Mounted Rifles to give the unit their second battle honour. During the Great War 1914-18, many enlisted in units of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, notably the 4th, 86th (Machine Gun), 120th, 129th and 205th Battalions, whose battle honours we perpetuate. Sgt. William Merrifield, VC, MM, of the 4th Battalion (“Mad 4th”) was awarded the regiment’s first Victoria Cross.

In World War II 1939-45, the RHLI fought through North-West Europe, with the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division. On August 19th, 1942 they suffered heavily during the raid on Dieppe, but paved the way for D-Day. Their padre, Hon. Capt. The Reverend John Weir Foote, VC, CD, earned his Victoria Cross at Dieppe tending to the many wounded under heavy fire.

Former Rileys served in combat in Korea under Brigadier “Rocky” Rockingham, an RHLI WW II CO. In 1951-52 the Regiment raised and sent a company to each of the 1st & 2nd Canadian Rifles, part of the 27th NATO Brigade in West Germany. The 27th later re-badged as “The Queen’s Own” and was sent to Korea. The 1990s saw Rileys under fire in the Former Republic of Yugoslavia on UN and NATO operations. Into the third millennium, Rileys have served many tours in Bosnia, the Golan Heights, Sierra Leone, Haiti, Kenya, South Sudan and in heavy combat in Afghanistan. 41 battle honours have been awarded to the RHLI by a grateful nation so far.

On humanitarian operations in Canada, Rileys helped contain the Red River in Manitoba in February/March 1997. In February 1999 they deployed 60 Rileys to Eastern Ontario during their fierce ice storm, and were on standby during the “Y2K” Millennium changeover.

In late 2003 “C” Company was established in Burlington. Today, the Rileys are a professional, combat-capable Army Reserve regiment, trained for full-spectrum operations world-wide. They proudly serve their communities and our nation in response to their motto, “Semper Paratus” - ***Always Ready.***