



**SUPPLY
LINE**

Air Force Service Dress Jacket

This jacket was part of the uniform of the Royal Canadian Air Force Women's Division. It was worn with a matching skirt and cap, and was the same blue colour as the men's uniform. A shirt, tie, shoes and stockings completed the uniform, along with a purse and gloves.

Reproduction



Air Force Service Jacket © Canadian War Museum

Women and Military Service

From the beginning of the Second World War, many Canadians – including women – were keen to serve in uniform. The military had little interest in encouraging women to enlist, however, mainly because of existing roles and rules based on gender. Military nurses were the only exception.

Some women formed their own organizations, where they learned military routine, practiced skills and wore uniforms. They also lobbied the government to allow them to enlist. As Canada's military grew, more personnel were needed. Women were seen as a source of recruits for non-combat roles.

Women's Branches of the Canadian Military

The Royal Canadian Air Force was the first of Canada's armed services to take in female recruits. It created the Canadian Women's Auxiliary Air Force in July 1941, which became the Royal Canadian Air Force Women's Division in February 1942.

In the meantime, the army had created the Canadian Women's Army Corps in August 1941. In July 1942, the navy created the Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service.

The Royal Canadian Air Force Women's Division

The Royal Canadian Air Force Women's Division was based on the Women's Auxiliary Air Force in Britain – including its uniforms, customs, organization and ranks. Unlike its British counterpart, the Canadian organization was a full part of the Royal Canadian Air Force.

More than 17,000 women served in the Royal Canadian Air Force Women's Division. They were restricted to non-combat duties, from clerical work to aircraft maintenance. Beginning in 1942, some women were posted to the United Kingdom and other locations outside Canada.

The jacket in the Discovery Box is a copy of an officer's uniform. It is made of wool. The buttons have the RCAF initials and eagle on them. The "Canada" badges on the shoulders indicate the wearer would have served overseas. The stripes on its sleeves indicate the rank of flying officer.

Enlisted personnel (anyone who was not an officer) had a different version of the uniform. Lighter-weight cotton uniforms were also provided for summer and hot climates.

Did You Know?

While the Royal Canadian Air Force service dress uniform for men was worn with trousers, the Women's Division service dress jacket was worn with a skirt.