

# The '74 Mounties

## The Great March Across the Plains

By Major FRED A. BAGLEY, late of Banff, Alberta.

Sixty-four years on the prairie.  
(God but I'm growing old)  
I was just a lad in my teens  
When I donned the Scarlet and Gold.

One of the North West Mounties,  
I have watched a city grow  
On the banks of the Belly River  
Where I first saw the buffalo.

Sixty-four years on the prairie.  
(It's hell how the time does fly)  
It seems like only a year or two  
Since I bid the folks good-bye.  
Striking West for adventure,  
Maybe an Indian fray;  
With a horse, a gun and a saddle  
Plus my grub and four bits a day.

Sixty-four years on the prairie.  
(Boys but the thought is grand)  
To have helped to make this Province  
From the wild lone prairie land.  
Still my heart yearns for the old days,  
With the Riders of the Plains.  
And I'd like to be back in the saddle  
again,  
With my hand a-cripping the reins.  
(Author unknown)

A fragment adapted from "Scarlet and Gold".

### The "New" Fort Toronto

AT the "New" Fort the inevitable confusion attending the organization of raw recruits, and ever rarer Officers into a cohesive and disciplined force reigned.

Apart from Colonel French, the Commissioner, very few of the Officers could boast of any military training.

Conspicuous among the trained officers was Major James M. Walsh, whose erect bearing and quick, energetic movements gave early evidence that he possessed that virile character which was in after years to earn for him the name: "Sitting Bull's Boss".

But outstanding from the muddle was that thorough soldier and disciplinarian Colonel French, who seemed to be here, there, and everywhere, giving special attention often accompanied by devastating remarks, to some of the incompetents wished on him by the Ottawa gang, and generally, a la Father O'Flynn, coaxing the lazy ones on "wid a shtick".

These same incompetents—fortunately for the Force they were very few in number—by means of their "influence", supported by many a mean slander, eventually forced French to resign after less than three years as Commissioner.

Freed from the malign and crafty schemes of the Ottawa pirates his true worth was subsequently recognized by

the Imperial Government when he was promoted to the rank of General, received the honor of knighthood from Her late Majesty Queen Victoria, and appointed Commander in Chief of the Queensland Military Forces.

The Troop Sergeants Major were all, without exception, experienced military men. One indeed (Sergeant Major Joe Francis) had but recently been a member of the 10th Imperial Hussars — or 10th Light Dragoons as they were then called — and took part in the famous charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava. Sad to relate, but typical of Joe's sterling, manly qualities, he was burned to death some time after he retired from the Force while trying to rescue people from a burning house.

A visit to the riding school revealed dashing horsemen galore. Many of them dashing from their saddles and over their horses' heads, causing such sarcastic remarks from the Rough Riding Sergeant Major as: "Who the h—l told you to dismount, Sir"? Or to another unfortunate whose elbows were thrashing up and down in a vain effort to relieve the pressure on his excoriated nether limbs and other obscure and very tender parts of his anatomy: "Blimey! Look at 'im a flapping of 'is wings! Hi there! (to the bystanders.) Hopen the blooming windows, and let the blighter fly hout".

One recruit, a former Professor in a famous French college, might be seen leaning forward from his saddle and embracing his horse's neck, drawing the raucous roar from the aforesaid R.R.S.M.: "That's right young fellow, me lad, kiss 'im and e'll be good to you".

Whether because of my tender age, or the fact that I already had some ex-

### AT STUD

The Thoroughbred Horse, "Temoc", Vol. 19 A, 1943, seal-brown, 16hds. ½ inch; sire, "Teddy's Comet" by "Teddy"; dam, "Uptodate" by "High Time" by "Ultimus". Fee, for a live foal, \$25.00; cold-blood mares, \$10.00. Pasture free.

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perience of barrack life I was immune from being the victim of the light-hearted practical jokes often played on the last joined recruit, such as sending him to the carpenter's shop to be "measured for his sentry box", etc., but no time was lost in introducing me to the duties of Room Orderly.

The Room Orderly's duties were then quite different to what they are in the present days of spacious mess rooms, with an army of white uniformed waiters to attend to the gastronomic wants of each trooper.

