

# **Small Arms, Ltd. 1940-1946**

By Liwen Chen for Heritage Mississauga

During the existence of Small Arms, Ltd. few details were available due to the nature of the company. Small Arms, Ltd. was a Crown company which manufactured firearms on arsenals property during World War II. 50 years later, a variety of books, newspapers, photographs, company newsletters, and accounts from former employees have established the Company's contribution to the Canadian war effort.

On September 10<sup>th</sup>, 1939 the Canadian government declared war against Germany while Canada was still in the Great Depression. With a total population of 11 million people, approximately 900,000 workers were unemployed (Pierson, 1986). 20% of the unemployed were women (Pierson, 1986). Lakeview, in Mississauga suffered from unemployment before World War II but the establishment of Small Arms, Ltd reversed the condition by providing thousands of people with work to support the war (Heritage Mississauga Files<sup>1</sup>).

The increase in the population of Lakeview resulted in the building of many wartime housing, transportation links as well as two modern schools: Lakeview Beach and Lakeview Park. Small Arms, Ltd. started the industrial expansion in Lakeview as a stimulus for economic and population boom in post-depression Ontario (Weeks, 1990).

## **Formation of the Company**

As early as 1927 the Quarter Master General proposed steps to initiate rifle production in Canada (Law, 2004). The government however viewed it as unnecessary defence expenditure (Law, 2004). It was not until 1937 that the Canadian Department of National Defence began a detailed study based on small arms production in the United Kingdom (Law, 2004). On May 31<sup>st</sup>, 1940 Colonel D.E. Dewar, Director of Clothing, Equipment and Manufacturing Establishments in the Branch of the Master General of the Ordnance made a proposal to manufacture rifles in Canada. The United Kingdom had recently sent for all Canadian Ross rifles and requested more but Canada had little firearm to support even its own rapidly expanding forces (Stacey, 1977).

On June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1940 the Ordnance Branch of the Department of National Defence was authorized to build an arsenal in Long Branch, Ontario west of Etobicoke Creek. It was to manufacture firearms and ammunition for Canada and the UK during the War (Weeks, 1990). Colonel Malcolm P. Jolley a former engineer in the Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps was appointed General Manager of the arsenal project. Colonel Jolley had previously spent an 11-month secondment at the Royal Small Arms Factory in Enfield, United Kingdom to learn about the manufacturing of No.4 rifles, Bren guns and other small arms (Stacey, 1977). He became a resident technical and inspection officer and was the departmental expert on small arms.

The project first operated as the Dominion Small Arms Factory but the procedures and standard practices of the Department of National Defence were ponderous and caused delays in the decision making process (Marshall, 1946). As part of the Department it was difficult to get the plant constructed, machinery installed and personnel hired (Marshall, 1946). On August 7<sup>th</sup>, 1940 the project was transferred to the Department of Munitions and Supply as Small Arms, Ltd. It became a Crown company operating as a private enterprise with a president and board of directors (Marshall, 1946). Colonel Jolley reported to the

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<sup>1</sup> Newspaper Clipping: Small Arms Limited a Banner War Plant. September 13<sup>th</sup>, 1945.

Board on a regular basis and consulted them when necessary. The Government's interest was held by the Department of Munitions and Supply of which C.D. Howe was the Minister (Marshall, 1946).

Before the incorporation of Small Arms, Ltd. much progress had to be made towards the establishment of the company. No previous infrastructure existed; there was no land, buildings, machinery or operation staff. The location for the factory was chosen in Long Branch, suitably sited just outside downtown Toronto. The Department of National Defence had previously purchased part of the Long Branch Rifle Ranges Lot 4-9 and part of Lot 10 from the Ontario Militia Department a few years back on May 31<sup>st</sup>, 1935 (Peel Land Registry Office).

