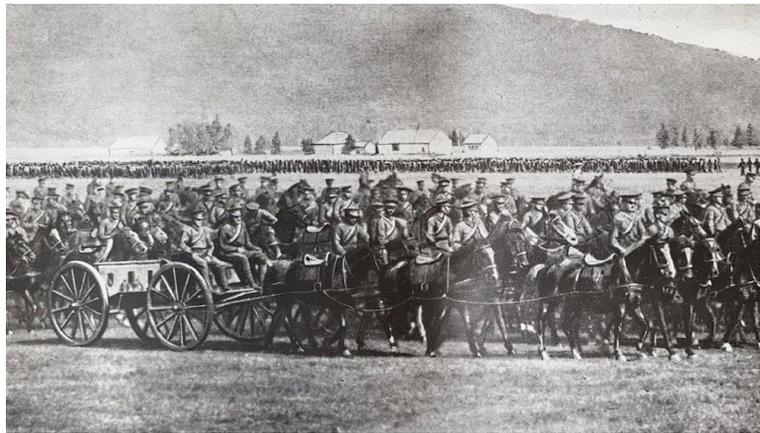


NOTE TO READER: *The information contained in these texts is as accurate as possible. It has been compiled from various sources that are difficult to cite. We hope that the reader will forgive us. Check back periodically, more history to follow....*

Camp Valcartier, Canadian Arsenals and Expropriations

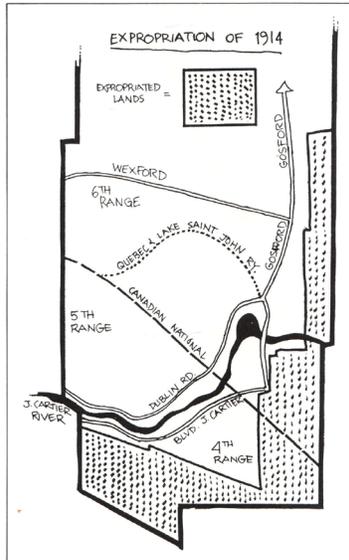
In 1912, Canada's Department of Militia and Defence needed property for training of militiamen from Quebec City. Five sites were considered. What are now Saint-Gabriel-de-Valcartier and Shannon were judged to be the best areas for the future facilities and the five thousand or so men expected each summer.

At the outbreak of World War 1 in 1914, it became necessary for the Federal Government to acquire 125 additional properties to organize the Canadian Expeditionary Force. This second wave of land acquisitions by Camp Valcartier involved expropriations and increased its size to 49.57 square kilometers. As a result, approximately one hundred farmers in St-Gabriel were expropriated; most of them moved to the Parish of Saint-Gabriel and some moved to Sainte-Catherine (Shannon) and Loretteville.



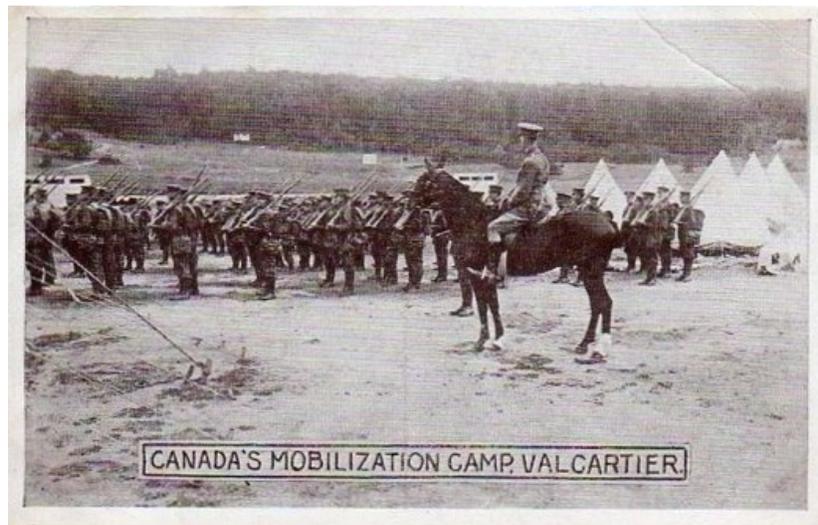
1914 Expropriation-Saint-Gabriel sector
Portion of a photo provided by Mrs. Theresa King - «By permission of the Panoramic Camera Company, Toronto»

In 1914, the expropriation impacted Sainte-Catherine (Shannon) and some 1,153 acres and ten farmers and their families were expropriated. This expropriation included parts of lots 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 286, 287, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419 and 420. Here are the names of those families affected by this expropriation: Curtis Billing, Walter Buchanan, Maurice Conway, Jerry Fogarty, John Griffin, N.A. Kingsland, Edmund Landers, Joseph Matte, F. Racine and William Thompson.



