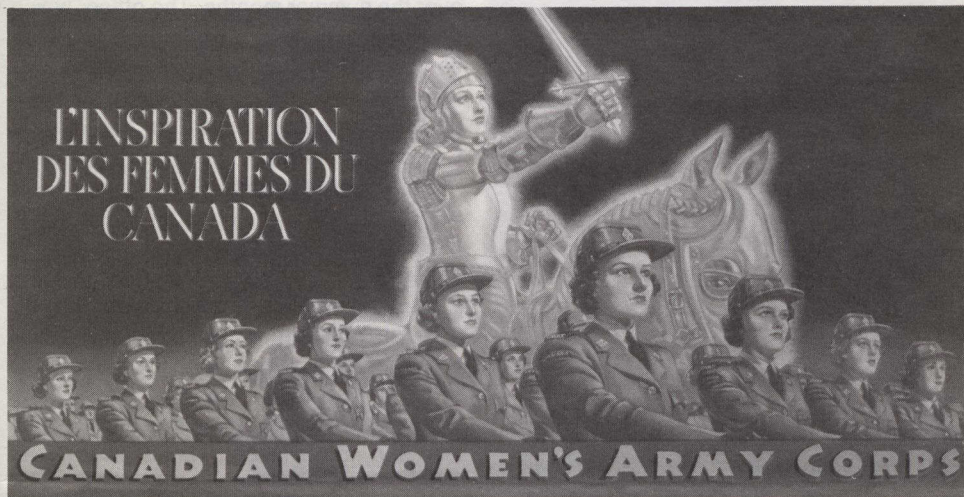


Landmark exhibit features women and war



Canadian Women's Army Corps recruiting poster

The Canadian War Museum in Ottawa recently opened an exhibit, *Women and War*, which highlights the role played by Canadian women during periods of conflict throughout the country's history. The exhibition runs until September 1985.

In examining the many ways Canadian women contributed to the defence of their homes and country, cared for the wounded, prepared materials of war, served in the military and provided economic support in a troubled wartime economy, *Women and War* reveals that Canadian women have shared fully in their nation's wartime experience. While focusing on the two world wars of this century, the exhibition also refers to the role of women during other periods of conflict



Female riveters at work on a navy frigate at Yarrow's Limited, Esquimalt, British Columbia.

throughout Canada's history.

The exhibition is divided into five segments describing the different facets of wartime experience for women. *Fighters and Protectors* examines how women defended home and country, from the days of Madame de La Tour and Madeleine Jarret de Verchères in the seventeenth century to the Second World War when Joan Bamford Fletcher led 1 700 Japanese prisoners of war through 450 kilometres of hostile territory in Southeast Asia.

Wartime healers

Care for the Wounded looks at the traditional view of women as wartime healers, tending the sick and wounded. From the establishment of the first hospital at Ville Marie in Montreal by Jeanne Mance in 1643 to the 4 480 nursing sisters recruited during the Second World War, women continued a long history of nursing care. Photographs, uniforms and souvenirs from patients illustrate this section of the exhibition and include mementoes from Ottawa's Margaret H. Smith who served in both the Boer War and the First World War.

As the scale of wars grew, women were recruited more and more into the labour force to respond to the need for guns, tanks, explosives, and radio equipment. *Materials of War* focuses on this home-front involvement by women. In 1917 there were an estimated 35 000 women in munitions factories in Ontario and Quebec working ten to 16 hours a day for between 20 to 45 cents an hour. During the Second World War, some 261 000 women were employed in war production, mostly in the field of munitions inspection, although they accounted for 30 per cent of the aircraft industry.

Military women

In the Military looks at the women who served with the military, from the days of Indian women accompanying their warriors to set up camp to William Lyon Mackenzie's wife Isabel, who followed him to his island refuge during the 1837 Rebellion in Upper Canada. The placement of women in administrative jobs during the First World War freed men to fight at the front but some in uniform were only grudgingly accepted by the military establishment and the Canadian public right up until 1941. In that year the first two active corps for women were created as auxiliaries to the air force and the army. Once accepted, women were actively recruited with posters, films, booklets and public talks.

The final section of the exhibition, entitled *Economic Support*, examines the



Georgina Fane Pope (1862-1938), first matron of the Canadian Army Medical Corps, served with distinction in the South African War and was the first Canadian to receive the Royal Red Cross for conspicuous service in the field.

role of women in maintaining a stable wartime society. In both world wars, women were called upon to volunteer their time, energy, skills and money in support of the nation's war effort. They sustained and strengthened the wartime economic base and ensured that morale remained high.

Over 300 artifacts including letters, posters, photographs, paintings, weapons, uniforms, medals and souvenirs offer a moving testimony to the courage, devotion and determination of Canadian women at war.