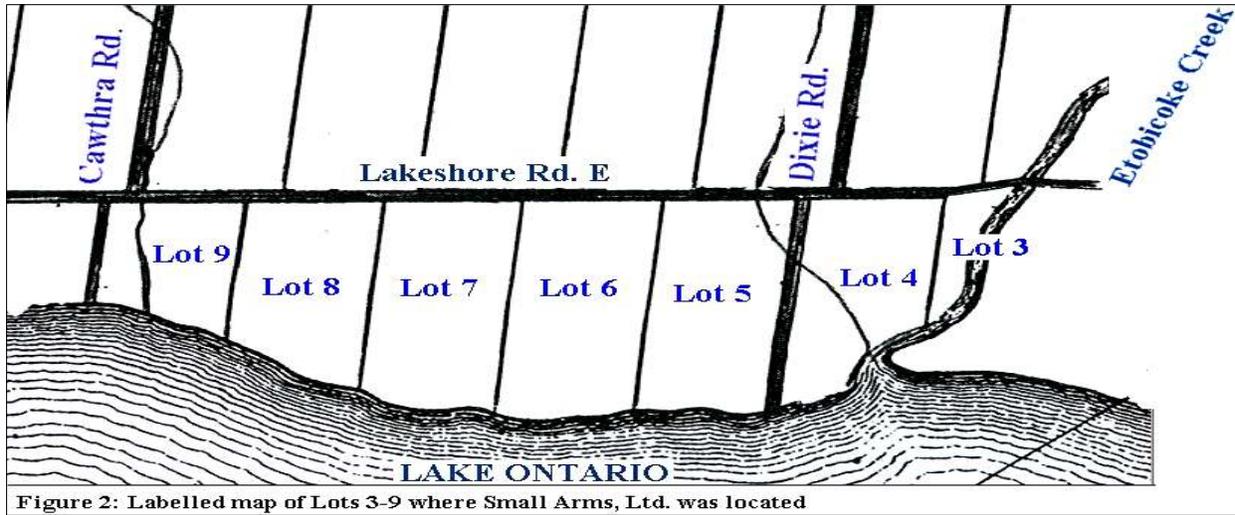


Figure 2: Labelled map of Lots 3-9 where Small Arms, Ltd. was located

The location for Small Arms, Ltd. was chosen on this government property for its suitability in undertaking rectifications and alterations as needed (Kennedy, 1950). The property was adjacent to the Long Branch Rifle Ranges and the Small Arms Military Training Centre which was allowed for testing and inspection of the firearm products (Kennedy, 1950). The location was also easily accessible by good roads and rail connections to the large labour market in the main Toronto area and more distant points (Kennedy, 1950).



Figure 1: Section from 1877 Peel Atlas showing Lots 3-9 Concession 3 South of Dundas

The first sod was turned on August 20<sup>th</sup>, 1940. In a short ten months the factory was completed. By the end of June 1941, construction had included 212,000 square feet of factory floor space, 81,000 square feet of office space and a 2 storey red brick rifle inspection facility (Weeks, 1990). The plant was efficiently constructed and equipped at a cost of approximately \$8 million (Kennedy, 1950). On June 21<sup>st</sup>, 1940 Jolley visited New York's British Purchasing Commission to purchase machine tools. Later on July 8, as advised by Jolley, 32 orders were placed by the Department of Munitions and Supply to firms in United States and Canada for machine tools ranging from \$452 to \$165,000 (Stacey, 1977).

## Production Statistics

Within ten months of construction, the first five Lee Enfield rifles, variant No. 4 Mark I\* were constructed and inspected for endurance trials on June 30, 1941 (Kennedy, 1950).



Figure 3: Exterior Photo of Small Arms, Ltd.

(Heritage Mississauga Research Files)

After the rifles were approved, manufacturing began for No. 4 Mark I\* at a rate of 4,000 units per month to meet the rifle requirements of the Canadian service (Kennedy, 1950). Instructions were soon received from the Department of Munitions and Supply to expand the facilities of the plant to accommodate production of 25,000 rifles per month. By this time, 200 rifles had been assembled and shipped and the staff had grown to 1,220 (Kennedy, 1950).



Figure 4: Photo of Lee-Enfield No. 4 Mk I\* made in Long Branch

(Heritage Mississauga Research Files)

Small Arms, Ltd. was also authorized to manufacture Sten Mark II at a rate of 2,500 per month (Kennedy, 1950). The Sten was a small compact submachine gun that was relatively lightweight at 5 pounds and relatively cheap to produce at a cost of about \$10 (Kennedy, 1950). It could fire at a rate of 550 per minute with a useful life of more than 5,000 rounds (Kennedy, 1950). The first shipment was produced by February of 1942, less than seven

months after the receipt of drawings and specifications (Kennedy, 1950). The Sten was produced not only for the Canadian Army but also the Air Force, the Navy and the United Kingdom (Kennedy, 1950). Many shipments were also sent to China by the Canadian Mutual Aid Board (Kennedy, 1950). By the end of 1941, a total of 7,589 Sten Mark II had been completed and delivered (Kennedy, 1950).

In the third quarter of 1942, instructions were received to increase No. 4 Mark I\* rifle production levels from 25,000 rifles per month to 32,500 rifles and the Sten from 2,500 to 10,000 per month (Kennedy, 1950). Production levels totalled 206,389 rifles and 17,718 Sten Mark II by the end of 1942. By the end of 1943, rifle production totalled 564,113 and 73,407 for the Sten. The cost of No. 4 Mark I\* rifles had been reduced from \$62.30 in 1941 to \$32 in 1943. In the final quarter of 1944, total production levels reached 814,829 rifles, 3,974 training rifles, 4,237 .22 inch calibre rifles and 644 sniper's rifles.

