



# Sabretache

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF  
THE CALGARY MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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## A closer look at the Ross Rifle failure



**Ross Rifle Mk III** [50.6"] [9.9 lbs] [5 rounds]

The Ross Model 1910 family of rifles were excellent sporting arms and went on to dominate shooting competitions around the world. Sadly, oversights when converting the pattern to military use meant this became one of the most maligned rifles in history. The entire Ross series of rifles began adoption in Canada in response to British delays to provide the Lee-Enfield rifle during the Boer War to Canadian soldiers. The gun features a straight pull, roughly cock-on-open action with a serrated “interrupted screw” locking arrangement, 5-round vertical magazine, and adjustable rear aperture sights. It’s quite long, quite heavy, and very accurate. A slight variant was also sold directly to Britain

Given a shortage of experience armorers in the Canadian lines it took quite some time to track all the small, stacked issues with the Ross Rifle. Basically, the chamber was too tight for loose wartime British ammo standards, causing spent casings to stick on extraction. This led to soldiers simply kicking open stuck breaches. Two other problems, soft bolt heads and undersized bolt stops, came into play at these moments, deforming the bolt head on the left side. So after several kicks the actions would seize entirely. The Ross Mk III also had a bolt that when assembled incorrectly would not lock but would allow the gun to be fired. This meant hot gas, casing fragments, and other bits of shattered metal would eject out the back of and incorrectly assembled gun. The bolt would launch rearward violently and if the soldier had a good cheek weld it would smash his face in. All of these problems were fixed eventually but patience for the Ross had worn out. It was replaced as soon as possible



What can you do with surplus of Ross Rifles now that the Canadian Army replaced them? You could convert them to automatic machine guns. Really! — It almost happened. Joseph Alphonse Huot, a machinist and blacksmith from Quebec, invented and produced the first serious automatic weapon considered for military service in Canada.

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**Attention; All Members..** On June 25th, Member Marty will be hosting **THE FOURTH ANNUAL CALGARY MILITARIA SHOW** To be held at the Hillside Community Hall. This is a important show for all who are interested in the ongoing hobby of militaria and history. I suggest that you print out a few copies of Page 2 poster and hand them out to your friends and neighbors. Make this show a success.

# 4th Annual Calgary Militaria Show

## June 25, 2022



### Buy - Sell - Trade - Display

#### Military Items and Artifacts - All Nations and All Conflicts

Uniforms, Field Gear, Edged Weapons, Antique & Deactivated Military Firearms, Medals & Awards, Insignia, Books, Documents, Manuals, Photographs, and Much More

#### Hillhurst Sunnyside Community Association

1320 5 Ave NW, Calgary,  
Saturday 10:00 to 3:00.

Admission: Adults \$5.00. Children under 12 free with accompanying adult.  
Food & Beverage Concession onsite - Free Parking

Calgary Militaria Show - C/O 3048 Parkdale Blvd NW - Calgary, Alberta T2N 5B3

For Table Reservation & Information contact Marlie Urganhart at [calgarymilitariashows@shaw.ca](mailto:calgarymilitariashows@shaw.ca) or (587) 888-7704



Calgary Militaria Shows Supports the Breaking Free Foundation  
and the Veterans Association Food Bank

Cash and Non Perishable Food Donations Accepted at this Show



I would like to welcome you to Calgary Militaria Show (CMS) and thank for your interest and participation.

The Calgary Militaria Show is attempting to fill a void in the militaria collectors' community by conducting stand-alone militaria shows in Western Canada.

The Show's focus is to promote the study, discussion and preservation of military history, military artifacts, and their provenance through the collecting of militaria and military related items.

The Show's purpose is to support the hobby of Militaria, its collectors, dealers, modelers, Canadian militia and cadet units, reenactors, researchers, restorers, professors, teachers, students and the interested public by conducting regularly scheduled shows providing a venue where military artifacts and regalia can be educationally displayed, bought, sold or traded.