Land expropriated in 1914 – Source: City of Shannon archives

Camp Valcartier was the creation of Sam Hughes, the right-hand man of then Prime Minister, Sir Robert Borden. Major General Hughes had been in charge of the Nation's Military Forces since 1911 and advocated for the recruitment of volunteers. On August 7, 1914, he ordered the construction of Camp Valcartier and demanded that it be completed by the time the entire force was assembled. Four hundred workmen completed the task within the required timeframe.



Colonel Samuel Hughes, Minister of Militia and Defence (1911-1916), in front of his men, at the Valcartier military camp
 Photo Provided by National Defence - From an article lesoleil.com/archives/la-premiere-guerre-mondiale-et-la-naissance-de-valcartier

August 24th, 1914 saw the first troops arrive at Camp Valcartier and approximately 33,000 soldiers were to be trained for service overseas. In less than a month, the tract of land bisected by the Jacques-Cartier River had been transformed into a bustling military camp complete with roads, water mains, railway sidings, stores and showers. There were even movies for the troops. The camp included three miles of rifle ranges and training space for heavy artillery and cavalry.



Well deserved rest for the soldiers after training.
Photo provided by National Defence - From an article lesoleil.com/archives/la-premiere-guerre-mondiale-et-la-naissance-de-valcartier

During its first year of operation, Camp Valcartier had a record 33,644 men and by 1918, it had been almost entirely abandoned. Over the next decade, a few regiments trained there from time to time.

The end of the 1920s saw the beginning of the Great Depression and its consequent mass unemployment. To help the unemployed, political authorities established special measures. One of the relief programs involved building or repairing several military bases. At Valcartier, Unemployed Relief Camp No. 39 was opened in April 1933.



Men from the Valcartier labour camp building a road (May 1933).

Photo: Library and Archives Canada, from a CBC article: ici.radio-canada.ca/emissions/il_etait_une_voix/2015-2016/chronique.asp?idChronique=371052

Unemployed men were the first to be hired at Valcartier. Most were from Quebec City and the surrounding area. According to the Chronicle-Telegraph Newspaper, in 1933 there were 1,600 men who were lodged, fed, clothed and given a ration of tobacco. From 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. they could purchase beer for 5 cents a glass.

Eventually, the number of men rose to 2,400 making Valcartier the largest of Canada's 140 relief camps. Their daily tasks involved sweeping roads, clearing and levelling land, and erecting buildings. The men were paid twenty cents for their day's work. Hence their nicknames: *Royal Twenty Centers*, *les vingt sous*, or *les vingt cennes*. The Liberal Government came to power in late 1935 under the leadership of Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, and soon after, the Relief Camps came to an end.

When the Second World War began in 1939, Canada had a very small military force of 4,169 men composed of a standing army and a part-time militia. Those numbers soon changed and by 1940, some 76,678 men were under arms. Camp Valcartier once again became a year-round training camp.

Once more, appropriate buildings had to be erected. Wooden barracks without foundations were built in a H-shaped layout, known as "H" huts. These temporary barracks were placed in the central area of the camp and were used for different purposes; lodging, training, hospital, place of worship, etc. Other half-moon structures that could be dismantled were also built. Finally, a road network was laid out.

The Quebec Cartridge Company of Saint-Malo, Quebec, was unable to meet demands, so a new arsenal was opened in Valcartier on September 27, 1938, and that company's workshops were transferred to Valcartier. The workers filled percussion caps, cartridge cases and heavy shells. Valcartier's remote and isolated location seemed well suited to the storage of powders and explosives.

Many employees lived in Quebec City and travelled to work by train. A train station named "Val Rose" was built for the Valcartier Arsenal. By 1939, 7,000 people worked there, and eighty million cartridges were produced monthly. Canada became the fourth largest supplier of ammunition for the Allied Forces and its second largest exporter.

During the Second World War, the Quebec Arsenal was Quebec City's biggest employer. Of these 14,000 people who worked at the three facilities, 8,000 were women.

Local women from Shannon made important contributions on the home front during the war years. With so many men off to fight overseas, women were called to work on the production lines at Canadian Arsenals and in doing so became vital to the war effort.