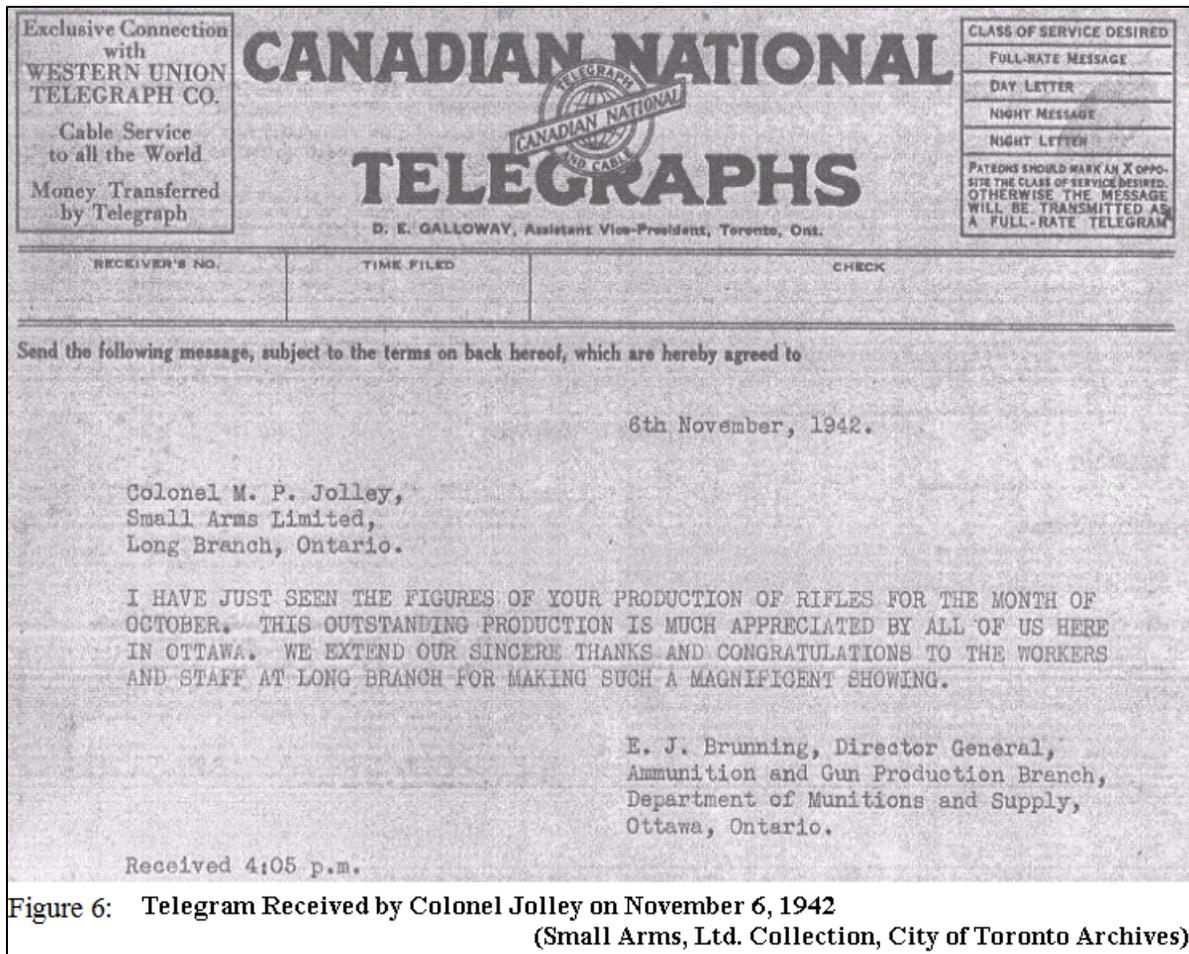
Small Arms, Ltd. produced a variety of different firearms and ammunition during its operation from 1941 to 1946. These products included No. 4 Mark I\* and Sten as discussed above as well as magazines for M3 Carbine, .22" Rifles, Combination Holsters, Sten Machine Carbine Mk. V, and wooden bullets. The swift evolution of warfare required improved specialized small arms weapons from the Company. Small Arms, Ltd. also developed special weapons including the No. 4 Mk. I\* (T) Sniper Rifle and the Long Branch Training Rifle. The Sniper Rifle had special mounting equipment for telescopes adopted by standard Canadian Sniper equipment (Marshall, 1946).

The Long Branch Training Rifle was suitable for training new recruits to hold, manipulate, and aim a service rifle. Its purpose was to reduce training time and the cost of training by covering a variety of stages in the training program without expenditure of ammunition and trips to the ranges. An order was placed for several thousands of the training rifles. The entire design was done at the plant with a production cost a fifth of equivalent British equipment (Kennedy, 1950).

Description	TOTAL SMALL ARMS PRODUCTION													
	Value (units)							Value (millions of dollars)						
	1939-40	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	Total	1939-40	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	Total
Rifles and Pistols	...	6,847	220,240	394,349	381,228	190,500	1,203,164	—	...	12	20	17	11	40
Machine Guns	1,391	17,860	93,102	150,507	105,916	18,102	386,878	1	7	00	00	45	8	151
All Others	.....	1,032	72,234	55,420	34,075	5,589	168,350	—	...	2	10	27	1	40
Magazines, Spare Barrels, Tripods	.....	9,742	43,885	3,581,235	2,804,920	15,075	6,254,857							

Figure 5: Production Levels of Small Arms, Ltd. Over the Years

(Kennedy, 1950)



The telegram above was received by Colonel Jolley from the Director General of the Ammunition and Gun Production Branch of the Department of Munitions and Supply. It is quoted that the production figures in late 1942 were “outstanding”.