Calgary Militaria Shows is hoping, with the help of it's participants, to grow this annual event into the largest Militaria Show in Canada and to build a reputation as a high-quality event, striving to maintaining tasteful, high quality vendors tables and educational display presentations that present a responsible image to the public.

Show Rules and Regulations are included in upcoming show registration packages and are emailed, mailed or hand delivered, to individuals and entities on the CMS's current distribution list.

By participating in and helping to promote our show, you also promote your business or organization which increases Calgary's collector and customer base to the benefit of all. Please help support your hobby. Hope to see you in June!

Marty



Canadian World War II propaganda poster titled Lick Them Over There! "Come On Canada! The image shows a Canadian infantryman in uniform, holding a rifle and standing on a globe with one foot placed in Canada and the other in the United Kingdom. The UK is marked with a Union Jack flag and an anti-aircraft gun which fires into the sky. The soldier points to black swastika hovering above Great Britain in front of a cloudy night sky. Text is in stylised red font on the image, and in blue font beneath the image. Issued for the Department of National Defence by the Director of Public Information, Ottawa. Printed in Canada. Good condition, paper losses, staining, tears. Country of issue: Canada, designer: Unknown, size 46x30.5, year of printing: 1940s





The first serious automatic weapon considered for military service in Canada was the brainchild of Joseph Alphonse Huot. He began his work by experimenting with a small .32

caliber semiautomatic rifle as a hobby project, but when World War I broke out his interest in the gun became more serious. He applied his ideas to a Ross straight-pull rifle. Working with a single assistant from mid-1914 until the end of 1916 perfecting his design.

The basic idea was to mount a gas piston off the left side of the barrel. This would tap gas from the barrel near the muzzle and use it to drive a rod which was connected to the bolt of a Ross rifle. Since the Ross was a straight-pull design to begin with, this sort of conversion was mechanically fairly straightforward. The problem was getting it to run smoothly and be reliable. In addition to the basic operating piston, Huot designed a ratchet and linkage that would positively index the next round in the drum magazine each time the weapon was fired, thus eliminating the need to rely on a tensioned spring to feed ammunition. He also effected a copy of the Lewis gun's cooling mechanism, using the muzzle blast to pull cool air through the large barrel shroud and over a radiator assembly built around the barrel.

After showing his design to the Government on September of 1916, he was hired as a civilian mechanic for the Small Arms Experimental Department. Improvements and extensive testing (firing over 10,000 rounds) of the weapon occurred over the next year. The Standing Small Arms Committee saw the gun tested again in October 1917. That test led them to send Huot and Major Robert Blair (Assistant Inspector of Small Arms in Quebec) to England for trials there to have the weapon approved by the British military.

They arrived in England in early December 1917, and the first tests at Hythe were undertaken on January 10th 1918, with a second round in March. These tests pitted the Huot against the other machine rifles available at that time: the Lewis, Farquhar-Hill, and Hotchkiss. Although it tested successfully against the other weapons it was rejected.

So why was the weapon rejected despite such promising test results? Simple – it wasn't sufficiently better than the Lewis to justify the expense of retooling production and retraining soldiers.

**Another version of the story** claims that the weapon was also field-tested in France; those who used the Huot were highly impressed, with **Lt-Gen Arthur Currie** requesting that 5,000 be purchased, arguing casualties required the increased firepower of the remaining man in a squad, in addition to allowing their men to counter the increasing number of German machine guns. The weapon was also considerably cheaper when compared to the Lewis. **Maj. Robert Blair** claimed that tooling was available in Canada and that the Dominion Rifle Factory was ready to manufacture Huot rifles en masse, using parts from Rosses slated to be scrapped. However, once the war ended the existing supply of Lewis guns was suddenly far more than would be needed by a peacetime Army, and there was no need to look for additional such arms.

**Overall, the Huot had 33 parts directly interchangeable with the Ross M1910 rifle, plus 11 parts that had to be modified from the rifle and an additional 56 parts that had to be made from scratch.**

[A You Tube video is available for the Hout automatic rifle](#)



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Contact Editor: David Gale

[david@sunnyspotservice.ca](mailto:david@sunnyspotservice.ca)