



**University of Guelph
Department of History**

MA Thesis Defence

Student: Bram Fookes

Date: Wednesday, April 16, 2025

Time: 2:00 – 4:00pm

Place: In-Person (contact
histacademic@uoguelph.ca for location)

**“St. Vincent's Iron Harvest: The History of the Meaford
Tank Range”**

Abstract

In the summer of 1942, against the backdrop of the Second World War, the Canadian Department of National Defence expropriated 18,000 acres of land in St. Vincent township, Ontario. By 1 October, the region was a fully operational tank range, representing a critical part of Camp Borden's armoured warfare training operations. However, the expropriations displaced about eighty-four families from their farms, many of which were the only homes these people had ever known. The trauma experienced by individuals displaced from St. Vincent in 1942 has trickled into the spirit of the surrounding area, where many remain deeply suspicious of actions by both the military and the federal government. The Meaford Range also continues to be a site of controversy, and the long-term environmental effects of military activities there are hotly debated.

Bram's thesis explores the process of establishing the Meaford Range from a military perspective, outlining why and how it went about the project, and what its ultimate results were. It then traces the consequences of the military's actions over the following decades by examining the peripheral effects the establishment of the range had on the local civilian population, and on the natural environment.

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