

CAMP X

CANADIAN WOMEN'S ARMY CORPS

CAMP X

Camp X was set up on 200 acres of farmland fronting on Lake Ontario between Oshawa and Whitby by the chief of the British Security Coordination, Sir William Stephenson, a Canadian from Winnipeg Manitoba. Prior to the attack on Pearl Harbour and the entry of the United States into the war, Camp X trained allied agents from the Special Operations Executive, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Office of Strategic Services. The Camp trained over 500 Allied units in a wide variety of special techniques including silent killing and sabotage. There were many names assigned to Camp X: S25-1-1, by the R.C.M.P.; Project J, by the Canadian Military; Special Training School 103 (STS-103).

One important feature of Camp X was Hydra, a very sophisticated communications centre capable of both coding and decoding information.

After the war, the camp was renamed Oshawa Wireless Station, turned over to the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals and became essentially a spy listening station. It ceased operation in 1969 and all the buildings were either demolished or moved to a new location.

The site of Camp X is currently Intrepid Park where a monument erected in 1984 honours the men and women of Camp X.

THE CANADIAN WOMEN'S ARMY CORPS

The Canadian Women's Army Corps was authorized on August 13, 1941 in response to an ever increasing demand for personnel in the navy, army and air force. The CWAC at 22,000 strong was a milestone for women in the military.

Prior to 1939, Canadian women served as nurses in the Northwest Rebellion of 1885, continuing through the South African War (1899-1902) and the First World War (1914-1918).

In addition to freeing up the men for active combat duty, the CWAC proved its efficiency and dedication in the war effort and set the stage for women to be permanently integrated into the military.



*Camp X Teletype Room,
c.1944-1946, Whitby Archives.*

In September 1939, dozens of unofficial women's corps organized into such groups as the Women's Volunteer Reserve Corps and the Canadian Auxiliary Territorial Service. These determined women paid for their own training in Morse Code, signalling and map reading. They also learned regulation infantry drills.

Ottawa appointed Elizabeth Smellie, formerly Matron-in Chief of the Nursing Sisters as the first Officer Administering the CWAC. Joan Kennedy would eventually succeed Smellie as Director in 1942. Subsequently, Lieutenant-Colonel Margaret Eaton, of the department store chain Eaton family, would assume the position of Director General from 1944-1945.

After the war, the authorities deemed the women's service no longer necessary and disbanded the Canadian Women's Corps on September 30, 1946.