



Built originally as Winnipeg's Winter Club, this building on the Manitoba capital's Smith Street, just off Broadway Avenue, houses HMCS Chippawa, an active centre of naval life in the prairie city.

# THE CHIPPAWA STORY

*"We would like you to form a reserve naval company in Winnipeg."*

**T**HESE WORDS were spoken by Lt. H. J. F. Hibbard, of Naval Headquarters, Ottawa, to Eustace A. Brock, the assistant secretary of the Great West Life Assurance Company in Winnipeg. The date was February 1923.

So started one of the 21 Royal Canadian Navy (Reserve) training establishments scattered in cities large and small and from one end of Canada to the other.

Mr. Brock, who later became Captain E. A. Brock, is now retired and living in England, and Lt. Hibbard, retired as a lieutenant-commander in 1942, lives at Cobourg, Ontario. And what they discussed that day, 38 years ago, is today one of the largest of the 21 Reserve establishments, a fully commissioned "ship" in Her Majesty's Royal Canadian Navy, with more than 300 officers, offi-

cer cadets, men and women under training. Her name is HMCS *Chippawa*.

She's a happy ship, an active ship, and although she's often referred to by Winnipeg citizens as "the stone frigate hard by Smith Street", she's an important part of the community, playing a big part in the lives of hundreds of people every day of the week.

How does *Chippawa* fit into Canada's defence structure? What goes on behind the stone walls of the building Winnipeg sailors call their "ship"?

The Winnipeg reserve naval establishment was officially commissioned HMCS *Chippawa* in 1941, having been known at first as the Winnipeg Company,

RCNVR, and then as the Winnipeg Division.

*Chippawa* was named after a vessel which led the line of Commodore Barclay, RN, in action against the Americans in the Battle of Lake Erie in September 1813.

The word "Chippawa" is a popular adaptation of "Ojibway", name of a tribe that formerly ranged along the Great Lakes, through Minnesota to the Turtle Mountain area of Manitoba. It was one of the largest tribes north of Mexico, and it is interesting to note that the ship which bears this Ojibway name is one of the largest naval divisions in Canada, provides facilities for the largest Sea Cadet Corps in the British Commonwealth and is also the training headquarters for the largest Navy League Cadet Corps in Canada.

Since being formed in 1923, the establishment has been a vibrant part of

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By  
Lt. (SB) T. G. R. Nightingale  
RCN(R)

Winnipeg, having trained thousands of young prairie men and women to serve Canada in peace and war. It has twice won the Naval Divisions Efficiency Trophy, awarded annually to the top reserve division in the country.

Although the building which is a ship is actively used every night of the week, Tuesday evening is the main drill night, and the more than 300 reservists go hard at it from divisions at 2000 to evenings quarters at 2230.

In these two and one-half hours, the reservists undergo training in general seamanship, communications, sonar, the supply trades, and in the electrical and engineroom trades.

As the commanding officer of *Chippawa*, Cdr. J. W. Dangerfield, put it: "Our job here is to train men to be able to take on a job or at least have the basic knowledge of how to tackle it, if the chips are ever down."

Making sure that the men, and women, of *Chippawa* have the ability to tackle the job is the responsibility of Lt.-Cdr. C. R. Godbehere, the training commander, a reservist for 15 years and a veteran of the Second World War.

Under him is a qualified staff of instructors, all reservists themselves and many of whom have served in the Navy in many parts of the world. In addition, Lt.-Cdr. C. A. Hamer, RCN, is the Staff Officer, Administration. Lt.-Cdr. Hamer has been in the Royal Canadian Navy since 1950 and had a long association with the sea before that.

A Royal Naval Reservist during the war, he served in the merchant service before and after hostilities. He attended the Thames Naval Training College, HMS Worcester, and served in her tender, the famous *Cutty Sark*.

The training given the reservists at *Chippawa* is both varied and interesting. Learning to be reasonably skilful in seamanship is no easy task one evening a week, but a summer training period of anywhere from two weeks to six weeks at one of the RCN's shore establishments or in a ship at sea soon puts theoretical classroom work into practical application.

This latter training is usually undertaken during the summer months, and the chance to go to sea has always proven to be a big drawing card for reserve recruiting in Winnipeg and elsewhere on the prairies.

During 1960, 181 officers, men and wrens from *Chippawa* undertook training either at sea or at a shore establishment away from Winnipeg.

During early 1961, eight men from the ship undertook such training, most

of them at sea, taking them from the below zero winter temperatures of the prairies to the balmy climes of the South Pacific and the West Indies.

