

## Canadian Military History

---

Volume 18 | Issue 4

Article 6

---

3-27-2015

# The Top 10 Most Important Books of Canadian Military History

Tim Cook

---

### Recommended Citation

Tim Cook (2009) "The Top 10 Most Important Books of Canadian Military History," *Canadian Military History*: Vol. 18: Iss. 4, Article 6.

Available at: <http://scholars.wlu.ca/cmh/vol18/iss4/6>

This Feature is brought to you for free and open access by Scholars Commons @ Laurier. It has been accepted for inclusion in Canadian Military History by an authorized administrator of Scholars Commons @ Laurier. For more information, please contact [scholarscommons@wlu.ca](mailto:scholarscommons@wlu.ca).

# The Top 10 Most Important Books of Canadian Military History

Tim Cook

Historians love books. We are trained to read them critically, to look for their flaws, and to mine them for our own better understanding of the past, but I've never met an historian who did not love books. I've never met an historian who did not get excited about ducking into a used book store to search for a rare copy to fill that list of "must haves" that are carried in one's head, or jotted down on a tattered list in one's wallet.

Historians also have their favourite books. We talk easily of the historiography, but there are those books that affected us, profoundly shaped our knowledge, and gave us a foundation upon which to push off in new directions. But how does one measure a favourite book, and then rank it against other key monographs? It is no easy task, and all of the ten military historians who agreed to be a part of this exercise admitted to the difficulty in compiling their lists of the most important books within the field of Canadian military history.

The ten historians were given little guidance on how to define "important," other than a few brief suggestions that the books should have laid the foundation or framework of study for a field or subject matter; that the book added significant knowledge to our understanding of the past; that the book was innovative in its use of sources or methodology;

and that the book has enduring value. Scope of vision, deep and varied use of archival sources, or quality of writing were other possible criteria for consideration. The criteria were there for the historians to mull over, but ultimately the selection was up to each of them. This list is about their most "important" 10 books, but each historian has offered some thoughts to preface their decisions.

There were some restrictions placed on the historians.

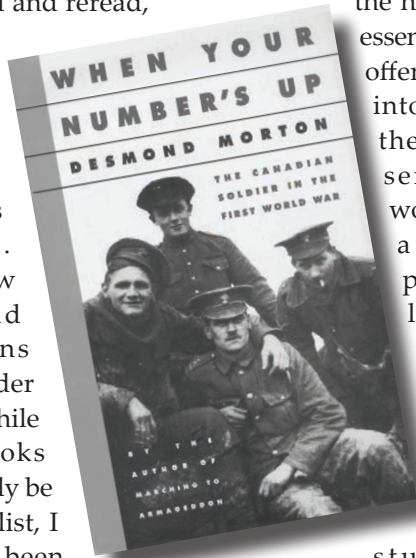
- Our historians were reminded to define military history broadly, from firing line to the home front, from the constructed memory of the war to gender studies, and everything in between and on the fringes.
- Official histories were out of contention. They have an unfair advantage in that they are written by teams, are constructed upon access to records that other historians usually do not have, and, almost by definition, are key foundational works on a particular subject. Such is certainly the case with the air force, navy, and army histories of the two world wars, many of which would be on these lists. However, while these works are excluded, other works by official historians writing in an academic capacity are not excluded.

Charles Perry Stacey's *Arms, Men and Governments* fell into a gray area, and there was a lively debate over whether it should be included. Since Stacey wrote *Arms, Men and Governments* in a civilian capacity (as a professor at the University of Toronto) and was not supported by the team of narrators like previous official histories, I decided that it should be included, even though, as one historian rightly argued, he had access to closed records that other historians of the time could not see for security reasons.

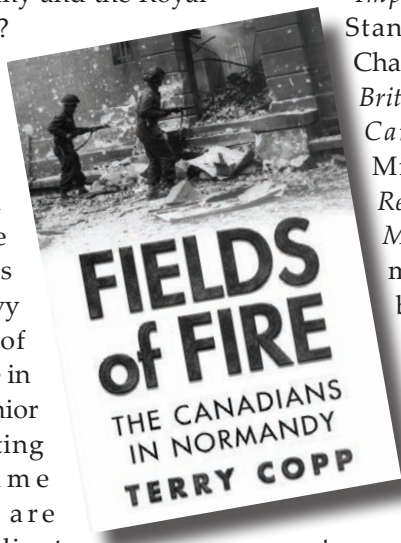
- Historians were instructed to keep their book selection to the field of Canadian military history. While there have been some very important works of military history written by Canadian historians, these are lists of Canadian history works. Authors like Tim Travers, Holger Herwig, or Dominick Graham have necessarily been excluded.
- Finally, historians were asked not to include their own books on their Top 10 list.

Qualifiers aside, I'm intrigued by the idea of how important books change over time for an historian. When I began my graduate studies that focused on Canada in the Great War, Desmond Morton's *When Your Number's Up* and Bill Rawling's

*Surviving Trench Warfare* were the most important books on my desk, constantly read and reread, opening up new avenues of thought and challenging previous assumption. Over time, new interests and new questions arose from wider reading, and while these two books would still likely be on my Top 10 list, I have recently been re-reading important works on the Second World War, and am amazed by J.L. Granatstein's *Canada's War: The Politics of the Mackenzie King Government, 1939-1945*, which for over thirty years has remained unsurpassed. What about the long histories of J.L. Granatstein and Marc Milner in their accounts of the Canadian Army and the Royal Canadian Navy? Both have relied heavily on previous scholarship, but the skill required to pull together the multiple strands of the army or navy over a century of conflict, to weave in battle, tactics, senior command, fighting and peacetime experiences, are marks of a brilliant study. Would I have selected Charles Stacey's history on the 1759 siege and battle of Quebec or the recent book by Peter Macleod, *Northern Armageddon*, which owes much to Stacey's groundbreaking work, but has built on it and, to