Women, employees of the arsenal
Provided by Mrs. Deborah Kiley. Taken by Photo Moderne Enrg. Québec

Many men and women living in this area worked at the Canadian Arsenals also known as Dominion Arsenals. In the 1940's housing was built for some of the employees and their families. These were known as the Arsenal Houses and consisted of 2 blocks that housed 4 families each. These houses were located just a short distance from the

munitions plant. Over the years and among others were the workers and their families: Bilodeaus, Conways, Côtés, Durochers, Kileys Molloy, Mathieus, Mecteous, Moruds, Nevilles, Savards, Therriens, Thibaults and Vachons. These houses were demolished in the late 1980's by Valcartier Industries. Many families that had lived there built houses in Shannon.



« Arsenal Houses » - Provided by Mrs. Deborah Kiley

After the Second World War, the Department of Defence went through much reorganization. Camp Valcartier continued to be a place for training and assembly area for troops, a role that meant maintaining staff and permanent facilities. Between 1953 and 1959, these military needs led to a vast construction program; offices, gyms, kitchens, messes, stores, drill halls, training rooms, services, houses, etc.

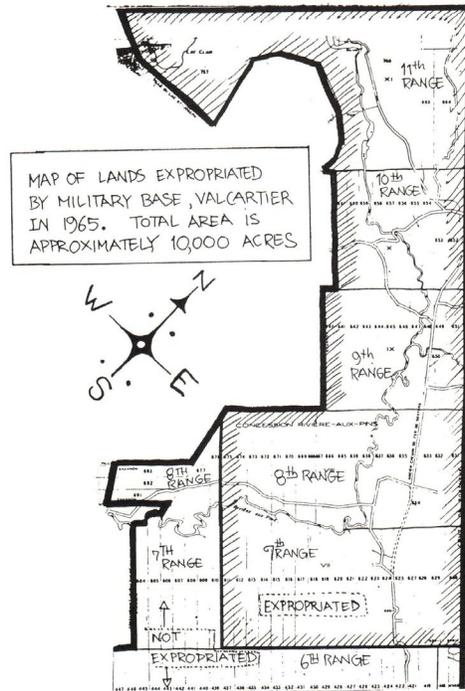
During the 1950s, many houses were built to lodge the military and their families. These were called PMQs (permanent married quarters).

In 1965, the Federal Government had plans to create a weapon-testing zone by considerably expanding Camp Valcartier. Once again, properties were expropriated in Shannon and Saint-Gabriel West.

This expropriation was considered a great tragedy for the residents of Shannon. The areas affected were the 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th and 11th ranges, representing approximately 10,000 acres of land with its rivers, lakes, forest, bushes and hills.

The financial compensation offered by the government did not satisfy the people involved in this expropriation and the way of life for these families would forever change. Residents relentlessly protested and eventually the government reviewed the situation, and one-quarter of the municipality was saved from expropriation. Since much of the 8th range had been expropriated, the residents of lots 677 and 678

were left with no access via Shannon roads. These residents were obliged to follow roads through two neighbouring municipalities in order to get to their homes on this range, now known as Kilkenny Road.



Land expropriated in 1965 – Source: City of Shannon Archives

The following proprietors and their families were part of the expropriation in 1965:

- 7th range: Russell Paquet, Margaret Campbell, J.A. Griffin, Michael Neville, Leo Tope, John G. Bowles, Raymond McGrory, James McGlennan, Edward J. Bowles, John G. Bowles, Charles Bowles, A.P. Conway and the Franciscan Fathers.
- 8th range: Edna McCune, Charles Bowles, Thomas Neville, John G. Bowles, Margaret Campbell, Theresa White, James Aikens, Eddy Conway, Michael McLaughlin.
- 9th range: Murdock Lumber Company, Joseph Bastien, Maurice Conway, Thomas McCune.
- 10th range: Roy Dupuis, Ted McLaughlin, Joseph Bastien, Anne Parent, Russell Paquet, Murdock Lumber Company.
- 11th range: Murdock Lumber Company, Joseph Bastien

Two other phases of development shaped the evolving military base. In the late 1960s, large garages and a series of apartment buildings were built.

Canadian Forces Base Valcartier is a community of 288 km². The population includes some 6,000 military personnel and 1,200 civilian employees. In the summer, some 2,500 cadets and 2,000 reservists use the facilities.

The permanent married quarters sector, formerly known as Courcelette, is part of the city of Shannon. Its population of 1,800 is made up of military personnel and their families.

Shannon Post Offices

In the early days, mail was delivered once a week from Quebec City. The first post office was established in this community on July 1st, 1882, was named St. Gabriel Station. It was located in what was then called St. Gabriel Village, which was situated across from the ball field, roughly southwest of the present Shannon Community Center (75 Gosford).

