

**René Chartrand,
*Canadian Military Heritage***

**Jacques Bodin,
*L'histoire extraordinaire des soldats de la Nouvelle France :
gouvernement, vie en garnison et campagnes militaires en
Acadie, au Canada et en Louisiane aux 17^e et 18^e siècles***

BERNARD POTHIER

René Chartrand, *Canadian Military Heritage*, Vol. 1 (1000–1754). Montreal: Art Global Inc., 1993 (under the auspices of Communications M. C. Stratégiques and the Directorate of History, Department of National Defence). 239 pp.

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The company of enthusiasts who labour in the field of New France's military history form a small community, and most of its members are known to each other, consort with each other, and come to one another's assistance at every opportunity. Thus, Jacques Bodin tenders thanks in his acknowledgements to René Chartrand "pour son inaltérable serviabilité"; and the work of two artists, Michel Pétard and Eugène Lelièpvre, the latter the official artist of the French army, figures in both titles.

René Chartrand is a senior Parks Canada curator seconded to National Defence to write the first two volumes of a projected three-volume military history of Canada. In the first volume, to a degree unprecedented in previous historical accounts, Chartrand succeeds in weaving considerations of military material culture into the chronological narrative. For all that this work was conceived as a popularization, *Canadian Military Heritage* is founded on thorough primary source research. Chartrand is an international authority on military uniform and accoutrements, and his work is profusely illustrated from the fund of objects and weaponry surviving in museums and private collections, and from the historical iconography depicting both Amerindians and Europeans in military array. These are supplemented by carefully researched modern

day depictions of uniforms and units by such artists, in addition to Lelièpvre and Pétard, as Francis Back, Gerald Embleton and others.

Jacques Bodin, on the other hand, is a retired French army officer who now happily devotes himself to his life-long avocation, the history of the soldiers of New France. His passion culminated, as recently as 1992, in the creation of a museum — the *Mémorial des Soldats de la Nouvelle France* — located in the Château d'Oléron, near Rochefort, the great French naval station whence official traffic to New France departed. His *Histoire extraordinaire* closely follows the Oléron museum's storyline, and incorporates many graphics used in its displays. The book is in fact a companion to the memorial exhibition. Included are photographs of uniformed manikins from the Mémorial, dozens of watercolours and drawings of soldiers, garrison and campaign scenes. This is supplemented by modern photographs of the sites where the soldiers of New France once trod. Especially noteworthy is the historic cartography gathered from the standard French archival sources, most of which, however, is already well known on this side of the Atlantic.

The most obvious weakness in Bodin's book is the author's heavy reliance on the secondary literature, much of it dated and indeed some of it of doubtful scholarly authority, such as Thomas Costain's *The White and the Gold*. Bodin intersperses a historical narrative in traditional form with lengthy quotations from reference works, and recent and not so recent studies. What we have in fact is an illustrated story book of the French military presence in North America. Monsieur Bodin tells us nothing new. He does not go into the more elusive realities of warfare in the particular context imposed by geography, demography, and the economics of the fur trade. There is nothing, for example, on that particular home grown brand of warfare of the *Canadiens, la petite guerre*,

which allowed New France to expand, and hold, her frontiers for a century and a half. During that time French authority extended from the Atlantic to the Great Lakes, and from Hudson's Bay to the Gulf of Mexico, while the British colonies, ten times more populous, remained hemmed in between the eastern seaboard and the Appalachians.

René Chartrand, conversely, examines all of this in detail; the warlike customs of the Amerindians form the backdrop for the arrival of the Europeans, with their evolving technology, and its ramifications on military life and material culture. Chartrand chronicles the growth of the martial spirit in America as New France evolved from a mere fur trading counter to an intricate far-flung network of fortified outposts. Armed conflict between the Iroquois and the French began in earnest in the early 1640s. For a generation the Iroquois, who were receiving firearms from their trading partners — first the Dutch, then the English — held the strategic advantage, thanks to their tactics and their superior numbers. In time, however, the French developed their own war doctrine, uniting the methods of the Amerindians and the technical advances and the discipline of the Europeans. Gradually, they brought warfare to the back door of the enemy, be it Iroquois or British, and for a time were able to impose themselves militarily over much of North America.

We learn much from Chartrand, but not from Bodin, of the myriad of material details pertaining to the Canadian fighting man: that he carried a light weight musket, hatchet and knife, and adopted as his own the garb of the Amerindian (*capot*, leggings, a blanket, moccasins). He travelled on foot and by canoe, and in winter he donned snowshoes and packed his party's meagre baggage on toboggans. Using surprise, stealth, ambush, savage hit-and-run attacks and withdrawing as rapidly as they

came, the Canadian war party was the scourge of the North American frontier. Traditional sergeant's halberd and the tricorne hat (which figure prominently in Lelièpvre's illustrations in the Bodin book) were not required for the voyage!

Chartrand's central chapter, and his longest (chapter 5), deals with the *Compagnies franches de la Marine*, the colonial regulars and the most consistent military presence in New France. This is fitting, for Canadian historians have tended to exalt the place in our lore of *la petite guerre* to the detriment of the numerous garrisons of colonial regulars serving in both the established centres and in the far-flung forts. Chartrand examines the minute details of the regular soldier's life as well. He devotes a full chapter (chapter 6) to the lower colonies of Acadia, Plaisance and Île Royale, frequently neglected in general Canadian histories. Bodin's most evocative chapter is his depiction of the port of Rochefort (chapter 17) which deals interestingly with the "population" of a large warship, and the modalities of warfare on the high seas.

Both of these recent titles add to our knowledge of the material culture of military New France, although not to the same degree. Bodin's work is weakened by its traditional narrative form of history and by its shallow research, but nevertheless brings together an important part of the iconographic record. Chartrand's *Canadian Military Heritage* is the most valuable, thanks to its author's judicious use of all the available sources. His extensive footnotes refer us variously to archival sources (memoranda of expenditures, clothing and other supplies, etc.), printed sources (memoirs of daily life, travel, military etiquette, etc.), and to the best recent studies, including numerous unpublished monographs on material history subjects by his Parks Canada colleagues.

Desmond Morton, *When Your Number's Up: The Canadian Soldier in the First World War*

PETER SIMKINS

Morton, Desmond. *When Your Number's Up: The Canadian Soldier in the First World War*, Toronto: Random House of Canada, 1993. 354 pp., 52 photographs, 5 maps, 5 diagrams. Softcover \$19.00, ISBN 0-394-22288-1.

Although nearly 80 years have elapsed since the end of the Great War, interest in it has, if anything, grown in the past two decades and the debates about its causes, conduct and effects are as fierce as ever. Military and war museums —