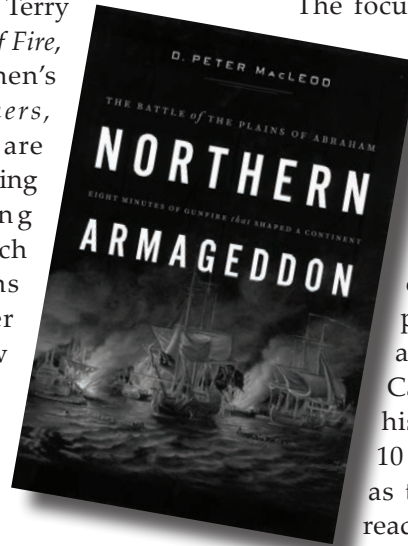


my mind, surpassed it? Would I include the foundational book or the new authoritative one? The essential memoirs of combatants offer unparalleled understanding into war, battle, peace, and the social environment of service personnel. How would I weigh them against a history of the same time period? More recent works like Jonathan Vance's *Death So Noble*, Terry Copp's *Fields of Fire*, and Jeff Keshen's *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers* are groundbreaking studies, carving out new fields, and each likely to spawn dozens of graduate theses over the coming years. How would I measure them against some of the groundbreaking studies of old, like Richard Preston's *Canada and*



*"Imperial Defence,"* George Stanley's *Canada's Soldiers*, Charles Stacey's *Canada and the British Army*, Stephen Harris's *Canadian Brass*, Carman Miller's *Painting the Map Red*, or Desmond Morton's *Ministers and Generals*, most of which have not been surpassed, only augmented by later studies. Luckily, as the editor of this piece, I need only pose the questions and not compile my own list. That hand-wringing task falls to our ten historians.

What would you choose as your Top 10 most "important" books? If you would like to share this with other readers,

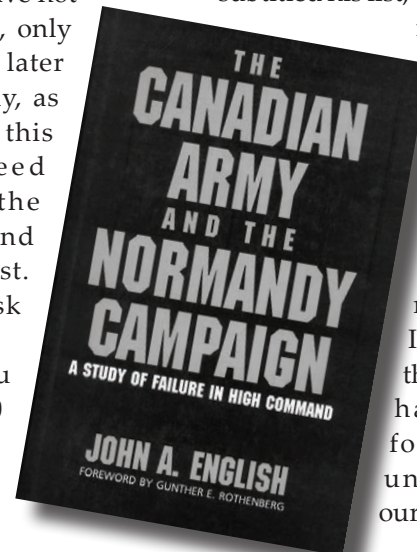


send your list to: <cmh@wlu.ca>. All Top 10 lists will be posted on the Laurier Centre's website: <www.canadianmilitaryhistory.com.>

At one point, I thought I would try to compile a Top 10 list from the ten separate lists (through some sort of ranking and scoring system), but I dropped that idea after all of the historians remarked that their lists are intensely personal and consist of the books that mattered to them.

The focus of the exercise changed, but at its most basic level, these lists are an indication of the rich historiography created by participants and historians of Canadian military history. These Top 10 lists could serve as the foundational reading list for MA or Ph.D. students about

to engage in the broad field of Canadian military history. The lists are also a stark reminder that just because your local bookstore has only the latest published books, that often the classics of the field repay with each rereading. Desmond Morton subtitled his list, "Ten books that



made a military historian"; these are indeed the books that allow us all to be historians or historically-minded, and I would argue that these books have laid the foundation for understanding our collective past.





### Douglas Delaney

**Douglas Delaney is the author of *The Soldiers' General: Bert Hoffmeister at War* (2005), which won the 2007 C.P. Stacey Prize in Canadian Military History. His latest work, *Corps Commanders*, examines Canadian and British generals who commanded corps for Canada during the Second World War. It will be published in 2011. A retired infantry officer with over 27 years of service, Dr. Delaney is**

**currently Chair of the War Studies program at the Royal Military College of Canada.**

Every book on this list is excellent, so picking a #1 is almost pointless. But, if I had to select one title for the influence it had on me, it would be Jack Granatstein's *The Generals*. I could have picked any number of Jack's books for the list, but *The Generals* is the one that really ignited my interest in biography and set me to studying command and generalship, issues that have occupied me for the last decade or so. It also reminded me that personality in history matters, something that I think historians had forgotten in the decade or two before *The Generals* was published.

Second World War histories dominate my list, but I didn't intend it that way. These books are fine examples for any military historian. C.P. Stacey's *Arms, Men, and Governments* is a masterpiece that would serve any student of government policy well, no matter what the country or era. Jack English's *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign* paved the way for other in-depth operational histories like Shane Schreiber's *Shock Army of the British Empire* and Terry Copp's *Fields of Fire*. English's work inspired numerous operational studies in the United States and the United Kingdom as well. Marc Milner's *North Atlantic Run* would be at the top of any list of naval histories anywhere. And anyone wanting to understand the human dimension of war would do well to read the eleventh book on my list, *Battle Exhaustion* by Bill McAndrew and Terry Copp.

I have also benefited from the example of works in other eras. I still think Des Morton's *When Your Number's Up* is one of the most engaging and accessible social histories of soldiers ever written. Jonathan Vance's *Death So Noble* on collective memory and the Great War is inspiring, both for the sophistication of its analysis and the beauty of its prose. Without Richard Preston's *Canada and "Imperial Defence,"* people who work on Canadian defence policy would be lost, as would Canadian Army historians without Steve Harris's *Canadian Brass*. Finally, with *Shock Troops*, Tim Cook showed us all how to combine operational and social history in a scholarly way – and still make it on the *Maclean's* best-seller list.

