

Glenbow Museum

Wednesday, June 18, 2008

Glenbow Museum Helps Bring National Treasure Home to Canada

CALGARY, ALBERTA – A huge piece of Alberta history is coming home thanks to the efforts of Glenbow Museum, the University of Alberta, the Government of Canada's Department of Canadian Heritage and many other generous donors and supporters. After almost 90 years, personal belongings and papers belonging to Sir Samuel Steele are returning to our prairie province after a repatriation ceremony at Canada House, Trafalgar Square, London on Thursday, June 19th, 2008. His Royal Highness Prince Edward, The Earl of Wessex will lead the ceremony and will be joined by distinguished guests including Glenbow Museum's President and CEO, Jeff Spalding and Senior Curator Lorain Lounsberry. **Photos and broadcast-ready video of this event will be available for download by 4 pm Calgary time on Thursday. Please visit the University of Alberta's online media kit at <http://fulham.library.ualberta.ca> for access.**

"Sir Samuel Benefield Steele is a true icon of the Canadian west, his exploits inextricably linked with the major policing and military events undertaken by Canada in the first 40 years after Confederation," said Lorain Lounsberry, Glenbow Museum Senior Curator, Cultural History. "Glenbow, which has hundreds of artifacts belonging to people who served with Sam Steele, will now have the largest and most impressive collection of artifacts originally owned by Steele himself."

From the Red River Rebellion in 1870, to the formative years of the North-West Mounted Police after 1873, to the North-West Resistance of 1885, the Yukon gold rush of 1898, the South African War (Boer War) in 1900, and to the First World War in 1914, Sam Steele was in the thick of the action. An impressive military man, Steele inspired confidence in his men and his masters. He is still the most well-known of the first "Mounties."

The Steele Collection reflects all aspects of Sir Sam Steele's remarkable career. Numbering at approximately 60 objects, the artifacts focus on the last two decades of Steele's career. Outstanding in the collection is Steele's grouping of Medals and Orders, ranging from the Canada General Service Medal with clasp (Red River 1870), through the Canada North-West medal with clasp, the Queen's and King's South Africa Medals with clasps, the Order of Bath and the Knight Commander of St. Michael and St. George. These medals and orders are an inspiring distillation of Steele's policing and military career.

This collection of military artifacts and an incredible collection of Steele family archival materials recently became available at Christie's, who are acting on behalf of the descendants of Sir Sam Steele. Glenbow Museum has partnered with the University of Alberta Library (Canada's second largest university library) to purchase the collections and repatriate them to Alberta. The artifact collections will be housed at Glenbow Museum, becoming the first artifacts linked directly to Sir Sam Steele in its collection. Glenbow will share this outstanding collection through exhibition in the museum, exhibition on our website, and through short term loan to accredited museums and institutions. The archival material will be housed at the University of Alberta Library that has pledged to start to digitize the documents for the internet.

"Glenbow is proud to help bring our history back to our province," said Jeff Spalding, Glenbow Museum President and CEO. "Our founder, Eric Harvie, believed in sharing Alberta's stories with the world. This collection will continue his vision by creating some new chapters in the story of Alberta's military."

Only a few collections of artifacts with Steele provenance are held in Canada's public museums: the RCMP Museum in Regina has some Mounted Police and South African War material; the Canadian War Museum has one of his British Army uniforms. The news of this acquisition has created a stir in other museums, and Glenbow anticipates requests for loans from the collection will be numerous.

Glenbow plans to showcase this significant collection in the fall of 2008, followed by a more extensive exhibition in 2009.

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For more information, interviews and images please contact:

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