



A .30/06 Enfield rifle with boxes of cartridges and a grenade rest atop a “bone-dry” jacket.

## Pacific Coast Militia Rangers

SHORTLY AFTER THE DECLARATION of the First World War, the provincial government organized men over the age of 40 into a home guard called the Pacific Coast Mountain Rangers. The men did parade and rifle drill exercises at the agricultural grounds in downtown Haney. The agricultural hall had been conscripted by the military and was used for the storage of drab green water-repellant canvas uniforms called “bone dry” and boots.

John Drury Watson, a captain in the home guard, was originally from Sarnia, Ontario. He became a partner in the Fuller-MacDonald general store, and that resulted in a name change. Prematurely white-haired, Watson was nicknamed “Okie” because he had worked at the Imperial Oil Refinery at Ioco in Port Moody before becoming a part-owner in the Fuller Watson general store. Since one of the partners in the store was John Owen Fuller, the store’s personnel

decided to call him Okie to differentiate between the two “Johns.” Okie’s brother-in-law William Charles Fuller was in charge of the military kit store located in the agricultural hall.

The volunteer army also practised firearms with 30.06 rifles and so-called sten guns at the PCMR’s main range that was up against the mountains north of 132<sup>nd</sup> Avenue mid-way between 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue (now 224<sup>th</sup> Street) and 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue (now 232<sup>nd</sup> Street) and another range at a gravel pit on Bonson Road in Pitt Meadows.

Owen Fuller remembers:

I remember shooting a sten gun at the rifle range and I would only have been 11 or 12 years old. My dad let me shoot one of these short sawed-off metal guns that used inch-long .32 shells that could be taken apart and put in a packsack. They had a trench dug at the base of the mountain, and they had targets that you pulled with ropes. They had a pulley set up and they would shoot at targets. I was in the trench and would bring the target down and cover up the holes with paper. I was down there doing that and the rocks were coming down the hill from the bullets hitting the hill behind the target. It wasn’t a place to stick your head up. You were in a trench and bullets were hitting the target above my head. I am surprised that I had an opportunity to be there. By then the Japanese were already gone.

I was playing in my uncle’s barn one day and he caught me and he was upset and he told me what was under the hay. There were thousands and thousands of rounds of ammunition under it and it wasn’t the only barn. The rangers had rifles and ammunition stashed all over the place. My uncle told me to stay out of his barn.



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