1. J.L. Granatstein, *The Generals: The Canadian Army's Senior Commanders in the Second World War* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1993).
2. Charles Perry Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments: The War Policies of Canada 1939-1945* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970).
3. Desmond Morton, *When Your Number's Up: The Canadian Soldier in the First World War* (Toronto: Random House, 1993).
4. Richard Preston, *Canada and "Imperial Defence": A Study of the Origins of the British Commonwealth's Defence Organizations, 1867-1919* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967).
5. John A. English, *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign: A Study of Failure in High Command* (Westport: Praeger, 1991).
6. Terry Copp, *Fields of Fire: The Canadians in Normandy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003).
7. Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning and the First World War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997).
8. Stephen J. Harris, *Canadian Brass: The Making of a Professional Army, 1860-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988).
9. Marc Milner, *The North Atlantic Run: The Royal Canadian Navy and the Battle for the Convoys* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985).
10. Tim Cook, *Shock Troops: Canadians Fighting the Great War, 1917-1918, volume II* (Toronto: Viking, 2008).



### Serge Durlinger

**Dr. Serge Durlinger is an Associate Professor in the History Department at the University of Ottawa. His most recent book, *Fighting From Home: The Second World War in Verdun, Quebec*, was published in 2006 by UBC Press. His next book, *Veterans with a Vision: Canada's War Blinded in Peace and War*, is forthcoming from the same publisher.**

Selecting my top ten books in Canadian military history has been a surprisingly difficult but no less delightful task. It has obliged me to identify (and sometimes rethink) those formative career influences which help explain my own approach to the study of Canada's military past. My original "short list" contained about 25 books! I established some criteria against which to measure a given work's impact. Accordingly, I have chosen books that influenced

my understanding and perceptions of the past, that I continue to find innovative as interpretive models and pedagogical tools, that delivered, in scholarly or non-scholarly form, some essential knowledge on which to base further studies, that are wonderfully crafted, that moved me at a human level, or, as in the case of my top choice, proved a combination of all or some of these qualities. This has proven a very personal, even idiosyncratic exercise. In fact, beyond my first choice, I hesitate to rank the remaining nine; my seventh choice could easily have been my third, and vice versa. Moreover, my top-ten list is not set in stone: it will change with the emergence of new instant “classics” and according to my own changing research interests and reconceptualization of Canada’s military and social-military history. The great C.P. Stacey’s *Arms, Men, and Governments* is a magisterial work of enormous historical significance. Virtually unequalled in our military historiography for breadth of coverage and insight of analysis, it remains a model of impeccable research presented in elegant, yet robust literary style. It is my favourite book of Canadian military history.

1. Charles Perry Stacey, *Arms, Men, and Governments: The War Policies of Canada 1939-1945* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1970).
2. Will R. Bird, *Ghosts Have Warm Hands* (Toronto: Clarke-Irwin, 1968).
3. Charles Perry Stacey, *Quebec 1759: The Siege and the Battle* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1959).
4. J.L. Granatstein, *Canada’s War: The Politics of the Mackenzie King Government, 1939-1945* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1975).
5. Desmond Morton, *Fight or Pay: Soldiers’ Families in the Great War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004).
6. Jonathan F. Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997).
7. Maurice Pope, *Soldiers and Politicians: The Memoirs of Lt.-Gen. Maurice A. Pope* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962).
8. George Blackburn, *The Guns of Normandy: A Soldier’s Eye View, France 1944* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1995).
9. Murray Peden, *A Thousand Shall Fall* (Stittsville: Canada’s Wings, 1979).
10. Gertrude Laing, *A Community Organizes for War* (Winnipeg, 1948).



## J.L. Granatstein

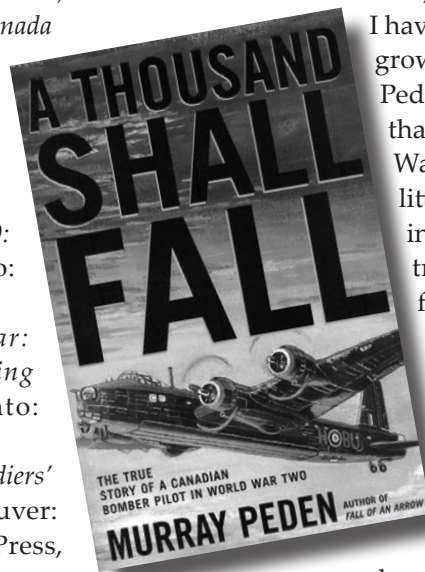
**Dr. J.L. Granatstein attended CMR, RMC, Toronto and Duke Universities. He is the author of *Canada’s War, Broken Promises, The Ottawa Men, How Britain’s Weakness Forced Canada into the Arms of the United States, The Generals, Canada’s Army, Who Killed the Canadian Military?*, and other books. He was Director and CEO of the Canadian War Museum (1998-2000).**

As an officer cadet at RMC, I was raised on the official Canadian Army histories of World War II and G.F.G. Stanley’s *Canada’s Soldiers*. As a student of Richard Preston, Charles Stacey, and Theodore Ropp in the 1950s and 1960s, I also received substantial grounding in broader fields of military history. But there was then, official history aside, very little researched and detailed Canadian material on the 20th Century—which was (and is) what interested me.

Thus, most of my Top 10 are relatively recent. I have included only one memoir of an ever-growing number of books, that by Murray Peden of his RCAF experiences. I believe that his is one of the great Second World War autobiographies, unfortunately too little known. I could just as readily have included George Blackburn’s wonderful trilogy on his experiences with the guns from 1939 to 1945, but frankly my list was already heavy on the army and too light on the air, so I regretfully left him off.

