



## Camp Hughes provided soldiers trench training

### World War One combatants learned warfare techniques

By Helen Fallding Regional Reporter

RANDON — The cattle grazing peacefully beside a series of gullies near Carberry are unaware that First World War soldiers used to lob live grenades from training trenches there before heading off to war.

"The people who trained at (Camp) Hughes were the ones who captured Vimy Ridge," said Bruce Tascona, president of the Military History Society of Manitoba.

The public was allowed to tour the remaining trenches yesterday on Hughes Heritage Day — an event the society hosts every two years. The Camp Hughes cemetery is open to the public year round.

Manitobans are proud of their contribution to training Second World War fighter pilots through the Common-wealth Air Training Plan, but few know that in 1916, almost 28,000 troops from Manitoba and northwestern Ontario trained at Camp Hughes. The men lived from April to November in clusters of white bell tents around a central camp that boasted six movie theatres, a heaf-

ed swimming pool and a hospital. A thousand men at a time spent at least 24 hours straight in the sandbagreinforced trench system, learning how to keep watch, then going over the top across no-man's-land to attack "enemy" trenches. Veterans from the

Many families are left

wondering what to do.

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battlefields of France and Flanders returned to teach the latest techniques. The soldiers also practised shooting on the camp's rifle range.

The Military History Society has been collecting artifacts since 1988 from the provincial heritage site.

"In a field, you'll find personal items like shaving sticks, combs, shoe polish tins," said Tascona, whose goal is to turn the area into a walking interpretive park before the camp's centennial in 2015.

Camp Hughes is unique in Canada, and possibly North America, because its First World War trench system is untouched by later military activity. "It's just like a stopwatch," Tascona said.

About 10 kilometres of trenches, some more eroded than others, can be found on the 20 square kilometres of government land now leased to farmers.

Originally established as Camp Sewell in 1910, the training camp was renamed in 1915 in honour of Canada's Minister of Defence, Maj.-Gen. Sam Hughes.

Training was suspended in 1917 and 1918 when volunteers dried up as the list of casualties rose and Manitobans realized their sons would not be home by Christmas, Tascona said.

The cemetery was used to bury recent immigrants whose families did not claim their bodies. The civilians and soldiers died from alcohol poisoning, meningitis and training accidents, according to Tascona.

Summer militia training continued at the camp until 1933, when the train-

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First World War veterans returned to Camp Hughes to teach soldiers trench warfare. These trenches (top left and right) were used for practice. Main Street was a busy place for after-hours R&R (left). Below, bell tents served as home for soldiers at camp.

ing facility was dismantled, with some of the buildings moved to the new Camp Shilo nearby. By that time, wars were no longer fought from muddy

Visitors can reach the site from Provincial Road 351, west of Carberry. Follow signs for the Camp Hughes cemetery.

More information on Camp Hughes is available on the Internet at http://www.GateWest.net/~gcros/hughes.html



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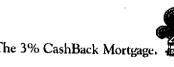
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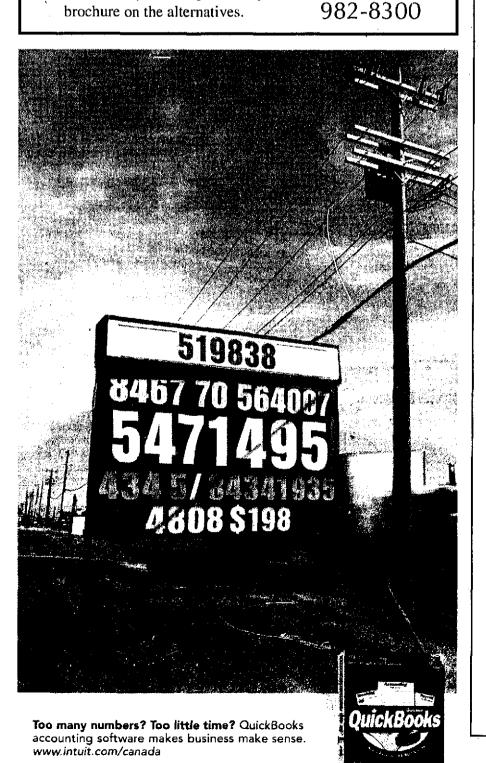


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