Small Arms, Ltd. was a banner war plant that not only contributed to the war effort by producing millions of small arms, but it also contributed to the social economic improvement of the Lakeview area.

## Personnel

The demand for labour by Wartime Industry was high since most young men in the labour force were already enlisted in the armed forces. Small Arms, Ltd. hired full time recruiters who travelled across Canada offering jobs to single women or married women without children with husbands in the armed forces (The Toronto Star, 1991). New workers were given free passage to Toronto to do assembly-line work in good conditions. In total the personnel department hired and released over 14,000 employees during its entire operation.

Numerous advertisements were placed in newspapers for a variety of different positions within Small Arms, Ltd.

<b>GIRLS AND WOMEN OPERATORS AND INSPECTORS 18 AND OVER IDEAL WORKING CONDITIONS</b>  <b>WAGES COMPARABLE TO TORONTO AREA PLUS COST OF LIVING BONUS APPLY SMALL ARMS LTD. LONG BRANCH, ONT.</b>	<b>STENOGRAPHERS</b> Juniors and Seniors. <small>EXCELLENT WORKING CONDITIONS</small> <small>APPLY</small> <b>SMALL ARMS LTD.</b> <b>LONG BRANCH, ONT.</b>	<b>WANTED</b> <small>FOR</small> <b>VITAL WAR WORK</b> <b>TOOL</b> <small>AND</small> <b>GAUGE-MAKERS</b> <b>SURFACE</b> <b>CYLINDRICAL</b> <small>AND</small> <b>CUTTER</b> <b>GRINDERS</b> <small>AND</small> <b>EXPERIENCED</b> <b>TOOL ROOM</b> <b>MACHINE HANDS</b> <small>APPLY</small> <b>SMALL ARMS LTD.</b> <b>LONG BRANCH, ONT.</b>	<b>Girls Wanted</b> <b>Aged 18 to 35</b>  Single or Married without Children And with a Soldier Husband  Those engaged in Agriculture or Wartime Industries not Accepted  We Arrange for your Room and Board Finest Working Conditions in a Modern Plant Good Food at Low Prices Special Girls Club in Separate Building with a Variety of Athletic and Lounging Rooms  We Train You to do the Work at <b>Small Arms Limited</b>
	<b>MUNITIONS OPPORTUNITY WOMEN - 18 TO 45 BRITISH SUBJECTS</b>	<b>TOOL DESIGNERS</b> <b>TWO</b> first-class tool designers, experi- enced on tools, gauges, and fixtures; excellent working conditions. <b>I</b> N reply state age, experience and salary expected to: <small>PERSONNEL MANAGER</small> <b>SMALL ARMS LIMITED</b> <b>LONG BRANCH</b>	
	<b>EXPERIENCED</b> die setter for blanking dies, forming dies, and combination punch trim dies and drop hammer dies. Must fill in operating power press. Apply Mr. Moore, Antoine Vanities Ltd., Small Arms Building, Long Branch.		

Figure 7: The Toronto Star Classifieds for Small Arms, Ltd. workers  
(The Toronto Star, various dates)

The Company began operating officially in June 1941 with 735 persons at work. The construction of the company facilities was successful but it met trouble as the personnel did not have sufficient experience to operate the machines and tools efficiently. It was difficult to obtain supervisors with previous experience in tool making, tool designing, drafting and machine operation (Kennedy, 1950). The staff needed to be trained to undertake the specialized, complex work of rifle manufacturing on a mass production basis.

Following the “scientific management schemes” developed in the UK and US, the Inter-Departmental Committee on Labour Co-ordination recommended that jobs be divided along an assembly line (Pierson, 1986). Due to the lack of employees with experience in producing weapons of war, the plant was laid out so a large number of operations could be carried out in individual small steps (Heritage Mississauga File<sup>2</sup>). The Company was divided into various departments, each undertaking a specific assembly task. The departments were Body, Barrel, Polishing, Woodshop, Heat treats, Inspector, Metallurgist, Combines, and Maintenance (Lindy Wrigley Collection, 1946). Due to increased subdivision and stratification of the production line, only trained mechanics worked at the most “skilled jobs” while the others performed operations requiring minimum training (Kennedy, 1950).

The Company built up additional staff who could instruct operators on how to teach employees to perform their work properly (Marshall, 1946). These job instruction classes ran almost continuously where foremen, supervisors, set-up men and leading hands were taught the correct methods of job

<sup>2</sup> Newspaper Clipping: Small Arms Limited a Banner War Plant. September 13<sup>th</sup>, 1945.

instruction. These classes stressed on the preparation, presentation, performance try-out and the follow up of proper instruction. As a result the learning time of new employees were reduced to a minimum (Marshall, 1946).