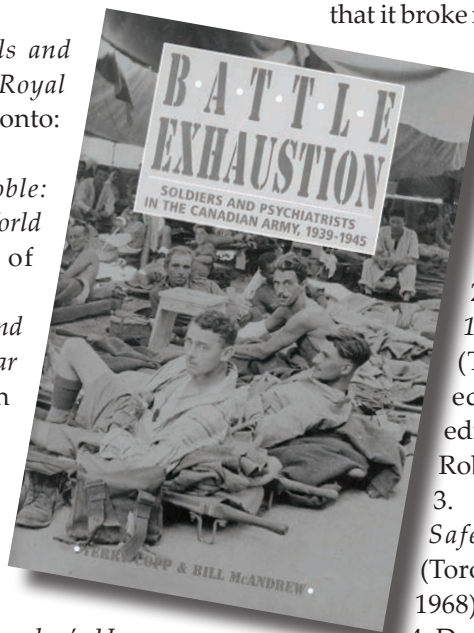
Peden is one of only two on my list (Pugsley being the other) that I do not know personally. That suggests how small the Canadian military history field has been and still is (or perhaps that my knowledge of it is terribly limited). Nonetheless, it startles me that the remaining eight writers are either co-authors, colleagues, friends, or former students, and that makes me question my judgments. The other point that flows from this concern is that the rankings are almost all completely arbitrary. I will stand and fight for Stacey’s *Arms, Men and Governments* as my No.1, but every other title could move up, down, or sideways – or perhaps off the list – without too many qualms from me.

1. Charles Perry Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments: The War Policies of Canada 1939-1945* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1970).





2. Jack English, *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign: A Study of Failure in High Command* (Westport: Praeger, 1991).
3. Murray Peden, *A Thousand Shall Fall* (Stittsville: Canada's Wings, 1979).
4. J. Mackay Hitsman, *The Incredible War of 1812* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965).
5. Terry Copp, *Fields of Fire: The Canadians in Normandy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003).
6. William Pugsley, *Saints, Devils and Ordinary Seamen: Life on the Royal Canadian Navy's Lower Deck* (Toronto: Collins, 1945).
7. Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997).
8. Jeffrey Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers: Canada's Second World War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004).
9. Marc Milner, *North Atlantic Run: The Royal Canadian Navy and the Battle for the Convoys* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985).
10. Desmond Morton, *When Your Number's Up: The Canadian Soldier in the First World War* (Toronto: Random House, 1993).



It was my view that official histories should not be included in this list. That was agreed to, except that an exception was made for Stacey's magisterial, even breathtaking, *Arms, Men and Governments*. I'll hold to my convictions, however, and not include it; but I will cheat a bit and treat James Eayrs *In Defence of Canada* volumes 1 and 2 as a single entry. My top choice is Terry Copp and Bill McAndrew, *Battle Exhaustion: Soldiers and Psychiatrists in the Canadian Army, 1939-1945*, for the very obvious reason that it broke new ground on the international stage.

1. Terry Copp and Bill McAndrew, *Battle Exhaustion: Soldiers and Psychiatrists in the Canadian Army, 1939-1945* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 1990).
2. Charles Perry Stacey, *Quebec, 1759: The Siege and the Battle* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1959; new edition with additional material edited by Donald E. Graves. Toronto: Robin Brass Studio, 2002).
3. J. Mackay Hitsman, *Safeguarding Canada, 1763-1971* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968).
4. Desmond Morton, *Ministers and Generals: Politics and the Canadian Militia, 1868-1904* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970).
5. Desmond Morton, *When Your Numbers Up: The Canadian Soldier in the First World War* (Toronto: Random House, 1993).
6. William Johnston, *A War of Patrols: Canadian Army Operations in Korea* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2003).
7. James Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada. Vol. 1: From the Great War to the Great Depression; and Vol. 2: Appeasement and Rearmament* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964 and 1965).
8. James A. Boutilier, ed., *The RCN in Retrospect, 1910-1968* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1982).
9. Yves Tremblay, *Instruire une armée: Les officiers canadiens et la guerre moderne, 1919-1944* (Outremont: Athéna éditions, 2009).
10. John A. English, *The Canadian Army in Normandy: A Study of Failure in High Command* (Westport: Praeger, 1991).

### Stephen J. Harris

**Dr. Stephen J. Harris is the chief historian at the Directorate of History and Heritage, Department of National Defence. He is the author, co-author, or editor of *Canadian Brass* (1988), *Canada and the Battle of Vimy Ridge, 9-12 April 1917* (1992), *Crucible of War* (1993), *Warrior Chiefs* (2001), *Generalship and the Art of the Admiral* (2001).**



My choice of ten Canadian military histories is unabashedly influenced by their contribution to my own development as an historian: when I happened to read a particular book has in part determined my sense of its value or worth. My sense of their worth has also been influenced by the extent to which the book, for want of a better phrase, made me sit up and take notice. All of them are books I wish I had had the wit to write.



### Andrew Iarocci

**Dr. Andrew Iarocci is a research fellow at the Canadian War Museum, where he has also acted as Collections Manager, Transportation & Artillery. Iarocci is the author of *Shoestring Soldiers: 1st Canadian Division at War, 1914-1915*, and co-editor of *Vimy Ridge: A Canadian Reassessment*. He is now working on a new study of mechanization and logistics during the First World War. He has**

**taught broadly in 20th century military history, and is currently an instructor in the War Studies program at the Royal Military College.**

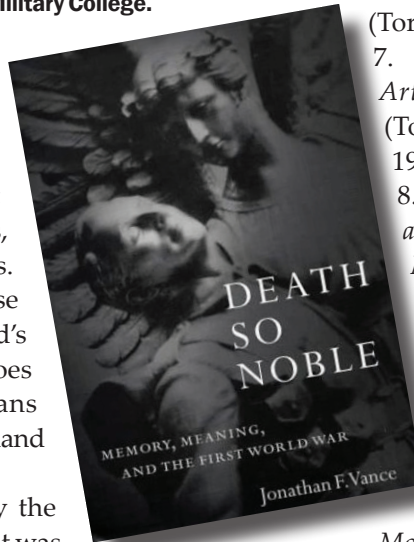
This exercise has been no small challenge. My choices on the upper end of the scale (Rawling, Morton, Vance) are so situated because they were highly influential in First World War studies during my student days. According to Tim Cook's ground rules, official histories are not permitted on our lists. I can easily live with this restriction because the far reaching importance of A.F. Duguid's and G.W.L. Nicholson's respective works goes without saying. First World War historians surely will keep the official accounts close at hand for many years to come.