Among those on Naval Training at the time of this writing was the commanding officer, Cdr. Dangerfield. He first joined the old Royal Canadian Navy Volunteer reserve in June of 1940. He served in the Pacific in the armed merchant cruiser HMCS *Prince Robert*, and then on North Atlantic convoy duty. He also took an anti-submarine course at a Royal Navy training establishment in England.

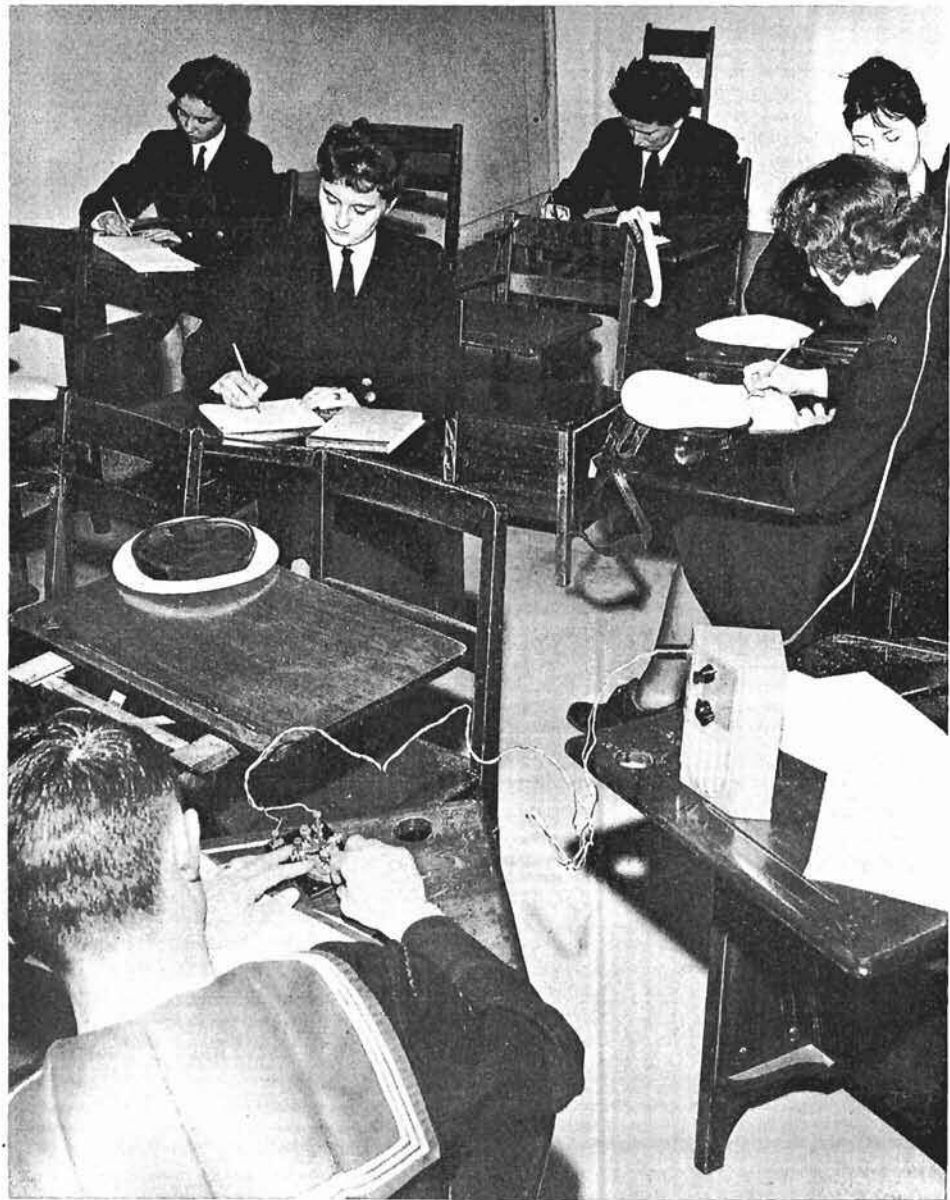
On completion of his war service, he rejoined the RCN(R) at *Chippawa* in 1947 with the rank of lieutenant. He was appointed executive officer in the spring of 1960, and became commanding officer

in September of the same year, succeeding Captain L. B. McIlhagga, who stepped down after eight years in command.

In civilian life, he is associated with Dangerfield Hotels Limited, and is active in community affairs. A keen seaman, he is a member of the Royal Lake of the Woods Yacht Club.