## Women in the Company

By 1942, the personnel had expanded to reach approximately 1,200. In 1943 when Small Arms, Ltd was in full operation it employed approximately 5,500 employees working 3 eight hour shifts producing over 30,000 units per month (Weeks, 1990). Approximately 62.8% (Canada Wartime Information Board, 1943) of the employees were women/housewives making approximately 50 cents an hour (Weeks, 1990). 25% of them were ages 40 and older (Canada Wartime Information Board, 1943).



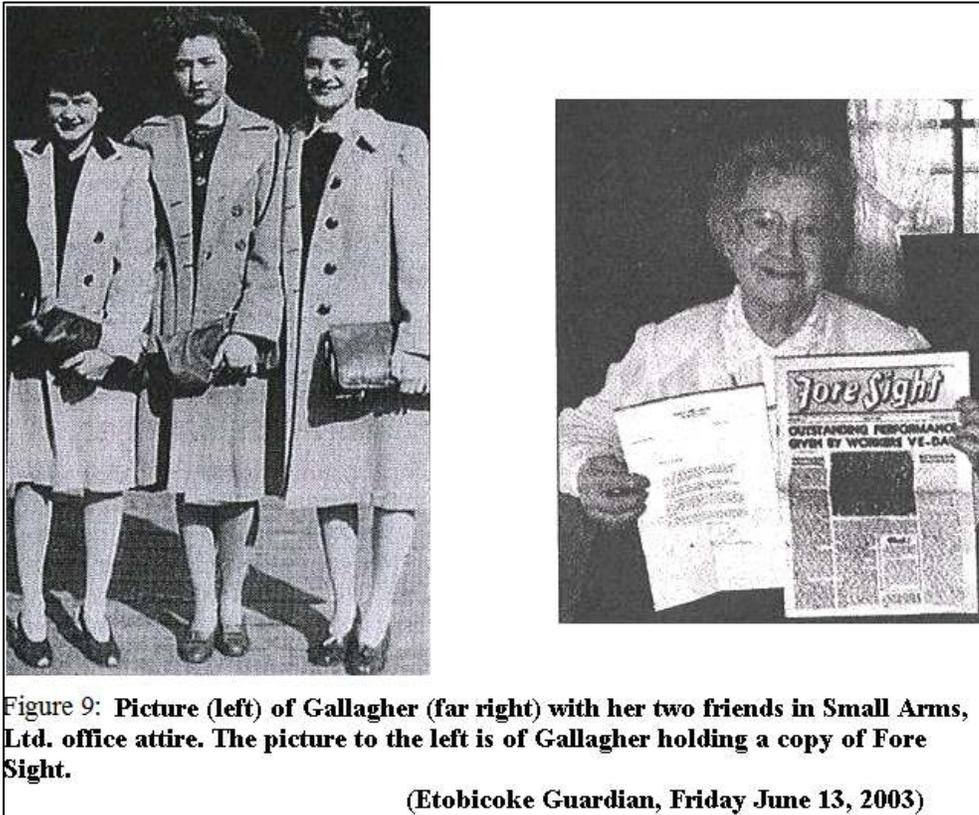
Figure 8: Women at work at Small Arms, Ltd.

(Mississauga Heritage Research Files)

The War Emergency Training Program provided training to women on four basic machines: a drill, milling machine, turret lathe and surface grinder (Kennedy, 1950). Women on the production floor were required to wear a blue-one piece jumpsuit and hat. Four women counsellors were appointed to counsel the large number of single girls, many a long distance from home. Their duty was to see that all female facilities were in good order and to assist girls in solving their personal problems.

Ethel Griggs talked about her experience at Small Arms, Ltd. in the *Etobicoke Guardian* published on Friday, June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2003. She was 24 at that time when she started working in June 1942. Her job at the plant was to fasten Enfield's wooden stick and butt to the barrel for 30 cents an hour. Griggs and her husband both worked at the plant. Their shift began at 7:15am and ended at 5:45pm. Once she arrived at her post, several "wagons" would arrive filled with Enfield rifle barrels and wooden stocks. Griggs would mount the wooden stocks and handguards to Enfield's "deadly and accurate barrel (Etobicoke Guardian, 2003). According to Griggs, the engineers at Small Arms, Ltd. were at first very particular about the Enfield's construction even concerned about the quality of wood (i.e. colour) used in the rifle's butt and stock. But as the war continued, "[they said] don't worry about it matching; just get them out the door" (Etobicoke Guardian, 2003).

Another account in the *Etobicoke Guardian* came from Rita Gallagher of Mimico who was 82 in 2003. She began her tenure in 1944 working in the security department. She was paid \$15 a week to take and develop photographs of employees to be used as their photo identification. Her tenure ended in 1946 and Gallagher said “I think working in the plant contributed to the war effort”.