*Ghosts Have Warm Hands* was probably the first Great War memoir that I laid hands on (it was recommended by Professor Hyatt when I took his World Wars course in second year). In particular, Bird's attention to detail resonated with my interest in material culture. Many of my own students have since been captivated by this durable story. Harold McGill's memoir (only recently published) and James Pedley's much earlier account each capture the complexities of the trench war experience from uniquely Canadian perspectives. And while neither officer imposed strict censorship on his writing, neither did McGill or Pedley seek to profit by attacking others' reputations.

No less significantly, I must underscore the lasting influence of Terry Copp's ground-breaking work on the Second World War, which he ventured into at a time when it was not especially fashionable to write about Canadian soldiers at war. From Terry's work, I learned that historical interpretations, no matter how widely accepted, are rarely carved in stone. Neither is this list I suppose, but hard choices had to be made!

1. Bill Rawling, *Surviving Trench Warfare: Technology and the Canadian Corps, 1914-1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992).

2. Desmond Morton, *When Your Number's Up: The Canadian Soldier in the First World War* (Toronto: Random House of Canada, 1993).  
3. Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997).  
4. Terry Copp and Robert Vogel, *Maple Leaf Route* (five volumes) (Alma: Maple Leaf Route, 1983-88).  
5. Terry Copp, *Fields of Fire: The Canadians in Normandy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003).  
6. Will R. Bird, *Ghosts Have Warm Hands* (Toronto: Clarke-Irwin, 1968).  
7. A.M.J. Hyatt, *General Sir Arthur Currie: A Military Biography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987).  
8. Desmond Morton, *Ministers and Generals: Politics and the Canadian Militia, 1868-1904* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970).  
9. James H. Pedley, *Only This: A War Retrospect* (Ottawa: Graphic Publishers, 1927).  
10. Marjorie Barron Norris, ed., *Medicine and Duty: The World War I Memoir of Captain Harold W. McGill* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2007).



### Peter MacLeod

**Dr. Peter MacLeod is the Pre-Confederation Historian at the Canadian War Museum and author of *Northern Armageddon: The Battle of the Plains of Abraham/La vérité sur la bataille des plaines d'Abraham and The Canadian Iroquois and the Seven Years' War/Les Iroquois et la guerre de Sept Ans*. He is currently writing a history of the Battle of Ste. Foy and the 1760 campaign.**

Compiling this list, I was surprised to find myself drawn more to the classics than the cutting edge. (Even *Le peuple, l'état, et la guerre* was written 20 years ago). Then I realized the obvious, that however brilliant the latest books may be, it takes time for the classics to emerge.

Among these books, Eccles and Stacey are virtually tied for first place. Eccles broke Francis Parkman's iron grip on Anglophone writing on New France; Stacey cut

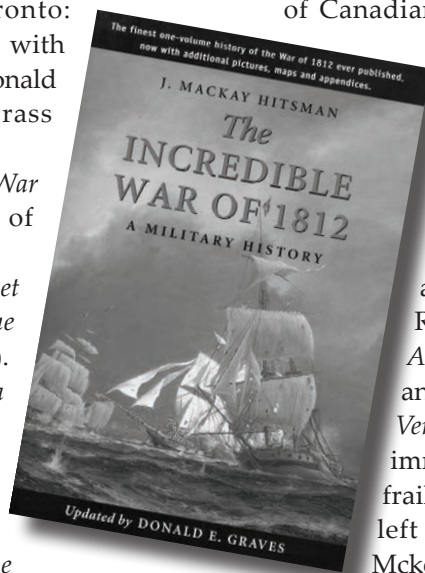


away the mythology surrounding a crucial battle. Both historians not only produced fine works of their own, they cleared the way for historians taking a more scholarly approach to New France and the Seven Years' War.

Like Eccles and Stacey, each of the other books set new standards for writing in their fields, whether by writing for a popular readership (Stewart), producing general histories of wars that remain unsurpassed after decades in print (Frégault and Hitsman), taking account of Amerindian perspectives (Havard, Stonechild, Weiser, and Benn), or exploring topics that had never been addressed in such detail before (Pritchard and Dechêne).

Since it is difficult to establish the relative importance of, say, a good book on the War of 1812 and a good book on the War of the Austrian Succession, I have listed the works after Eccles and Stacey in alphabetical order.

1. William John Eccles, *Frontenac, the Courtier Governor* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1959).
2. Charles Perry Stacey, *Quebec, 1759: The Siege and the Battle* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1959, new edition with additional material edited by Donald E. Graves. Toronto: Robin Brass Studio, 2002).
3. Carl Benn, *The Iroquois in the War of 1812* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).
4. Louise Dechêne, *Le peuple, l'État et la guerre au Canada sous le Régime français* (Montreal: Boréal, 2008).
5. Guy Frégault, *La guerre de la conquête* (Montreal: Fides, 1955).
6. Gilles Havard, *La grande paix de Montréal de 1701: les voies de la diplomatie franco-amérindienne* (Montreal: Recherches amérindiennes au Québec, 1992).
7. J. Mackay Hitsman, *The Incredible War of 1812: A Military History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965, new edition with additional material edited by Donald E. Graves. Toronto: Robin Brass Studio, 1999).
8. James Pritchard, *Anatomy of a Naval Disaster: The 1746 French Expedition to North America* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995).
9. Walter Stewart. *True Blue: The Loyalist legend* (Toronto: Collins, 1985).
10. Blair Stonechild and Bill Waiser, *Loyal till Death: Indians and the North-West Rebellion* (Calgary: Fifth House, 1997).



