

Researched and Written by: Capt (N) (Ret'd) M. Braham
Edited by: Carole Koch

Introduction: Camp Hughes was a Canadian military training camp, located in the Rural Municipality of North Cypress, west of the town of Carberry, in Manitoba. It was actively used for Army training from 1909 to 1934 and as a communications station from the early 1960s until 1991.

History: The need for a central training camp in Military District 10 (Manitoba and NW Ontario) resulted in the establishment of Sewell Camp in 1910, on Crown and Hudson's Bay Company land near Carberry, Manitoba. The site was accessible by both the Canadian Northern and Canadian Pacific Railways and the ground was deemed suitable for the training of artillery, cavalry and infantry units.

It started out as a city of tents and covered a large area. The name of the camp was changed in 1915 to "Camp Hughes" in honour of Major-General Sir Sam Hughes, Canada's Minister of Militia and Defence at the time.



Camp Hughes Tent City
 (Source: www.mhsm.ca)

Extensive trench systems, grenade and rifle ranges, and military structures were built at Camp Hughes between 1915 and 1916, and a variety of retail stores and entertainment complexes on a double-

avenued area close to the main camp formed a lively commercial midway.

In 1916, the camp trained 27,754 troops, making it the largest community in Manitoba outside of Winnipeg. Construction reached its zenith, and the camp boasted six movie theatres, numerous retail stores, a hospital, a large heated in-ground swimming pool, Ordnance and Service Corps buildings, photo studios, a post office, a prison and many other structures. The troops were accommodated in neat groups of white bell tents, located around the central camp.



Main Street, Camp Hughes
 (Source: www.mhsm.ca)

The Camp Hughes trench system was developed in 1916 to teach trainee soldiers the lessons of trench warfare which had been learned through great sacrifice on the battlefields of France and Flanders. Veterans were brought back to Canada to instruct in the latest techniques. The trenches accurately replicated the scale and living arrangements for a battalion of 1000 men.



Camp Hughes Trenches - 1916
(Source: www.mhsm.ca)

Many of the soldiers who trained at Camp Hughes were later involved in the Battle of Vimy Ridge on April 9, 1917.

The Canadian Army continued to train soldiers at the camp until 1934, when the camp closed and the troops were moved to nearby Camp Shilo, now CFB Shilo, and Kapyong Barracks, a now closed part of CFB Winnipeg.

In the early 1960s, the site re-opened as a Cold War remote transmitter station for the Regional Emergency Headquarters located at Camp Shilo. A one-level bunker was built on the property. The bunker was closed in 1992 and has since been demolished.

Heritage: Although very eroded after over 85 years, the original trench system at Camp Hughes is still intact and is the only World War I era trench system remaining in North America.



Camp Hughes Trenches Today
(Source: www.mhsm.ca)

The Camp Hughes Cemetery¹, which is located on what is known as Cemetery Hill, also remains at Camp Hughes.



Entrance to Camp Hughes Cemetery
(Source: Author)

In 1994 Camp Hughes was designated by the Government of Manitoba as a Provincial Heritage Site.

A commemorative plaque was set up on Cemetery Hill overlooking the area of the trench system.



(Source: Author)

¹There are only six military graves in the small cemetery. It also serves as the family plot for a family (Neighbours) that owned some of the land on which Camp Hughes is located. In addition, and somewhat mysteriously, there are the graves of 10-20 unidentified infants.

References:

1. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camp_Hughes
2. <http://www.mhsm.ca/>

Captain (N) (Ret'd) M. Braham, CD



Mike Braham is a graduate of the Royal Military College (1965) and a former naval officer and senior official with DND. He has an abiding interest in military history.