



SUPPLY  
LINE

Artifact Backgrounder

## Canada Shoulder Title



### DEFINITION

The **Canada shoulder title** is a metal device bearing the word “Canada” in uppercase letters, worn on both shoulder straps of the khaki service dress uniform by Canadian soldiers. The **Canada shoulder titles** distinguished Canadian soldiers from other British Empire troops.

### DID YOU KNOW?

The **Canada shoulder titles** were produced by several manufacturers, such as William Scully of Montreal, Quebec, P.W. Ellis & Company of Toronto, Ontario, and Roden Brothers, also of Toronto. William Scully had been manufacturing Canadian military insignia since the 1870s, and the company continues to operate today. P.W. Ellis & Company was a jewelry manufacturer and distributor that also supplied military insignia and accessories to the Canadian forces during the First World War. Roden Brothers specialized in silver flatware, but supplied military insignia during the war.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

While standard types of national insignia, such as the ‘**Canada**’ **shoulder titles** were issued to the troops, they were by no means universally worn. For example, some infantry battalions wore INF titles rather than a **Canada shoulder title**. Machine gun units, and other specialist units, wore distinctive titles of their own.

In September 1917, however, Canadian military officials stipulated that all officers and other ranks would wear **Canada shoulder titles** going forward. Officers were permitted to wear either metal or cloth titles, to match their badges of rank, which were also displayed on the shoulder straps. Other ranks were to wear the standard metal **Canada shoulder title**.

## EVOLUTION/DEVELOPMENT

The **Canada shoulder title** was manufactured in dozens of variations during the First World War. Some styles were slightly curved, while others were straight. There were two types of construction, solid and voided. Titles of ‘solid’ construction had lettering raised in relief against

a solid background. In titles of ‘voided’ construction the spaces around the lettering were open.

Titles were typically finished in brass, but copper and other gilt finishes were also used.

## VOCABULARY LIST

### British Empire forces:

In the context of the First World War period, this term refers to all military forces associated with the British Empire, including troops from colonies, self-governing nations (such as Canada or Australia), and various other territories under British influence or protection. Soldiers of many nationalities and ethnicities served with the British Empire forces, including English, Welsh, Scottish, Irish, Canadian, Australian, New Zealand, South African, Indian, Egyptian and Chinese personnel, as well as Aboriginal peoples from Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

### Battalion:

During the First World War, a *battalion* was a military unit consisting of approximately 1,000 infantry soldiers. Normally organized into four equally-sized companies of soldiers, battalions were the key elements that commanders used to attack the enemy, or to defend positions against enemy attacks. In the British and Canadian forces, four battalions were grouped together to form a brigade, and three brigades formed a division.

### Flatware:

Utensils (knives, forks, spoons) used for eating.

<b>Infantry:</b>	Soldiers who fight on foot, with various types of hand-held weapons, and often face to face with the enemy in direct combat. During the First World War, infantry soldiers suffered the highest rate of losses of any branch of service, as they were immediately responsible for seizing ground from the enemy, and protecting ground from enemy attacks.
<b>Insignia:</b>	Small symbols, usually made of metal or cloth, and displayed on the clothing to indicate the wearer's rank, or the organization (battalion or division, for example) to which the wearer belongs.
<b>Other ranks:</b>	A term that refers to soldiers who were not commissioned as officers. An officer's commission was conferred by the British monarch, King George V. Commissioned officers, such as lieutenants, captains or majors possessed the legal authority to issue commands. 'Other ranks' comprised ordinary private soldiers, as well as various grades of <i>non-commissioned</i> officers (corporals and sergeants for example) who may have filled leadership or supervisory roles, but did not hold a commission, and were therefore not officially authorized to exercise command.
<b>Service dress uniform:</b>	The uniform intended for everyday wear in the <u>British Empire forces</u> during the First World War period.