



## CANADIAN VALENTINE TANK MK VIIA

Although the British Army at the beginning of the Second World War did have some tanks of moderate capability, the success of the German blitzkrieg in Western Europe in 1940, combined with the threat of German bombing of British industry led to the expansion and decentralization of tank production by Britain. As part of this program an order for Valentine tanks was placed with the Canadian Pacific Railway's Angus Shop in Montreal in June 1940. Production of this tank began in 1941 and continued until 1943, at which time it was recognized that the tank's low speed, light armour and small calibre main armament had rendered the vehicle obsolescent.

Several explanations have been offered for the origin of the name of the Valentine: it was the middle name of Carden Lloyd, the designer; the acronym of Vickers-Armstrong Ltd. Newcastle on Tyne; or because the design was first offered to the British War Office by Vickers-Armstrong just before St. Valentine's Day in 1938!

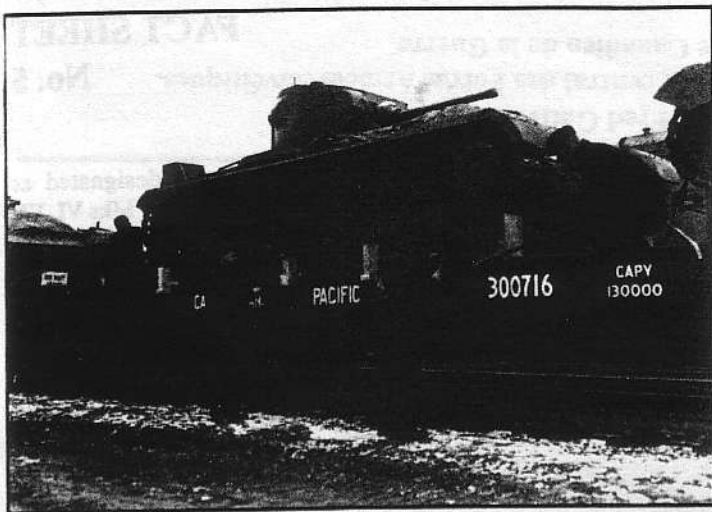
The Canadian-built Valentines were officially designated as Tanks, Infantry, Mk III\*\*\* at first and later as Valentine Mks VI, VII and VIIA. These were two-man turret models, powered by General Motors diesel engines. The main armament was a 2-pdr gun with a Besa co-axially mounted machine gun. After production of the first 15 vehicles the Besa was replaced by a .30-inch Browning. In the Mk VII a remote control grip and firing gear attachment was added to the Browning machine-gun and the No. 11 Wireless Set was replaced by the No. 19 Wireless Set. The Valentine VIIA had a number of minor improvements, including an auxiliary fuel tank, an oil cooler, studded tracks, a convoy lamp and modified turret armour.

The Valentine presented to the Canadian War Museum in 1992 has a very interesting history. As a result of Hitler's surprise invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, the Soviets lost large numbers of military weapons and vehicles. Although the Valentine was being superseded by newer designs, it was in production and when offered to the hard-pressed Soviets it was accepted. The Soviet T-34 tank, which was heavier, faster and more heavily gunned, was in production but the three-man 15 mph, manoeuvrable, low-silhouette Valentine proved of value in supporting Soviet infantry attacks. Of the 1,420 Valentine tanks produced in Canada, 1,390 were sent from this country to the Soviet Union under Lend-Lease arrangements.



*Valentine # 838 in Telepino shortly after its recovery.*

Original Research by Fred Gaffen.  
Photo Credit: National Archives of Canada and  
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*Valentine tanks bound for the Soviet Union being loaded on CPR flat bed cars at the Angus Shops, Montreal, Quebec, 29 December 1941.*



*Canadian made Valentine tanks in action during the Battle of Kursk, July 1943.*

The Canadian War Museum's Valentine tank is No. 838, built in May 1943. It was shipped to Russia where it was allocated to the 57th Regiment of the 5th Guards Tank Army. That regiment lost a large number of tanks, including Canadian built Valentines, during the battle of Kursk in the summer of 1943. Valentine No. 838 was lost during a Soviet counter-offensive on January 25th, 1944 in the Ukraine. The battle was one of a series of counter-attacks by the Red Army against the German Wehrmacht that winter. Two Valentine tanks were among those in an initial assault over the ice at a former bridge crossing across a swampy river. The first tank was successful in crossing the ice, but the second, No. 838, went through the ice and was lost. Its three-man crew escaped.

The tank rested in the bog near the village of Telepino, about 180 kilometres south of Kiev, until the summer of 1990. A 74-year old villager remembered it going down. To mark the new era of "glasnost", the tank was retrieved intact with the help of six tractors and two power winches. It was offered to Canada, and the Canadian War Museum accepted it on behalf of Canada. This tank is one of two surviving Canadian-built Valentines in the world. Its nameplate reads:

**VALENTINE VII-A, VICKERS-ARMSTRONG DESIGN,  
BUILT BY CANADIAN-PACIFIC RAILWAY.**

#### **SPECIAL FEATURES**

The Valentine was the first tank produced in Canada. It was also the first to have a turret cast in one piece. Other changes which made for improved production were cast armoured engine louvres to replace fabricated ones and cast nose (glacis) armour, replacing the built-up structure of the original design. The cast nose was later adopted by the British for their production of subsequent Marks of the Valentine. The expertise developed in producing the tank in Canada stood this country in good stead after the war.

#### **SPECIFICATIONS:**

##### **CANADIAN VALENTINE TANK VIIA**

Weight	4,545 kg (16 tons)
Length	5.41 m (17 ft. 9 in.)
Width	2.63 m (8 ft. 7 1/2 in.)
Height	2.27 m (7 ft. 5 1/2 in.)
Engine	6 cylinder General Motors Diesel
Speed	24 km/h (15 mph)
Fuel capacity	207.1 (46 Imp. gals) plus 139.1 aux. (31 Imp. gals)
Range	144 kilometres (90 miles) internal tank plus 120 kilometres (75 miles) aux tank
Armament	2-pdr and Browning machine gun
Armour	5.93 cm (2 1/3 in.)
Crew	3
Number in series	1,420
Production Period	1941-43

#### **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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INFANTRY TANK - VALENTINE  
 (2-man turret model)