## Marc Milner

**Dr. Marc Milner is Director of the Brigadier Milton F Gregg VC Centre for the Study of War and Society at the University of New Brunswick. He is the author of numerous books, including *North Atlantic Run: The Royal Canadian Navy and the Battle for the Convoys* (1985); *The U-Boat Hunters* (1995), *Corvettes of the Royal Canadian Navy* (co-authored with Ken Macpherson in 1993), *Canada's Navy: the First Century* (1999), *Battle of the Atlantic* (2003), and *D-Day to Carpiquet: the North Shore Regiment and the Liberation of Europe* (2007).**

These are the top Canadian monographs which I know have influenced me. The top three I absorbed in high school, the next four as a university student, and the final three since joining the ranks of the profession. Stanley was an easy choice as number one. Not only was his the first scholarly survey of Canadian military history, but as my colleague Brent Wilson observed, Stanley's description of Canadians as an "unmilitary people" who have

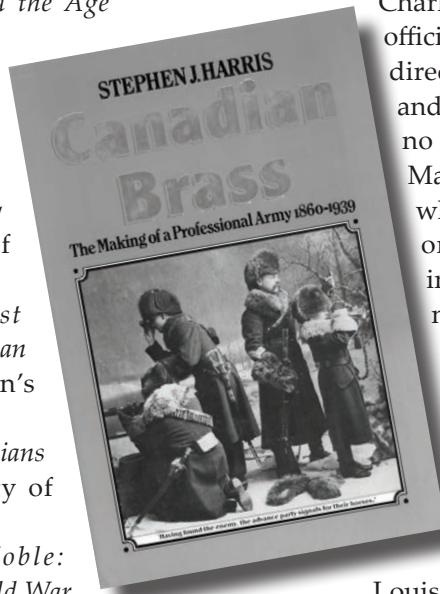
not shied away from fighting defined the dominant paradigm of all modern Canadian military history.

Most of my truly formative influences – official histories and "foreign" military writing – are specifically excluded from this exercise! This includes Gilbert Tucker and Joseph Schull's official histories of the RCN and Donald Macintyre's *Battle of the Atlantic*, all of which I read in high school and disliked even then. Bernard Fall's *Hell in a Very Small Place*, written with the easy pen and immediacy of a journalist, an eye for human frailty and tragedy and the skill of an historian left an early lasting impression. Alexander Mckee's *Caen*, Belfield and Essame's *The Battle for Normandy*, and a host of the "Pan Books: British Battles Series" (cheap paperbacks available at drugstores) filled my youth. This broad interest in general military history was nurtured by UNB's program, which has never been focused on Canadian military history.

1. George Stanley, *Canada's Soldiers: The Military History of an Unmilitary People* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1960).
2. Ross Munro, *Gauntlet to Overlord: The Story of the Canadian Army* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1945).
3. Farley Mowat, *The Regiment* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1967).
4. W.A.B. Douglas and Brereton Greenhous, *Out of the Shadows: Canada in the Second World War* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1977).



5. Francis Parkman, *Montcalm and Wolfe* (London: Macmillan, 1908).
6. Charles Perry Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict: A History of Canadian External Policies, 2 volumes* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1977, 1981).
7. Stephen J. Harris, *Canadian Brass: The Making of a Professional Army 1860-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988).
8. Michael Hadley, *U-Boats Against Canada: German Submarines in Canadian Waters* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985).
9. Terry Copp, *Fields of Fire: The Canadians in Normandy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003).
10. Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997).



As a historian, I have strayed close to the Great War. The politics of history fascinate me, and drew me to Charles Stacey's memoirs as much as to his official histories. During a year in Stacey's directorate, I was educated by the wise and industrious John Swettenham. I had no braver colleague than the crippled Mac Hitsman. With his valiant example, what task of mine could be impossible or even difficult? We were all more industrious than our critics alleged, none more so than Jack Granatstein or Norm Hillmer.

My dad and my uncle never let me forget our peacetime indifference to Quebec and the resulting cost in wartime. That struggle was exemplified by many outstanding officers, none more than Thomas-Louis Tremblay and Jean-Victor Allard. At the end of my career, recording this issue dominates my agenda. I hope to do belated justice.



### Desmond Morton

**Born in Calgary in 1937, Des Morton attended schools across Canada, graduated from CMR, RMC, Oxford and the LSE, taught at the Universities of Ottawa, Toronto, and McGill, authored 40 books on Canadian military, political and labour history, was chosen a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, earned the Canadian Forces Decoration and was admitted to the Order of Canada.**

My dad was one of Canada's few professional soldiers when we went to war in 1939. He left me a small library of old books that had shaped his career. One was my first choice, a little brown book, fit for a battledress pocket, to be read by corporals and precocious boys of under ten years. No book I knew better summed up what we had learned in 1914-18. Battles are won by corporals, not generals. They win by being cunning and keeping their soldiers alive. Boulton's book reflected Canada's 19th century experience, from the 100th Regiment to Batoche, with the name of every 1885 veteran. Louis Riel believed it was safer to kill Tom Scott than this son of a FOOF or Fine Old Ontario Family. Maybe he was wrong. Boulton's scouts saved Middleton's army from Gabriel Dumont's ambush at Fish Creek.

1. *Infantry Section Leading* (London: King's Printer, 1937).
2. Charles Arkell Boulton, *Reminiscences of the North-West Rebellion with a Record of the Raising of Her Majesty's 100th Regiment in Canada* (Toronto: Grip, 1886).
3. Will R. Bird, *Ghosts Have Warm Hands* (Toronto: Clarke-Irwin, 1968).
4. Charles Perry Stacey, *A Date with History: Memoirs of a Canadian Historian* (Ottawa, Deneau, 1982).
5. J. Mackay Hitsman, *Safeguarding Canada, 1763-1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968).
6. John Swettenham, *Allied Intervention in Russia, 1918-1919* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1967).
7. Norman Hillmer and J.L. Granatstein, *Empire to Umpire: Canada and the World to the 1990s* (Toronto: Copp, Clark, Longman's, 1994).
8. Marcelle Cinq-Mars, *Journal de guerre (1915-1918) de Thomas-Louis Tremblay* (Montréal: Éditions Athéna, 2006).
9. Richard A. Preston, *Canada and "Imperial Defense": A Study of the Origins of the British Commonwealth Defence Organization, 1867-1919* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967).
10. Peter MacLeod, *Northern Armageddon: The Battle of the Plains of Abraham* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2008).



