

**...what do a horde of happy airmen,
Emperor Haile Selassie,
the Canadian Forces
and pill-box hats have in common?
SCULLY'S...that's what.**

by Captain H. Lacombe

A few months ago the Royal Canadian Mounted Police needed a number of pill-box caps similar to those worn by the force at the turn of the century. The caps had to be authentic; they would top off uniforms of the period to be displayed during celebrations marking the 100th anniversary of the force.

They contacted Scully's.

From their files, Scully's produced a faded purchase order originally received in 1906 from the then North West Mounted Police.

The firm stuck to the original specifications and produced the pill-box caps. The caps were authentic, and delivered on time.

William Scully is a name well known to many active and retired servicemen, and 1973 marks the firm's 75th anniversary of service to the military community.

It has been a stormy three generations for the firm. The fortunes of war and the fortunes of the Canadian Armed Forces have had their effect.

It began in 1898 when William Scully, the grandfather of today's president, Vincent Gladstone Scully, opened a business at 14 Leader Lane in Toronto to sell military accoutrements imported from Britain.

Perhaps it was the slow over-sea delivery, or delays in having his orders filled by firms in Britain that prompted William Scully to consider manufacturing much of the military regalia in Canada. On March 14, 1905 he wrote a letter to Minister of Militia Sir Frederick Borden, advising him of the



Mary Mazaire, an employee of Wm. Scully Ltd. for 52 years, displays a small selection of embroidered badges she and others have produced for the Montreal firm.



Left: former premises vacated to make room for Place Ville Marie. Right: President Vincent Scully and son, Stuart, discuss belt buckle production for Tanzanian armed forces



decision and requesting support for the venture. The Minister's reply was enthusiastic and recommended that the firm establish in Ottawa. Instead Scully's moved to Montreal in 1908.

Recruiting craftsmen from Britain William Scully launched the first firm to manufacture military accoutrements in Canada. From the University Street holdings in Montreal the company began turning out caps, badges, buttons, and military embroidery, and acted as agents for British firms producing specialized equipment such as Wilkinson swords.

The outbreak of the First World War

brought expansion to the firm, but the expansion was more the result of patriotic zeal than good business sense.

"Grandfather almost ruined us at the end of the war," explains Vincent Gladstone Scully.

Nearby buildings were taken over and an overhead passageway joined them to the main store across University Street. The firm overproduced in an effort to meet promptly the demands of the expanded military service.

Following war's end demobilization meant that the few men remaining in Canada's militia had more than enough equipment at hand, and the firm was left with a large surplus stock and buildings and property no longer needed.

"The company went into the red for almost ten years and it only got back on its feet again during the depression years," recalls Mr. Scully.

Mrs. Mary Mazaire looks back on "the old days" with nostalgia. She has worked for the firm since 1920. "I remember that old Mr. Scully would come to work in a horse-drawn carriage".

She remembers that there was a time when the senior Scully would talk over the phone with a commanding officer of a unit about the design of a badge. A carefully positioned artist would overhear the conversation, and by the time the talk had ended there

Before becoming the firm's second president, Wm. G. Scully, at left, commanded the Third Montreal Field Battery overseas during First World War.





Current hat making operations at Moreau St. in east Montreal

would be several sketches for Mr. Scully to examine.

"Our work has always been of a creative nature", says Mrs. Mazaire who is an accomplished embroidery worker.

William Scully had three sons; the two youngest have served as president of the firm. Colonel William Gladstone Scully succeeded the old man on his death in 1921.

A captain in the Third Montreal Field Battery prior to the outbreak of World War One, the young Scully served overseas with the unit which was, for a while, commanded by Major (later General) A. G. L. "Andy" McNaughton. Later promoted to Major, Scully commanded the battery when it served overseas.

The hard-learned lessons of the First World War were remembered on the outbreak of war in 1939. Expansion was controlled and the firm employed two shifts of craftsmen to work night and day to meet the demand. Coupled with government profit control restrictions the formula was successful in limiting the amount of surplus equipment left in the hands of the company at war's end.