Its first postmaster was Mr. A.W. Landrigan. Upon his death in 1891, his wife replaced him. She eventually remarried and became Mrs. K. O'Donnell and continued her duties as postmistress until her death in 1905. She was succeeded by Mr. Louis Toutant whose term ended four years later.

The next postmaster was Mr. Francis Moreau. He was appointed in 1909 and he vacated the office in the Spring of 1917. Mr. J. O'Donnell replaced Mr. Moreau that year until his resignation in 1922. His successor was Mr. Michael Woodlock, who continued until his demise in December 1927. His daughter Miss Anna Woodlock, temporarily replaced her father until Mr. William Thompson became postmaster six months later. Mr. Thompson completed his term November 30th, 1939, the year that the St. Gabriel Station Post Office was closed.

To accommodate an increasing population, the St. Gabriel Station Post Office was transferred to Station Road. The name of the post office was changed to Valcartier Station Post Office and was established on December 1st, 1939. Mr. George Henderson served the first term at this post office, and resigned in June 1940. Mr. Moisé Gagnon, who retired four years later, succeeded him. For a short period of time, Mr. J. Maurice Frederic was postmaster until Mrs. Isabelle Gagné at 20 Station Road, replaced him and held the position until 1974.



Post Office at 20, Station Street – Provided by the family of Mrs. Isabelle Gagné

There was also another post office, the Shannon Post Office established in 1905 and it was situated on Gosford Road, near the old Green Gate road. (lot 421) Mr. John Griffin was the first postmaster until his death in March 1915. The post office was then transferred to the corner of Gosford Road and the 6th Range (now Wexford Road) on lot 422 to the home of Mr. Joseph Griffin. Upon his death in February 1929, his wife, Mrs. Helen Griffin continued her husband's duties until she resigned in 1940. During Mrs. Griffin's employment, the post office returned to its original location (lot 421).

Mr. Frank Griffin was then appointed postmaster. Subsequently, upon his death in 1948, his son, Mr. Jack Griffin assumed that responsibility, until 1965, when the post office was permanently closed because of the federal expropriation of land in that sector. Those who were not expropriated had to go to the Valcartier Station Post Office on Station Road where Mrs. Gagné was postmistress.

During Mrs. Gagné's period of employment the name of the post office, Valcartier Station, was changed to the Shannon Post Office. This was to avoid confusion as there were numerous other establishments that were similarly named including: Valcartier Village, Camp Valcartier and Valcartier Station.

Mrs. Rose Kack then became postmistress in 1974 and the post office was moved to her residence at 422 Blvd. Jacques Cartier. When Mrs. Kack became ill, Mrs. Pauline McCarthy temporarily replaced her from July 1977 until May 1978. Upon Mrs. Kack's demise in 1978, Mrs. Tillie Walling took over at 10 Conway Street until she retired in January 1983. Her husband, Mr. Raines Walling took over her duties until his death in June 1984.

Once again, Mrs. Pauline McCarthy temporarily filled the position from June until October 1984. In October 1984, Mrs. Marina Deveau became postmistress at 3

Gosford Road until January 18th, 1991 when the Shannon Post Office closed. Another piece of our history had unfortunately come to an end.

There was also a rural mail route, which ran the upper ranges, from the 6th to the 8th. This route was established in 1940 and the first courier was Mr. Elmer Thompson who would travel the route in the summer with a horse and buggy and in the winter with a sleigh. He would ring a bell to announce his approach so that anyone with parcels to send or who might be expecting a large piece of mail could hurry to the roadside to meet him.



Mr. Elmer Thompson, delivering with his horse and sleigh
Photo provided by the Shannon Historical Society

People who needed stamps simply placed the required amount of money in their mailbox. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the winter route took most of the day and Elmer would stop daily for lunch at Mary and Bill Conway's home on the 8th range. Mr. Thompson retired after forty-one years of service and was replaced by Mrs. Betty Griffin. She retired in 1994. The community boxes were then installed and various persons from the central postal service in Val Belair continue to ensure this rural delivery.

With the closing of the Post Office in 1991, postal counter services were available as follows:

- 1991–1992 – Boucherie Rolaine, formerly located at 24 Station Road;
- 1992-1994 – Dépanneur Shannon formerly located at the corner of Conway and Blvd. Jacques-Cartier.
- Postal counter services are presently available at the Super Dépanneur Shannon "EKO" at 436 Blvd. Jacques-Cartier.