## Béatrice Richard

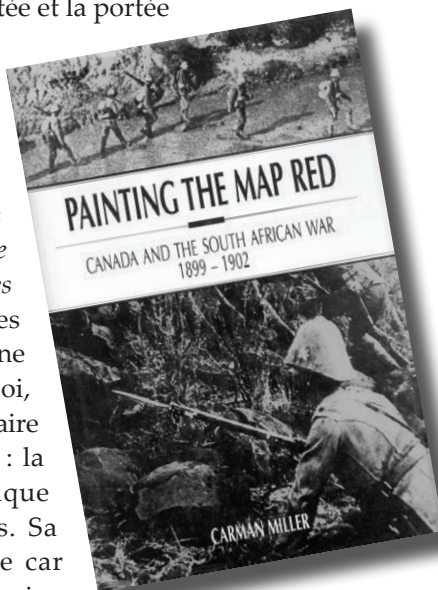
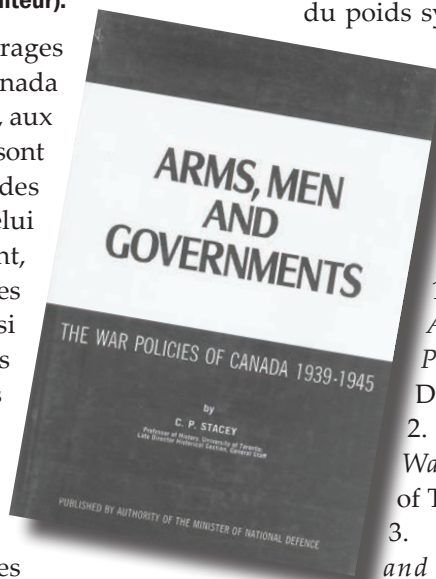
**Dr. Béatrice Richard est professeur agrégé au Collège militaire royal de Saint-Jean. Elle se spécialise en études culturelles de la guerre et des questions militaires avec un intérêt particulier pour l'attitude des Canadiens français face aux guerres et aux institutions militaires. En 2004, elle a obtenu le prix C. P. Stacey 2004 pour la meilleure étude en histoire militaire avec le livre *La mémoire***

**de Dieppe, radioscopie d'un mythe (Montréal, VLB éditeur).**

Il n'est pas facile de sélectionner les dix ouvrages les plus significatifs en histoire militaire du Canada car, en réalité, *au moins trois* Canadas militaires, aux enjeux et aux styles de guerre très différents, se sont succédé : celui de la Nouvelle-France, celui des colonies d'Amérique du Nord britannique et celui de la Confédération. Comment, par conséquent, comparer des ouvrages d'envergures équivalentes référant à des périodes ou à des thèmes aussi disparates ? J'ai donc choisi de classer les ouvrages choisis – que je considère à peu près ex-aequo – par période, sauf pour le no 1. Autre remarque : l'histoire militaire du Canada reste largement de tradition mâle et anglo-saxonne et intéresse peu les minorités culturelles ou de genre. Cependant le vent tourne et de nouvelles problématiques et approches sont en train de renouveler ce domaine. Aussi, ma bibliothèque idéale tentera-t-elle de refléter la plus grande diversité possible en termes d'auteurs, d'approches, de sujets, d'époques et d'acteurs. Cela m'a obligé à exclure des œuvres majeures, dont celles de Desmond Morton et de Jack Granatstein. La qualité de la documentation exploitée et la portée du thème traité ont également été prises en compte. Mon premier choix s'était porté sur l'étude de Serge Bernier et de Jean Pariseau, *Les Canadiens français et le bilinguisme dans les forces armées canadiennes* (tomes 1 et 2) car elle aborde une problématique, selon moi, centrale de l'histoire militaire du Canada depuis 1763 : la discrimination systémique dans les forces armées. Sa portée reste universelle car cette logique d'exclusion

concerne d'autres minorités que les francophones – que l'on songe aux femmes, aux Autochtones ou aux minorités visibles. Hélas, il s'agit d'une histoire officielle, donc hors concours. Mon choix s'est donc porté sur *Northern Armageddon: The Battle of the Plains of Abraham*, de Peter MacLeod car, là encore, on a un thème de portée universelle. Ne s'agit-il pas des « huit minutes » qui ont changé le destin du monde ? En racontant ce duel mythique entre deux grandes puissances coloniales, l'auteur exploite une grande diversité de témoignages et de sources de façon à en restituer la dimension humaine et intersubjective. Sa réflexion tient également compte du poids symbolique de ce fait d'arme et de

son écho toujours actuel dans la mémoire collective au Québec. Ce faisant, MacLeod démontre que la mémoire peut-être aussi la continuation de la guerre par d'autres moyens.



1. Peter MacLeod, *Northern Armageddon: The Battle of the Plains of Abraham* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2009).
2. Carl Benn, *The Iroquois in the War of 1812* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).
3. Elinor Kyte Senior, *Redcoats and Patriots: The Rebellions in Lower Canada, 1837-1838* (Ottawa: Canadian War Museum, 1985).
4. Gustave Lanctôt, *Le Canada et la Révolution américaine, 1774-1783* (Montréal: Librairie Beauchemin, 1965).
5. Carman Miller, *Painting the Map Red: Canada and the South African War, 1899-1902* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992).
6. Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997).
7. Jean Provencher, *Québec sous la loi des mesures de guerre, 1918* (Montréal: les éditions du Boréal express, 1971).
8. Desmond Morton, *When Your Number's Up: The Canadian Soldier in the First World War* (Toronto: Random House, 1993).
9. C.P. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments: The War Policies of Canada 1939-1945* (Ottawa: Minister of National Defence, 1970).
10. Bill Rawling, *La mort pour ennemi. La médecine militaire canadienne* (Trad.) (Montréal : Athéna éditions, 2007).