On Colonel Scully's death in 1946 brother Vincent became president until 1956 when the present incumbent, Vincent Gladstone Scully was appointed to the position.

With militia service from 1930 when he joined the Royal Montreal Regiment (he later won a commission in the Artillery) V. G. Scully joined the Victoria Rifles on the outbreak of war. Later, eager for overseas duty, he resigned his commission to become a Sergeant flight engineer in the RCAF. His plans were thwarted; he was denied overseas service.

During his tenure as president V. G. Scully has seen many changes. The firm moved from University Street to make room for Place Ville Marie; today it is located on Moreau Street in Montreal's east end.

From a wartime work staff of over 200, the firm now employs about 60

Berthe St. Laurent, a 40-year employee, fits gold and light blue two-inch fringe to 441 Squadron standard which took 600 hours to embroider.



people. At one time 30 embroidery workers were employed to produce all of the colors, standards, guidons and pennants for the Canadian Forces. Today the company shares this work with overseas firms and only three skilled embroiderists are required to keep pace with a yearly demand for five to seven regimental colours or squadron standards each year.

Among Scully's happy customers are an unnumbered host of RCAF airmen who served in the late 1950s when the firm produced the first non-polishable brass buttons for large scale issue to the RCAF. And then there's Haile Selassie, Emperor of Ethiopia who had a dress uniform tailored in 1955. The firm also has the distinction of making the first full-dress uniform to be created in Canada for a Lieutenant-Governor.

Dress uniforms aside, Scully-produced web belts won praise from Tanzanian Army authorities who took a liking to one worn by a Canadian officer serving in the African country. An initial order for 2,500 of the functional belts was recently followed by another request for 10,000 belts and



20 years with the firm, Josepha Zbierski puts the finishing touches to RCMP pill-box hats

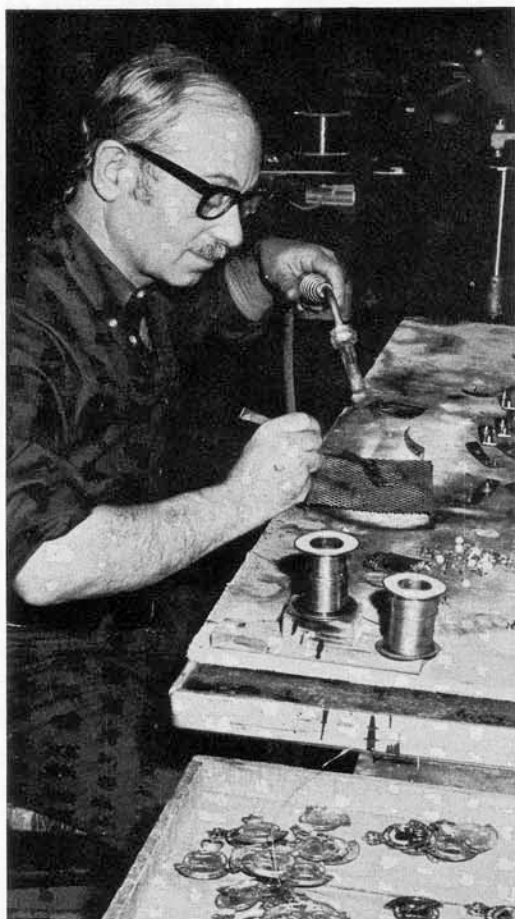
buckles from the same country. Quite an accomplishment for a company that employs no salesmen, depending more on word of mouth from satisfied customers.

Unification has left its mark.

The firm has a stock valued at \$100,000.00 in now obsolete buckles, buttons, badges and other regalia. Admittedly, some of the items are fast becoming collectors items and the firm is quick to answer enquiries from the military buff.

Today Scully's specializes in the manufacture of caps of all sorts, but still maintains expertise in embroidery and metalware. Maintaining its reputation for high quality and craftsmanship is an easy task for the 60 employees, many of whom have been with the firm for more than 20 years.

And it's a family business.



Leo Spiegler solders "clutch-backs" on to a batch of enamelled title badges for CPR