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**Big Tom Returns Home to Veteran's Park**



*Home after an absence of 55 years, Big Tom overlooks the memorial cenotaph on a crisp November afternoon.*

Lou Giancarlo had a feeling that something was out of place. He couldn't help wondering what the cannon known to generations of Sarnians as "Big Tom" was doing in Canatara Park.

Eight months later, thanks to Lou's efforts and those of a celebrated group of Sarnia military historians, Big Tom is back at its former home in Veteran's Park, just in time for Remembrance Day.

Believed to have been cast in Crimean War days (1853-1856), the cannon is known to have served as part of the armaments of the 288-ton gunboat *Prince Alfred*, patrolling the Great Lakes during the days of Fighting Tom Sweeney's Fenian Raids circa 1866. In June of 1869, Big Tom was retired and relocated to Port Sarnia's Market Square (now Veteran's Park). The park was the traditional site of ceremonies for departing troops and victory celebrations. Now home to Sarnia's Cenotaph and the location of Remembrance Day

ceremonies, Veteran's Park, under its various names, was Big Tom's home for 90 years. The cannon was moved to Canatara Park in 1959 when the old Carnegie library was demolished and the current building was being erected.

The committee assembled to return Big Tom home for Remembrance Day and led by Lou Giancarlo included Mike Banovsky of MPB Industrial; Tom Slater, Randy Evans and Tom St. Amand, the architects of Sarnia's massive War Remembrance Project which recorded the stories of Sarnia's fallen soldiers; and Mike Atkinson of Atko Cranes, who donated the time and equipment to make the physical move possible.

Bolstered by the enthusiastic support of Mayor Mike Bradley and city council, the encouragement of the city's Heritage Committee and the Royal Canadian Legion, and with a contribution from the Sarnia Historical Society, Big Tom is back in Veteran's Park in time for November 11<sup>th</sup> Remembrance Day Services.

In a park named to honour Sarnia's veterans and the city's proud military heritage, Big Tom is one more reminder of the sacrifices paid by the thousands who fell or served in wartime. Lest we forget.



*Big Tom at its former location in Canatara Park – photo by Laurie Egan*

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