The company newspaper, *Fore Sight* was published bi-weekly to inform employees on its company policies, government regulations and measures such as taxation and rationing (Kennedy, 1950). It also reported on the occurrences within the plant and up-coming social events such as fundraiser dances and sports events. In Volume 1, No. 19, March 9 1943, the editor, Florence Craig wrote an article called “Mere Man Lauds Women Workers” referring to the “valuable, industrious and intelligent class of people employed in our war factory, namely the women and girls” (Foresight, 1943).

## Industrial Relations

On February 5<sup>th</sup>, 1942, an agreement was signed between Small Arms Ltd. and Local 519 of the United Electrical Radio and Machine Workers of America. The Union represented all Small Arms, Ltd. employees in matters of wages, hours and working conditions (Kennedy, 1950).

A labour-management committee was also organized later in June 1942. Members were elected by their fellow employees from all departments in the plant. The committee was to make suggestions to increase the efficiency and productivity of the Company. The Suggestion Award Plan encouraged employees to submit suggestions which may increase production, reduce costs, and improve their working conditions, etc. An Investigating Committee composed of two members of the engineering department evaluated the suggestions then passed it to the Suggestion Award Committee. The Committee consisted of senior

executives of the Company who decided on the amount of the award to be paid. A maximum award for any suggestion was \$350 (Kennedy, 1950).

## **Safety/Health Benefits**

Small Arms, Ltd. contained ten up-to-date hospital beds as well as first aid service maintained in the plant 24 hours a day. The staff consisted of a doctor, a head nurse, ten additional nurses, and a secretary. The first aid staff also operated a blood donors' clinic held every 2 weeks. Employees were constantly reminded that "it takes five donations to make one transfusion overseas." (Etobicoke Guardian, 2003). Some 400 employees were donors viewing this as part of their patriotic duty. The clinic was considered one of the best in the Province.

An additional safety committee was formed under the guidance of a plant safety engineer. The engineer carried out experiments, suggested changes and improved methods for operating with respect to the accident hazard involved. Classes for proper safety precautions were held regularly for employees.

Other than the accidents covered by Workmen's Compensation, the Employees' Mutual Benefit Society was added protection in the event of illness or accident. The Society received its Charter under provision of the Company Act of the Province of Ontario on April 18<sup>th</sup>, 1944. The Society was administered by a Board of Governors, a majority of whom were elected by the members. The Company appointed only minimal representation on the Board. Membership was 10 cents per week while the Company contributed 5 cents for every 10 cents contributed by members (Kennedy, 1950). In total about \$11,000 was paid out in disability benefits and medical services (Kennedy, 1950). The Employees' Mutual Benefit Society dissolved on August 27<sup>th</sup>, 1945 due to the cancellation of Company contracts. At the time of dissolution the Society had \$3,200 in funds that were returned to its members (Kennedy, 1950).

## **Employees' Athletic & Recreation Association**

In their off hours employees had many opportunities for recreational entertainment. According to both Griggs and Gallagher, working at Small Arms, Ltd. was pleasurable in part because of the company's President and General Manager; Colonel M.P. Jolley (Etobicoke Guardian, 2003). Griggs is quoted in the article saying, "Jolley was a serious man whom you never spoke to unless spoken to first but in an effort to boost morale, he insisted that management organize numerous social events for employees" (Etobicoke Guardian, 2003).

On January 25<sup>th</sup>, 1943 a full-time Athletic Director was appointed and an Employee's Athletic Association was formed to organizing riding, swimming, football, etc. (Kennedy, 1950). There were a bowling league, a softball league, a hobby club, a wood working club, and men's and women's rifle club (Etobicoke Guardian, 2003).

The men's club used powerful .303-calibre British Enfield while the women used .22-calibre rifles. Small Arms, Ltd. was equipped with an outdoor rifle range so the factory products could be tested by engineers and military officials. During the off-hours it was used for the plant's popular rifle competitions.

The members of the recreation club were charged a small membership fee which provided the funds for most of their activities. Below is an Application for Membership with the Employees' Athletic & Recreation Association found in a copy of *Fore Sight*.

**SMALL ARMS LIMITED**

**Employees' Athletic & Recreation Association**

**Application For Membership**

I hereby make application for membership and authorize a deduction of ten (10) cents per week from my salary or wages.

Name .....  
(Print in block letters)

Department ..... Personnel No. ....

Date ..... Signature .....

See your Department representative or drop application in the Fore Sight Mail Box at Employees' entrance.

**Figure 10: Application for Employees' Athletic & Recreation Association Membership (Fore Sight, 1943)**

New Recreation Executives were elected and on June 12<sup>th</sup>, 1945, Melville (Butch) Keeling was one of them. He was a former athlete before coming to work in the Body department of Small Arms, Ltd. According to a newspaper clipping (November, 1984) in Linda Wrigley's Collection from the City of Toronto Archives, he played 12 seasons in the National Hockey League with both the Toronto Maple Leaves and the New York Rangers. He was a forward, finishing his career with 157 regular-season goals and 11 playoff goals. He scored the winning goal for the Rangers in the 1932-1933 Stanley Cup playoffs.

