

Abandoned Military Installations of Canada, Volume 1: Ontario

By Paul Ozorak, 1991 and 1998. Softcover.

The story of Canada's domestic military infrastructure has been overlooked by academics. RMC historian Ronald Haycock concluded in an insightful 1991 article on Camp Borden that the stories of such specialized institutions as military facilities are often ignored - professional historians apparently consider these histories "too dull or too unimportant," while "amateurs have concentrated on drama rather than analysis and description."¹ Haycock's relatively brief exploration of military property acquisition and development focused largely on the roles and impressions left by high-ranking national political and military officials, and highlighted the need for further study of this neglected area of Canadian history. Amateur historian Paul Ozorak, perceiving a need for a central reference volume on old military properties, took it upon himself to fill the gap and produced his first book concurrent with the publication of Haycock's article.

Ozorak's study of abandoned military installations is clearly a labour of love. Basing his approach on the popular *Ghost Towns of Ontario* series, the author provides complete listings of military installations in Central Canada that were in operation during or after World War II and that are now closed. The first volume looks at eighty-two Ontario centres that previously housed anything and everything from aerodromes to Pinetree radar sites to RCN training establishments. The book is arranged alphabetically by 'city' name (although many of the centres were not, in fact, cities in the proper sense of the term). The second volume, a similar study of sixty-six Quebec sites, follows an identical format. Each case study is self-contained and concise - this is understandable given the scope of his project. Both volumes are prefaced with brief overviews of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan training structure, the various types of army training facilities, and the PINETREE and SAGE systems.

Perhaps most impressive and useful are the very detailed bibliographies. Given the nature of the topic, the author had to rely almost entirely on archival material from the Department of National Defence (Directorate of History and Heritage) and the National Archives of Canada. Ozorak details the collections and record groups that he consulted down to the file level, and provides the microfilm reel number for accessible volumes.

The author places a premium on providing a comprehensive list of abandoned sites, not on analysis. By no means can the two volumes be considered 'academic.' The quality and depth of detail provided in each 'snapshot' is uneven and unbalanced - in some cases the author merely seems to provide lists of raw data that seem out of place alongside the other case studies (such as listing the individual regiments who appeared in the various barracks at Niagara during World War II). There are maps for some installations, and not for others, with no indication of why this is the case. There are also problems with minor details, such as a statement in the introduction to the second volume stating that the former Camp Ipperwash was transferred to the "Stoney Creek Indian band" (rather than the Stony Point Band, or more correctly the Kettle and Stony Point First Nation).^{1[1]} Furthermore, Ozorak does not adequately define what he means by "military installations" - he does not include leased bombing ranges (such as Tyendinaga), but he does include Gerald Bull's Highwater laboratory that was never owned by the government. In that latter inclusion, the author succumbs to the lure of "drama" and seems to deviate from the task he

set out to fulfill. Unfortunately, Ozorak chose not to use footnotes within the text (although this shortcoming is somewhat offset by the excellent bibliographies). The massive rounds of Canadian base closures announced in the 1994 and 1995 budgets mean that the Ontario book is already somewhat dated. Nevertheless, Ozorak provides a solid foundation for future research on this interesting subject by academics and on specific case studies by local history buffs.^{2[2]} Historians and librarians answering local queries will, as the author hoped, find these volumes to be a useful reference. They are even better suited for his second aim: to serve as a travel guide for military enthusiasts. He suggests there are two more volumes to come, presumably on Western Canada and the Maritimes respectively. I will certainly add them to my collection.

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