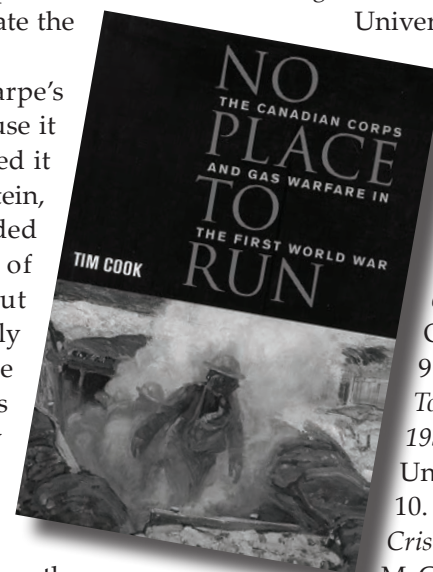
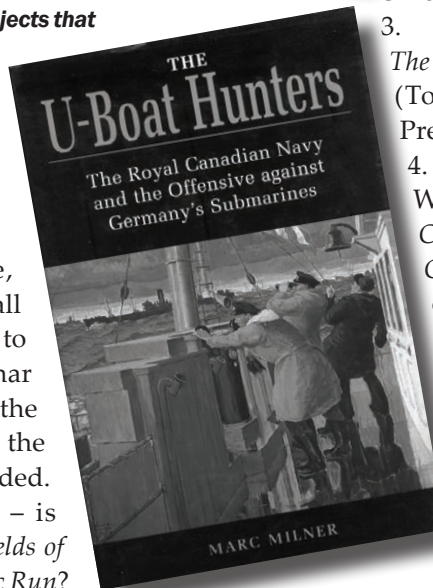
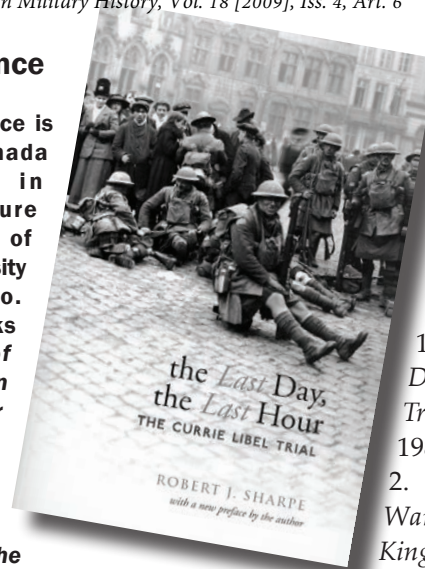
**Jonathan F. Vance**

**Dr. Jonathan F. Vance is professor and Canada Research Chair in Conflict and Culture in the Department of History at the University of Western Ontario. His published works include *Objects of Concern: Canadian Prisoners of War Through the***

***Twentieth Century* (1994); *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War* (1997); *High Flight: Aviation and the Canadian Imagination* (2002); *A Gallant Company: The True Story of "The Great Escape"* (2003); *The Encyclopedia of Prisoners of War and Internment* (2006); *Building Canada: People and Projects that Shaped the Nation* (2006); *Unlikely Soldiers: How Two Canadians Fought the Secret War Against Nazi Occupation* (2008); and *Bamboo Cage: The P.O.W. Diary of Flight Lieutenant Robert Wyse, 1942-1943* (2009). He teaches military history, Canadian history, public history, and social memory.**

For me, "best" meant indispensable, foundational, essential – the books that all incoming graduate students are compelled to read, and that every undergraduate seminar must hear about ad nauseum. To confine the list to ten seemed almost criminal, as did the stricture that official histories must be excluded. My choices are admittedly idiosyncratic – is *Cinderella Army* really a better book than *Fields of Fire*, or *The U-Boat Hunters* than *North Atlantic Run*? Perhaps not, but in some cases it was just a phrase or two that was so pithy that it had to elevate the book above its fellows.

In the end, I opted to put Robert Sharpe's *The Last Day, the Last Hour* at the top, because it continues to surprise me. When I first picked it up (on the recommendation of Jack Granatstein, I think), my hope weren't high – it sounded as interesting, I thought, as a history of conveyancing or quantity surveying. But this is a remarkably vivid book, engagingly written and featuring terrific portraits of the personalities involved. What's more, it has some enormously important things to say about the enduring resonance of military history, and how much it mattered for the generation that lived through the Great War. Sharpe forced me to look at what happened on the



battlefield from entirely different perspectives. The best thing a military historian can do once in a while is read military history that is not written by a military historian – this should be required reading for armchair generals everywhere.

1. Robert J. Sharpe, *The Last Day, the Last Hour: The Currie Libel Trial* (Toronto: The Osgoode Society, 1988).
2. J.L. Granatstein, *Canada's War: The Politics of the Mackenzie King Government, 1939-1945* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1975).
3. Terry Copp, *Cinderella Army: The Canadians in North-West Europe* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006).
4. Desmond Morton & Glenn Wright, *Winning the Second Battle: Canadian Veterans and the Return to Civilian Life* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987).
5. Tim Cook, *No Place to Run: The Canadian Corps and Gas Warfare in the First World War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1999).
6. Marc Milner, *The U-Boat Hunters: The Royal Canadian Navy and the Offensive Against Germany's Submarines* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994).
7. Bill Rawling, *Surviving Trench Warfare: Technology and the Canadian Corps, 1914-1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992).
8. Ian Steele, *Warpaths: Invasions of North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).
9. Brent Watson, *Far Eastern Tour: The Canadian Infantry in Korea, 1950-53* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002).
10. Elizabeth H. Armstrong, *Crisis of Quebec, 1914-1918* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1974 [1937]).

**Share your Top 10 Lists! We will be posting them on our website at [www.canadianmilitaryhistory.com](http://www.canadianmilitaryhistory.com)  
Email your lists to: [cmh@wlu.ca](mailto:cmh@wlu.ca)**