## Employee Housing

The influx of small arms workers from around the country led to severe housing shortages (Heritage Mississauga File<sup>3</sup>). The Department of Munitions and Supply set up Wartime Housing Limited to alleviate the shortage of housing in Canada. Workers were boarding within reasonable distance from the plant and travelling to work everyday from areas such as Lakeview, Port Credit, Long Branch, Alderwood, New Toronto and Mimico (Weeks, 1990).

In 1943 Wartime Housing Limited finished building a dormitory on Dixie Rd. and Lakeshore Rd. E housing a total of 422 female employees (Weeks, 1990). According to a newspaper article published by *The Toronto Star* on February 27<sup>th</sup> 1943, the dormitory was a combination of a modern hotel, a home and a girls' club. On the outside however it was an almost barrack like building, grey and plain. The article described the building inside as a "luxury liner". The two-storey, four winged building was designed to be a home away from home. It included 32 bathrooms, 32 showers, 160 wash basins, six modern bowling alleys, a games room, mezzanine lounge, date parlors, writing rooms, laundries with tubs, drying racks, electric irons and a fully equipped cafeteria (Fore Sight, 1943).

According to *The Toronto Star* article, 374 girls could be accommodated within the 167 two-bed bedrooms. In addition to double rooms, there are also 48 single bedrooms for girls who wished to bunk

<sup>3</sup> Newspaper Clipping: Small Arms Limited a Banner War Plant. September 13<sup>th</sup>, 1945.

alone. Each bedroom contained a bed over a thick floor mat, a chair, dressing table, mirror, wardrobe and a garbage can. The double bedrooms contained two of each furniture. All wooden furnishing were of blonde maple. Each room was harmonized with pastel shades of plum, yellow, turquoise, green, rose and blue. For example a room with yellow walls had a green ceiling with plum curtains and bedspreads (The Toronto Star, 1943).

The article continues by describing the main floor of the building which contained a great wing 188 feet long by 66 feet wide. It contained the kitchen and cafeteria that could seat 250 people at a time and service 500 in a half hour. The wing also contained a lounge with a large fireplace which could comfortably seat 125 girls and an additional 125 visitors. In comparison to Toronto's largest hotel at the time which was only 167 feet by 30 feet from the "doorway of the dining room to the last pillar on the east end" the Small Arms, Ltd. dormitory was extravagant.

## Public Transportation

The increased demand for public transportation led to the Toronto Transportation Commission (TTC) to build a temporary double track line extension westward from the Long Branch Streetcar line. The streetcar drove directly to the doors of the plant to accommodate the large volume of workers travelling from distant areas of the Toronto area (Weeks, 1990).



Figure 11: Cecilia Lenchuck, Small Arms, Ltd. worker waiting at bus stop in front of the factory (Donna Kinzett in Weeks, 1990)

On October 26 1942, the Long Branch streetcar was extended across Etobicoke Creek. It was known as the 'Small Arms Loop'. The Loop served the munitions workers for three years and dropped employees off directly at the door of the factory. On October 14, 1945 when the war came to an end, the tracks were abandoned and the Long Branch streetcar line was pulled back to its Long Branch terminus (Bow, 2006). It still exists today as a terminal for TTC streetcars and Mississauga buses.

<p><b>GOALS REACHED IN LOAN DRIVE</b></p>
<p><b>Small Arms plant was up to 130 per cent of its original objective and today showed a \$416,200 total.</b></p>
<p><b>The Globe and Mail. Thursday, April 27 1944</b></p>
<p><b>Figure 12: Newspaper Article</b></p>

## Victory Bonds

Small Arms, Ltd. sponsored payroll deductions in support of Victory Bonds. Approximately half of the Canadian war cost was covered by War Savings Certificates and war bonds known as Victory Bonds (Keshen, 2004). These bonds matured after seven years and paid \$5 for every \$4 invested (Keshen, 2004). These Bonds were a sign of Canadian war prosperity (Granatstein and Morton, 1989). The start of the war established many new industries in Lakeview. According to an account in a newspaper article from Heritage Mississauga Research Files written on September 13, 1945, the “area stretching from Mimico to Oakville is destined to become perhaps the greatest industrial area of Greater Toronto”. The newly established industries employed workers from around. In the first week of January 1942, not a single claim was filed with the Unemployment Insurance Commission offices in Halifax (Granatstein and Morton, 1989). Canadian workers soon found newly established wealth to invest in the war effort.

