



## **BLACKFALDS & AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

### **THE WIGMORE UNIFORM PROJECT**

Written and curated by

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## Introduction

This project came about in the early fall of 2007, from a visit to the Wigmore family for a different reason. Ken Wigmore had decided to donate part of his family's photo collection to the archives, and I was there to go through the boxes of photos and sort what would be significant to the Wigmore history and the



*Figure 1: Wigmore Coat of Arms*

Blackfalds area for donation. Our conversation came to him asking about what the Historical Society was working on next, and I mentioned we were planning a Remembrance Day display and were looking for items pertaining to that. That is when the subject of the old uniforms of his great grandfathers came up, and he said I was welcome to use them for the display. He brought up an old suitcase from the basement and I didn't open it until I got home. To my surprise and horror, the suitcase was full of mold covering all the many pieces inside. It was obvious they could not be used in the display, but the items looked so interesting I decided to vacuum everything off to get a better look, and was intrigued. My daughter was working at the Alberta Museums Association in Edmonton at the time, and she asked around and



*Figure 2: Old suitcase the uniforms were stored in.*



*Figure 3: Interior of suitcase.*

found a textile conservator who agreed to have a look at the uniforms. The rest, they say, is history.

## Some Wigmore History

The Wigmore name dates back into English history, as far back as Alfred the Great. The Wigmore Castle in Herefordshire was first built in 1069, and later a church on the hill and an abbey and grange were added to the surrounding lands and village. Their ruins still stand today.



Figure 4: Wigmore Castle sign.



Figure 5: Part of Wigmore Castle ruins.



Figure 6: Edward Wigmore Sr. in Driffield, Yorkshire, England, circa 1894.

Edward Wigmore was born in Driffield, Yorkshire, England on July 3, 1851. His father, William Wigmore ( 1816 – 1882), served in a volunteer rifle regiment in Yorkshire. Edward was a solicitor in Yorkshire and his other interests were good books, particularly those of historical background, botany, zoology, and travel, and he was fluent in six languages. Edward was a member of the East Yorkshire Rifle Volunteers, probably joining in the late 1860s. He was involved with the Prussians prior to, or during the Franco/Prussian war (1870). Edward was married on Dec. 20, 1876 to Margaret Hannah Raynor, and a son Edward Atter Wigmore was born February 7, 1878 in Driffield, followed by a daughter, Edith Ethel, on Dec. 25, 1881.

In 1884 the family moved from England to Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, where they lived and Edward Sr. joined the Canadian Militia, serving as a lieutenant in the 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion Volunteer Militia Infantry of Canada.



Figure 7: Margaret Hannah Raynor, married Edward Wigmore in 1876.



Figure 8: East York Rifle Volunteers unit, circa 1870s.

A second daughter, Gladys, was born in Hamilton on Jan. 4, 1889. In about 1892 the family returned to England for 4 years, and then Edward Sr. and Jr. returned to Canada in 1896, this time to Alberta, and lived with a fellow Englishman, Jack Tipping, in the Burbank area just southeast of Blackfalds. They then took up a homestead west of Blackfalds, proving the south half of section 22-



Figure 9: Edward Wigmore Sr. in Canadian Militia uniform, circa 1890.



Figure 10: Wigmore's first home on the homestead west of Blackfalds, 1901.



Figure 11: Wigmore's second home west of Blackfalds, circa 1902.



Figure 12: Edward Wigmore Jr. on horse, Buttons, early 1900s.

39-28-W4 in 1902. Mrs. Edward Wigmore Sr., who had remained in England since 1892, then came to join them when they had established a home and working farm. Edward Jr. was quite musical and played in an active orchestra in the Blackfalds area headed by Billy Plowright. He played the violin, guitar, mandolin, and gave music lessons for many years. Edward Sr. died on May 28, 1911 and his wife, Margaret, returned to England. Edward Jr. stayed on the farm and in June of 1910 he married Florence Banton, a teacher at the Aspelund School west of Blackfalds. Edward was the secretary of the Aspelund School Board. Florence was also musical, playing the piano, and the pair became in high demand to supply music for local dances.



