



**J. L. Granatstein, Dean F. Oliver.** *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Military History*. Don Mills, Ont.: Oxford University Press, 2011. xiii + 514 pp. \$74.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-19-543088-2.

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The long-running Oxford Companion series aims to provide reference works on every conceivable topic from English literature (1932) to cheese (2016). The volume on Canadian military history consists of more than five hundred alphabetical entries ranging from brief one-paragraph blurbs on individual soldiers, weapons, or battles, to longer essays on significant figures and broader themes. Many entries end with cross-references to related topics and offer suggested readings. The handsome volume includes 250 illustrations, featuring previously unpublished photographs, color paintings, and maps, presenting an attractive addition to either the coffee table or the library reference section.

While the *Oxford Companion to American Military History* (1999) had five hundred contributors, this volume has two: Jack Granatstein and Dean Oliver. The historians were both affiliated with the Canadian War Museum when they wrote this book and acknowledged the contributions from staff (p. xi). Published as a co-production between Oxford University Press and the museum, the work is an example of the long-standing support that Canadian military history has enjoyed from the War Museum. In the realm of academic publishing, the institution has contributed funds and editorial sup-

port to the Studies in Canadian Military History series by the University of British Columbia Press and to *Canadian Military History*, the leading journal in the field. Many of the captivating illustrations were sourced from the museum's archives.

Reviewers of works on warfare in the Oxford Companion series have questioned the worth of one-volume encyclopedic subject dictionaries. American military historian Russell Weigley suggested that with extensive digital information a mere click away, the space constraints of this format seem obsolescent.[1] This critique is only partially applicable to this volume. While the online *Canadian Encyclopedia* and the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* cover some of the most commonly known aspects of Canada's martial past just as well or in greater detail, on the other hand, figures who lived after the Second World War and many of the lesser-known events and organizations are covered more completely here. British historian Simon Ball suggested the companion idea is "fatally flawed" in that contents often fall inadequately between brief entries with condensed descriptive information and essays surveying broad themes from lofty heights.[2] Whatever the potential pitfalls of the format, this volume on Canadian military history was well received. The

book won the distinguished C. P. Stacey Prize for best book in Canadian military history.

A number of entries deliver the bare facts on topics big and small. These will please the detail-oriented military buff, and the writer, editor, or public historian using the work as a fact-checking reference. The short essay entries are of greater interest. Some take the long view on various and, at times, novel themes (Canadian alliances; military language; national interests; Quebec and the military) or provide balanced overviews of complex topics, often providing international context (Battle of the Atlantic; Cold War; home front, war finance, and war industry in the world wars; Korean War). An entry on casualties examines problems in quantification, politicization, and nationalism. Others offer historiographical insight into the lack of military biography or autobiography in Canada, the controversy over Canadian participation in strategic bombing, and the development of Canadian military history as a field. Beginning in 2012, several of these essays were published as stand-alone articles in *Canadian Military History* and are now available free online.[3]

The authors were presented with the difficult task of selecting the most important aspects of the field and then condensing them according to importance. The book covers historical topics from the colonial period, but more emphasis is given to the post-Confederation era. Without an additional index or a table of contents, searching for specific topics can take time. The American Revolution is found under “Revolutionary War” and “Loyalists in Canada” are granted but a sentence. If looking for information on Air Vice-Marshal C. M. “Black Mike” McEwen, commander of No. 6 Bomber Group in the Second World War, would you think to look under “Air Marshals, World War II?” A cross-reference to an individual entry on McEwen leads nowhere, suggesting he met the editor’s knife (p. 311). Is an entry on “Artificial Moonlight” really that illuminating? Some of the maps are excellent, especially those created by the Department of Na-

tional Defence’s Directorate of History and Heritage, presumably published here for the first time. A few are too small to be effective.

A lively voice makes for much more than a dry reference work. Refrains of arguments found in some of Granatstein’s many books cry for greater military spending in Canada and unraveling the Canadian self-image as a peacekeeping nation.[4] Such views have been critiqued as scholarly militarism, but this book does not ring as jingoism.[5] The authors write of Canada’s military past, “We have not been uniformly just, or effective, and rarely selfless. We violated liberties and suppressed freedoms; we have massacred, violated, incinerated, and pillaged. We have also saved and liberated, defended and upheld, protected and preserved. We have fought good wars for the right reasons, with the right allies, though not always upholding at home the same principles for which we waged war abroad” (p. vii).

#### Notes

[1]. Russell F. Weigley, review of *The Oxford Companion to American Military History*, ed. John Whiteclay Chambers II, *Journal of Military History* 65, no. 1 (2001): 277.

[2]. Simon Ball, review of *The Oxford Companion to Military History*, ed. Richard Holmes, *English Historical Review* 117, no. 471 (2002): 440.

[3]. J. L. Granatstein and Dean F. Oliver, “Autobiography and Biography: The Oxford Companion to Canadian Military History,” *Canadian Military History* 21, no. 2 (2012): 69-75, <https://scholars.wlu.ca/cmh/vol21/iss2/7/>.

[4]. J. L. Granatstein, *Who Killed the Canadian Military?*, 1st ed. (Toronto: Harper Flamingo Canada, 2004); J. L. Granatstein, *Canada’s Army: Waging War and Keeping the Peace* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).

[5]. Ian McKay and Jamie Swift, *Warrior Nation: Rebranding Canada in an Age of Anxiety* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2012).

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