In November 1944, Small Arms, Ltd. held a Victory Loan campaign where employees purchased \$494,300 in war bonds (Etobicoke Guardian, 2003). The plant’s various departments competed with one another to raise the most money. Employees who purchased bonds were offered a chance to win prizes. According to *Fore Sight*, the woodshop won the bond competition after its workers purchased \$57,100 worth of Victory bonds (Etobicoke Guardian, 2003). As the Loans progressed, subscriptions at Small Arms, Ltd. became larger until an average subscription of \$300 per employee was achieved. It is on record that no other company with similar earnings at that time reached the subscriptions made by the employees of the Company. In total approximately \$3.5 million was subscribed by employees of Small Arms, Ltd. (Marshall, 1946).



Figure 13: Colonel Jolley addressing the employees at a Victory Bond rally held at the plant on April 26, 1943

(Fore Sight Vol. 1, No. 22, May 17 1943)



Figure 14: Woman at Small Arms, Ltd. receives Certificate of Honour for purchasing war bonds

(Heritage Mississauga Research Files)

War Loan and Victory Loan campaigns produced approximately \$8.8 billion for the Canadian war effort during World War II (Granatstein and Morton, 1989). Many forms of publicity were employed from celebrities buying bonds to entertainments, speeches and magazine advertising (Granatstein and Morton, 1989).

## Final Periods

The establishment of Small Arms, Ltd. contributed not only to the War but to the local community in the Lakeview area. The Company provided a source of income for hundreds of families. Not only were employees able to work in relatively good working conditions, they also received good wages and many



personal and social benefits. Small Arms, Ltd. placed much emphasis in providing good health care, social gatherings and recreational activities for its employees. This newly generated wealth resulted in better housing, transportation links, schools and of course generous contributions to Victory Bonds to support the War.

Of course all employees knew this was not permanent. Victory in Europe Day on May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1945 was the date that the Allies formally accepted the unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany and their armed forces. This signified the end of the war and its demand for firearms. For Small Arms, Ltd. "it meant only one thing, to stay on the job as long as weapons were needed for the final winning of the war" (Heritage Mississauga File<sup>4</sup>). As the War came to an

end, progress was made to convert the plant to peacetime operation. The total sales of Small Arms, Ltd. during the existence amounted to \$43,907,176.87 with a capital investment of \$8.5 million (Kennedy, 1950).

On December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1945 the Department of Munitions and Supply passed out of existence and Small Arms, Ltd. was taken over by the Small Arms Division of Canadian Arsenals Limited. On March 31<sup>st</sup> 1946, all assets and liabilities of Small Arms, Ltd. were turned over to the Department of Reconstruction and Supply and the Company made application for the surrender of its Charter (Stacey, 1977).

The post-war arsenal scheme recommended by the Joint Arsenals Planning Board was approved by the government to incorporate Canadian Arsenals Limited to deal exclusively with small arms (Secretary of State of Canada, 1958). The machinery and equipment not required by Canadian Arsenals Limited were transferred to War Assets Corporation for disposal. Canadian Arsenals Limited employed 200 people who continued to supply arms to the Canadian Army (Weeks, 1990). These included components for the C1 submachine gun, the Browning HP pistol, the Canadian Army standard FN rifle and Bren DMG's (Mississauga News, 1970). Additionally they also produced crank shafts and connecting rods for the Koehler engine for high RPM snowmobiles (Weeks, 1990).

<sup>4</sup> Newspaper Clipping: Small Arms Limited a Banner War Plant. September 13<sup>th</sup>, 1945.



Canadian Arsenals Limited continued to operate within the factory until the summer of 1974 (Weeks, 1980). Since then all the buildings owned by the Federal government have been torn down. The only building that remains on the Arsenals land is the No. 12 building where Small Arm, Ltd inspected their products. The Inspection Building has been designated under the Ontario Heritage Act by the City of Mississauga (The Bridge, 2009).

**Figure 16: Aerial photo of Canadian Arsenals Limited  
(Heritage Mississauga Research Files)**

The Inspection Building was used by the Ontario Power Generation and Cadet Organization Police School (COPS) organization since 1975. The women's dormitory built by the Wartime Housing Co. is now the Sheridan Ford car dealership located at 1345 Lakeshore Rd. Lot 4 was sold in 1953 to the Corporation of Long Branch for Marie Curtis Park. Lot 5 (1352 and 1400 Lakeshore) was transferred to Canada Post in 1981 as a sorting facility when it became a Crown corporation.

The only structure besides the Inspection Building that still stands is a Water Tower that was built for the Lakeview Community. The water tower reflects the historic industrial use of the Arsenals land. It is believed to have been erected around 1910. Water Towers in Mississauga are rare and this structure has also been designated under the *Ontario Heritage Act* (The Bridge, 2009).

In 1992, the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority acquired the lands for the new park development project to incorporate the Arsenal lands to the expansion of the adjacent Marie Curtis Park. The new park will include a heritage walk trail that will feature interpretive signage looking at the history of this significant heritage property.



**Figure 17: Modern Photo of Small Arms, Ltd. No. 12 Inspection Building at  
1352 Lakeshore Road East**

**(The Bridge, 2009)**



Figure 18: Modern (left) & historic (right) photo of the water tower  
(Heritage Mississauga Research Files)

## References

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