*Figure 13: Edward Wigmore Jr. and wife Florence, 1933.*



*Figure 14: Edward Wigmore Jr. farm house, 1930.*

Edward and Florence had three children all born on the farm, Arthur ( 1911 - 2003 ) Frank ( 1913 - 1916 ) and Margaret ( 1916 – 1954 ). Arthur married Ruth Miller in July of 1938 and they had three children, Dorothy, David, and Kenneth. Margaret married Cyril Ironside in June of 1938 and they had two children, Edmund and Lillian. Several more generations of Wigmore now reside in the area.

## **The Project**

The Blackfalds & Area Historical Society decided at a meeting that the uniforms (circa 1875 – 1885) of one of our local pioneers, Edward Wigmore, were certainly significant enough to warrant restoration. Major fund raising would have to be done, but the first step was the Wigmore family donating the uniforms with all the pieces to the Society. It took over a year to raise the funds needed to get the restorative work done properly. Research was also done on the family history as well as the uniform and regiment history, to add to the display.

## **The Conservator's Work**

Dr. Elizabeth Richards was the textile conservator who did the conservation work on the Wigmore uniforms. She is a retired professor of Clothing and Textiles at the University of Alberta who now runs a private textile conservation firm, KCR Textiles Consulting Ltd. in Edmonton, Alberta. Prior to leaving the University of Alberta Dr. Richards taught in the areas of textile science, textile conservation and research methods in clothing and textiles. In her private consulting firm the projects vary from restoring Christening dresses, mounting textile art work and conserving historic costumes and textiles. Dr. Richards has a B.Sc. in Home Economics from the University of Alberta, a M. S. in Clothing and Textiles from Utah State University and a Ph.D. from the University of Alberta, in Environmental Science in Environmental Engineering.

The conservation of the Wigmore Uniforms was a very large project due to the number and complexity of the garments conserved. It was a unique project



because of the age of the uniforms (circa 1875), the fact that the uniforms were Canadian, from the Hamilton Militia, and that the uniforms all belonged to the same soldier. Prior to conservation the uniforms were very dirty and had been stored in an old suitcase in a basement, surviving a basement flood.



*Figure 15: Dr. Elizabeth Richards, textile conservator, with restored uniforms.*

The conservation work involved the following steps:

1. Documentation of the condition of the uniforms;
2. Decisions regarding cleaning of the various pieces: tunics, trousers, belts, mittens and hats;
3. Cleaning the wool uniform pieces, either by wet cleaning (washing) or dry cleaning (under special conditions);
4. Repairing the damage due to age, wear and storage. While in storage mice had chewed parts of the wool pieces and had done extensive damage. There was also some moth damage.
5. Stitching repairs to the tunics, trousers and vest;
6. Making three mannequins specifically for the uniforms.
7. Cleaning the hats and making hat mounts for exhibition and display;
8. Photographing the initial condition of the uniforms, the conservation processes and the uniform pieces after conservation.

The exhibition mannequins were made by Artefact Conservation students at Queen's University when Dr. Richards was a visiting lecturer in the winter of 2009.

The success of the project was apparent in the much improved condition of the conserved uniforms. Not only do the uniforms look impressive on their mannequins, but the cleaned uniforms will be conserved for future generations.

## The Display

The display was set up in early November, and we have our unveiling reception on November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2009, attended by the Wigmore family, Historical Society members, and invited guests. Dr. Elizabeth Richards, the conservator, gave a talk on her work, and refreshments were served, and everyone enjoyed the exhibit.



Figure 16: Part of the Wigmore display in Blackfalds Library, Nov. 7, 2009.



Figure 17: Part of the Wigmore display in Blackfalds Library, Nov. 7, 2009.

Included in the display were the following pieces:

**1. Red full dress tunic** – This hand sewn jacket is made of red stroud, a felted wool fabric, and has been piece dyed. The trim is white stroud. The jacket is lined with a beige twill weave silk fabric, with silk thread. There are 8 brass buttons at center front, the buttons have a beaver in the center and the words ‘Canada’ and ‘Militia’ on them. Each shoulder has a heavy gold braid cord in a twisted pattern, and the neck edge has 2 smaller gold rank badges. There are 2 gold militia buttons at the back of the jacket. There are 2 insignia buttons on each side of the collar opening. The sleeves have a decorative silver braid, colored gold.