Who are some of the other Winnipeg citizens who give their time and energy to the Reserve? Who are some of these people who are "sailors" one night a week and clerks, mechanics, salesmen, teachers, etc. in civilian life?

Take AB Erik Askew. In civilian life he's a CPR machinist, but in the Navy, he's a bandsman. Ord. Sea. H. J. Black is a student both in civilian life and in the Reserve, where he takes com-



Communications training is one of *Chippawa's* specialties. Here a group of wrens write out a message as it is tapped out in Morse code.

munications training. CPO Art Dale is a fireman in Winnipeg's neighbouring French-speaking community of St. Boniface. Ord. Sea. Robert Glass, who is taking general seamanship training, works for the Manitoba Telephone System. Wren Phyllis Valentine is a leading communicator, who in civilian life works for television station CJAY.

The *Chippawa* reservists are drawn from all walks of life, and in some cases, the reserve draws more than one member of the family.

Petty Officer Second Class Don Ferguson is an Engineroom Mechanic, while his wife, Wren Petty Officer First class Sheila Ferguson—yes, she outranks him—works in *Chippawa's* pay office. This may pose a problem when P2 Don has to go to WP1 Sheila to draw his naval pay, but they both take in their stride.

Another similar team is Cdr. J. L. Freeman and his son, Lt. Peter Freeman. Cdr. Freeman is commanding officer of the University Naval Training Divisions, where the reserve officers are

trained. His son is in *Chippawa's* torpedo/anti-submarine department.

Many of the older men in the reserve division have sons in the Sea Cadets or Navy League Cadets, making sure the naval tradition stays with the family.

Although training is serious, hard work in *Chippawa*, there are plenty of other activities to keep the men and Wrens interested. There is an old saying that all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy, so care is taken in the ship to make sure there is play. Having at one time been the Winnipeg Winter Club, *Chippawa* boasts its own indoor swimming pool which is available to all members of the reserve, their families, the Sea Cadets and the Navy League Cadets. The pool is also used by several outside or "ashore" organizations such as the city police, the War Amputees Association, the Red Cross Water Safety Association, and others.

Some years ago, the pool became the object of a *Chippawa* verse of the

familiar reserve navy song "Roll Along Wavy Navy". It goes:

O we joined for the chance to go to sea . . .

O we joined for the chance to go to sea . . .

But the only sea we saw . . .

Was the pool in *Chippawa* . . .

Roll along Wavy Navy, roll along!

The special verse is now part of the ship's tradition and is sung in many a mess whenever *Chippawa* personnel are away on naval training.

But there was a less happy time when *Chippawa* had too much water to contend with. In 1950, the Red and Assiniboine Rivers overflowed, creating the worst flood in Winnipeg's history. Thousands of people had to be evacuated from their homes and sent to neighbouring towns and provinces.

Being close to the point where the two rivers meet, *Chippawa* was soon a stone frigate almost afloat in flood water several feet deep, but when the military authorities took over the situation



The swimming pool at *Chippawa*, one of the naval division's busiest departments, is serving not only reserve personnel and their families, but several community organizations as well. At one period it was an active centre of treatment for victims of a devastating polio epidemic that struck Manitoba.



at the request of the city and province, she carried on as the Navy's flood combat headquarters.

Naval personnel, both regular and reserve, were sent to Winnipeg from all over the country and lived on board *Chippawa* for several weeks. The ship's galley was activated within 48 hours to serve 1,500 meals a day, and *Chippawa's* main drill deck served as a dry dock for motor boats and other craft used in the flood combat operation. Several naval divers were also sent to the city to work out of *Chippawa*, clearing sewers and obstacles and investigating flooded houses and buildings at the height of the emergency.

The flood waters subsided, but *Chippawa's* job was not yet done. Shortly after one crisis was over, another spring up in the form of polio epidemic. Therapy was needed for its victims and the *Chippawa* pool, its water heated, was pressed into service in a humanitarian, as well as recreational role for two years.

On the happier side of the picture, *Chippawa's* messes are "going concerns". The men's mess, presided over by Ldg. Sea. Glen Shaw, is an attractive and highly popular part of the ship, which organizes many dances, wiener roasts and other activities during the training year. The same happy situation holds in the chief and petty officers' mess, under president CPO Sandy MacPherson, and in the wardroom, or officers' mess.