Figure 18: Full Dress Tunic - red - before conservation.



Figure 19: Damage to collar area.



Figure 20: Preparation of dry cleaning.



Figure 21: After Conservation – front.



Figure 22: After Conservation – back.

**2. Red mess dress jacket** – This hand sewn jacket is made of red stroud, a felted wool fabric, lined with red silk. The sleeve linings are white cotton with a black silk twill weave fabric facing. The front chest area is padded and stitched to give it shape. The jacket is missing both epaulets. There are 56 small brass buttons sewn together in a strip, with 11 hook and eye closures underneath. The braid is silver, faded to grey.



Figure 23: Mess Dress Jacket  
–before conservation.



Figure 24: After Conservation – front.



Figure 25: After Conservation – back.



**3. Red dress vest** – This hand sewn vest is made of red wool with cotton back and lining. The front has small brass buttons in a strip with hook and eye closures underneath. The pocket areas have silver braid. There is a small brass belt buckle and tab closure at the centre of the back. A paper with Capt Wigmore written in black ink is stitched with red thread to the belted closure at the back of the vest.



*Figure 26: Dress Vest-front, before conservation.*



*Figure 27: Dress Vest-back, before conservation.*



*Figure 28: After Conservation-front.*



*Figure 29: After Conservation-back.*



*Figure 30: Name attached to belt at back (Capt. Wigmore)*

**4. Navy blue long undress tunic** – This patrol jacket is manufactured with a collar label reading “Thos Crean. Toronto”. The fabric is a navy blue stroud, a felted wool yarn. The lining is 100% black cotton sateen. The silk braid is flat, 3/8 inch in width, and makes 4 decorative toggle closings, with large metal hooks and eyes for the functional closing for the jacket. The regimental rank badges have a Latin phrase “Tria Juncta In Uno” translated as “three joined in one”.



*Figure 31: Long Undress Tunic-front, before conservation.*



*Figure 32: Long Undress Tunic-back, before conservation.*



*Figure 33: Collar button.*



*Figure 34: Manufacturer's label -Thos. Crean, Toronto.*



*Figure 35: Damage to front area.*



*Figure 36: After Conservation – front.*



*Figure 37: After Conservation – back.*

**5. Navy blue trousers** - The trousers are made of worsted wool yarns, with a narrow red stripe running down the outside seams. The trousers have a 6 button fly opening, and the buttons have the label “Maynard Harris & Grice” on them. There are 6 buttons which would be used with suspenders.



*Figure 38: Trousers before conservation.*



*Figure 39: Trousers inside waist seam and pockets.*



*Figure 40: After Conservation – front.*



*Figure 41: After Conservation – back.*

**6. Forage cap** – The main fabric of this hat is a navy colored wool stroud with a band of red stroud below. A looped gold braid is along the lower edge. A badge from the 13 Royal Canadian Militia is at the center front. The hat has a thin leather hat band and the lining is a magenta silk stitched in a diamond design. The name Edwd. Wigmore is written in ink on the hat band, on the left proper side of the center back.



*Figure 42: Name on inside of cap band, in black ink  
–Edwd. Wigmore.*



*Figure 43: Front of cap after conservation.*





*Figure 44: Top of cap, after conservation.*

**7. Wedge cap** – This hat is made from wool stroud and the lining is brown cotton twill. The outer section is navy blue and the centre section is red with the outer edges trimmed with a narrow gold braid, and has a hook and eye closure.



*Figure 45: Wedge cap before conservation.*



*Figure 46: Wedge cap before conservation.*



*Figure 47: Wedge cap after conservation.*

**8. Pillbox hat** – The main fabric of this hat is a navy wool stroud, with a band of flat woven braid on the lower edge. A looped design of decorative braid is at the center of the top. A leather strap is attached to the inner leather hat band. The lining is magenta silk and has a stitched star design, and gold print of the Military Tailors which reads “By Appointment (Lion, Crown, Lion Symbol) Hobson & Son, Military Tailors & Outfitters, 94. St Martin’s Lane, Charring Cross Manufactory, 43.44 Artillery Place, Woolwich”.