Sports activity rates high in *Chippawa* winter and summer. In addition to the swimming pool, the ship has its own bowling alleys which are used by teams organized from each of the messes. The ship also has its own curling leagues, and these enter teams in the annual Manitoba bonspiel and in various military bonspiels.

Many organizations are associated with *Chippawa*, and these, too, undertake activities, often of a social nature. These include the Naval Officers' Associations of Canada, which has a Winnipeg membership of over 150, the Reserve Officers' Wives Association, the Ex-Wrens Association, the Ex-Chief and Petty Officers' Association, the Ladies' Auxiliary to the Chief and PO's Association, and the Manitoba Division and Greater Winnipeg branch of the Navy League of Canada.

Greater Winnipeg, with its population of close to half a million people, is a city well spread out over the prairie landscape, and a drive of three or four miles or more to the ship on parade night is most common. For a few members of the ship's company, however, the weekly trip is considerably longer.



Far from the sea, RCN(R) personnel at *Chippawa* learn the technique of submarine hunting in the division's sonar room under the guidance of Lt. Peter Freeman.

Lt.-Cdr. J. B. Thorsteinson commutes by car from the city of Brandon, 150 miles to the west of Winnipeg, to take up his weekly duty as the ship's electrical officer. Sub-Lt. George Robb drives in from Portage La Prairie, 60 miles from Winnipeg. These two are exceptions, but several other reservists live in small communities or on farms close to Winnipeg and drive ten to 20 miles each parade night.

In addition to the reserves, HMCS *Chippawa* serves as the training headquarters for two corps of Royal Canadian Sea Cadets and one corps of Navy League Cadets. Sea Cadets range in age from 14 to their 19th birthday, while the Navy League cadets are aged 12 to 14.

One of the Sea Cadet Corps, named after John Travers Cornwell who won the Victoria Cross as a boy seaman in the Battle of Jutland during the First World War, is believed to be the largest Sea Cadets corps in the British Commonwealth, with a complement of 400 cadets. The other Sea Cadet Corps in

Winnipeg, *Crusader*, bears the name of one of the proud ships of the RCN. It is affiliated with St. Paul's College in the city, which requires all of its grade nine students to belong to the cadets as part of their disciplinary training.

Winnipeg's Navy League Cadet Corps is the largest in Canada, with an enrolment of 300 boys. The corps is named after J. R. K. Millen, a national vice-president of the Navy League of Canada, who has long been associated with youth work in Winnipeg and throughout Canada.

The Women's Auxiliary to the Manitoba Division of the Navy League of Canada also takes an active interest in the corps, providing two scholarships a year to further the education of selected cadets.

Many Sea Cadets and Navy League Cadets go on with their naval training when they pass beyond the age limits of the cadet corps. The same holds true for the reserve personnel, many of whom find they like the sailor's life well enough to make a career of it.

During 1960, five Winnipeg naval reservists and 30 members of the Sea Cadets corps joined the Royal Canadian Navy.

The spiritual needs of the Reserve Personnel in *Chippawa* are well taken care of. There are three padres in the establishment, one Roman Catholic and two Protestant. They conduct services on appropriate Navy anniversaries, such as Battle of the Atlantic Sunday, Trafalgar Day, and others. Many members of the reserve also bring their children to *Chippawa* to be baptized on board the "ship", where the chaplains keep bottles of Pacific Ocean and Atlantic Ocean waters on hand at all times. The parents have their choice of the sea water with which they want their son or daughter baptized.

Considerable numbers of men and women of the Royal Canadian Navy can look back on *Chippawa* with fond memories, including some who have gone on to senior appointments in the RCN. These include Commodore Jeffrey Brock, the son of *Chippawa's* first commanding officer, who on June 30 be-



Cdr. John W. Dangerfield, commanding officer of HMCS *Chippawa*, the Winnipeg naval division. In civilian life, he is associated with Dangerfield Hotels Limited.