*Figure 48: Navy blue Pillbox Hat with thin leather strap.*



*Figure 49: Pillbox Hat with mount.*

**9. Persian lamb fur hat** – This hat is a folded winter hat, lined with a quilted fabric with a silk fabric face and thin cotton padding.



*Figure 50: Persian Lamb Hat from side.*



*Figure 51: Persian Lamb hat from top.*

**10. English Military Belt** – This white leather belt is from an English Yorkshire Regiment and is 7.5 cm wide with silver decoration on the end tab, a metal loop holder and a large white metal buckle. In the middle of the belt is a metal insignia with “1<sup>st</sup> AD Batt. E. York .R. V.” framed with leaves and a crown on top. On either side, a few inches along the belt, is a metal whistle connected with 2 strand chain to a lion head. Attached to one end of the belt is a small black leather pouch bearing a Victoria Crown and the interwoven metal letters “E.Y.R.V.” for East York Rifle Volunteers.



*Figure 52: English Military Belt.*



*Figure 53: Metal whistle, insignia ( 1st AD.Batt.E.York.R.V. ) chain, and lion head.*



*Figure 54: Black leather pouch with the Victoria Crown and EYRV for East York Rifle Volunteers.*

**11. Canadian Military Belt** – This leather belt has a shiny off white finish, with a large brass triangle on the proper right front and a large brass buckle. On the back of the belt is printed in black ink: EDWD. WIGMORE LIEUT. XIII BATT. C.A.M.

There is a paper label adhered under the belt buckle in cursive writing – Edwd Wigmore, Hamilton.



*Figure 55: Canadian Military Belt with brass buckle.*



*Figure 56: Inscription on inside of belt  
– EDWD. WIGMORE LIET.XIII BATT.C.A.M.*



*Figure 57: Inscription on paper insert under buckle – Edwd. Wigmore, Hamilton.*



**12. Canadian Military Belt** – This two part white leather belt has a waist belt threaded through two loops of a lower belt. The front metal closure is a decorated hook and loop depicting a snake. The sword holder is a simple hook, overlaying a leather semi circle.



*Figure 58: Canadian Military Belt with hook and loop snake design.*



*Figure 59: Close up of snake clasp.*

**13. Canadian Military Belt** – This two part white leather belt has a waist belt threaded through two loops of the upper belt. The front metal closure is a complex Canada Militia 13 buckle with a crown on the top, a large 13 in the center, and a beaver on the bottom of the circle part. The sword holder is a simple hook. On the back of the belt is carved into the leather the words EDWARD WIGMORE, NOV 17<sup>th</sup> 1888.



*Figure 60: Canadian Militia Belt from 13th battalion.*



*Figure 61: Close up of buckle.*



*Figure 62: Inscription carved into leather - EDWARD WIGMORE NOV. 17th 1888.*

**14. Leather and Fur Mitts** – The upper side and lower halves of the underside of the mittens are fur, with the rest leather. There is leather facing inside and the hand section is lined with lamb's wool.



*Figure 63: Leather and fur mittens, lower side.*



*Figure 64: Leather and fur mittens, upper side.*

**15. Other items** – Included in this collection from the Wigmore family were a few items that came along with the uniforms.

Two Infantry Swords – These two swords have decorative hilts with leather accents attached. There is also a bit of leather on the scabbards. There is etched scroll and the letters VR decorating the blade, going down about 12 – 18 inches from the hilt. The full length of the swords is about 38 inches. One of the swords has the manufacturers name on it – J. Martin & Co. – 467 St. Paul Street, Montreal.



*Figure 65: Two infantry swords used in 1872 and 1889, 38 inches long with scabbards.*



*Figure 66: Decorative scroll and VR on sword blade.*



*Figure 67: Sword hilt and chain buffer.*



*Figure 68: Sword hilt.*



*Figure 69: Sword hilt with leather acorn shaped decoration.*

Flask – The flask is glass with leather covering the upper half and a silver cap and base with the name G & JW Hawksley on both silver pieces.



*Figure 70: Flask with silver base and lid, and leather top half.*

Telescope – The telescope extends out in 4 graduating pieces. It has a leather case with the words 1881 – Driffield on the leather.



*Figure 71: Telescope extended.*



*Figure 72: Telescope in leather case with inscription  
–1881 Driffield.*