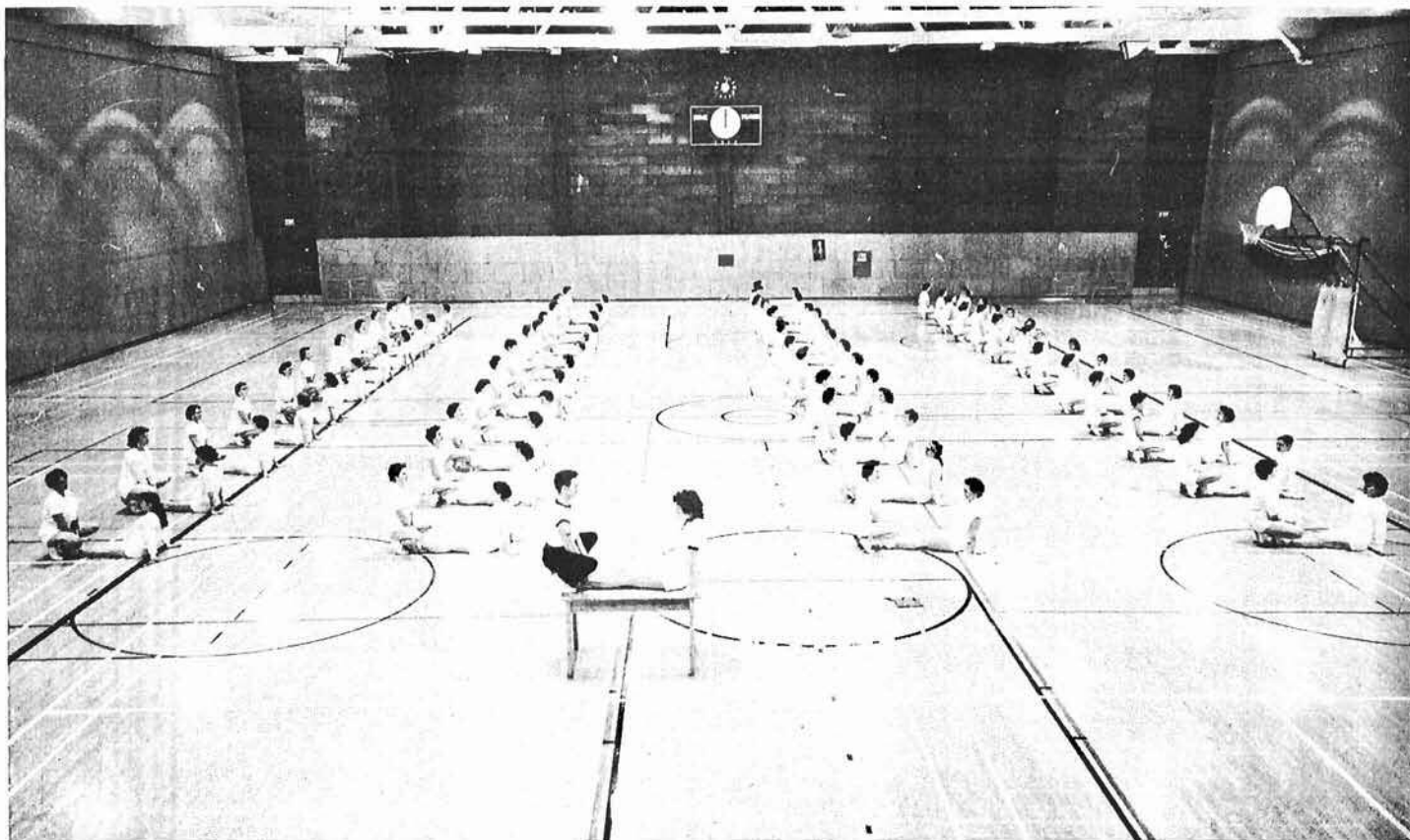
comes Vice-Chief of the Naval Staff in the rank of rear-admiral.

She's just a stone frigate hard by Winnipeg's Smith Street, but *Chippawa* is really a bit of Canada's maritime tradition, even though her homeland and everlasting port is far from the sea. She flies her colours far from the arenas of many famous, glorious and tragic battles that bring to mind names such as Nelson, and *Victory*, Jutland, and the North Atlantic.

However, on the anniversary of these battles, signal flags are hoisted on the mast in front of *Chippawa* to commemorate them.

In 1805, when Admiral Lord Nelson hoisted his now famous signal "England Expects Every Man Will Do His Duty", he of course could not have known or dreamed that his words would be spelled out again more than 150 years later on the mast of another ship of another Monarch in a prairie city far from Trafalgar.

But the men and women of HMCS *Chippawa* harken to his words and prepare for the day, if ever again the call comes to do their duty.



Navy wives on the West Coast are serious about PT, according to the attendance during a 25-week course at Naden. An average of 103 wives attended the course, which included 45 minutes of PT, 45 minutes of games, and 30 minutes of swimming each Thursday evening. The naval wives are shown during the final class when they capped the season with an impressive display at the P and RT centre at Naden. Course instructor was Ldg. Sea. S. O. Duffey.