In those far distant days the Room Orderlies, in addition to their common tasks of keeping the barrack rooms neat and clean, and attending the regular drills, had to draw supplies for the cooks at "Ration" call, set the barrack room tables with dishes, knives, etc., bring the cooked grub from the cook house, and apportion the same to each man, and wash the dishes and scrub the tables and benches. A large contract for a kid, but aside from an occasional "kick" from a disgruntled trooper who thought I had not treated him fairly in the division of the spoil I got along fairly well whenever my turn came for this duty.

In the evenings, when our drills and duties for the day were finished, and the "wet" canteen had disgorged its hilarious patrons at Watch Setting (1st Post)—or thereabouts—the ejected crowd usually indulged in a half hour of harmless antics

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and good natured horse play, winding up with a processional march around the parade ground headed by piper Donald McAulay playing the "Cock of the North", or the "Barren Rocks of Aden" until the sounding of Last Post sent them off to roost.

The drills of the Horse Artillery Troop with its steel nine pounder M.L. guns were always spectacular, and the drivers and gunners of that troop made the most of the sensation they caused as with gun carriages and limbers rumbling thunderously they rushed furiously from point to point.

These same 9 pr. guns, with their heavy carriages and limbers loaded with shells, proved to be killers of the horses that had to drag them, particularly while we were passing through the rough, almost precipitous Cypress Hills.

Amongst the adventurous spirits who had joined the Force in search of new thrills were a few younger sons of titled families of both English and French nationality, a fact that may have prompted a distinguished Inspector General, when reporting on the state of the Force the year following, to use the phrase "decayed gentlemen" when referring to the personnel.

The monotony of riding school and squad drill was varied now and then by a grand field day, when it was my duty as trumpeter to tag along after some Officer whose knowledge of military manoeuvres was of very recent acquisition, and who, although on his way, was in a dense mental fog as to where he was heading.

The untiring efforts of the hard-boiled Sergeants-Major gradually resulted in a marked improvement in drill, morale, and discipline, and the end of the month of May found us pretty well licked into shape, and we began to turn our thoughts Westward — to the land of Romance and Adventure.

The immediate and pressing task of the Force was to suppress the illegal traffic in liquor carried on in the North West Territories by unscrupulous and heartless white men hailing from south of the International Boundary.

Reports received by the Dominion Government from the Reverend Father Scolen and other missionaries in the West stated that the whisky traders, several hundreds strong, had established a stockaded Fort to which they had given the suggestive name of "Whoop Up". This Fort, the exact location thereof being unknown, was said to have loop-holed bastions, was well stocked with provisions and ammunition, and armed with several small cannons (field guns).

From here and other strongholds they hurled defiance at the Canadian Government, and carried on their ghastly work of ruining the poor savages body and soul, shooting them down without compunction whenever they thought fit — which was not unseldom.

#### Off for the Great Adventure

At last the happy day of our departure from Toronto arrived, and on the 6th of June, amid crowds of cheering people, and with several military bands playing patriotic airs, all serving to mitigate the poignancy of many tearful farewells, we entrained at the Grand Trunk Railway Station for the West via Detroit, St. Paul, Duluth, and Fargo, North Dakota.

The tremendous excitement, the music of the bands, and the cheers of the mob rendered me almost heedless of my dear Mother's admonition to "Be a good boy;

say your prayers regularly, and come back soon" as at the last minute she pressed into my hands a blank diary book and a watch (a key winder of course) and chain.

It was a far cry from that moment until she next saw me so many years thereafter, during the course of which much of her motherly advice was sometimes forgotten.

A feeling of intense elation buoyed us up as our trains pulled out of the station, and we started on our way West, bound for the Great Adventure.

In order to avoid any international "unpleasantness" we were all in mufti, and our arms, ammunition, and other equipment packed in cases, and stowed in the freight cars attached to our two special trains. Our strength numerically was 216 men of all ranks, and 244 horses.

At Chicago we saw Frank James, brother of the famous Jesse James, and himself somewhat of a bad man, with his feet cocked up on the railing enclosing the verandah of the frame building labelled "Hotel" near the stock yards where we put up our horses for one night (7th of June). The local Police seemed to be totally oblivious of his presence, and made no attempt to interfere with his evident enjoyment of a big cigar, or to disturb his (possible) plans for his next train robbery.

It may be of interest to note here that the population of Chicago at that time was not more than 630,000. The census as at January 1st, 1925 — 51 years afterwards — showed the number of inhabitants to be 3,986,331.

The sum of \$1.00 per day allowed each man for subsistence was found to be ample except in Chicago, where each meal cost at least fifty cents.

Despite the fact that our dog robbers at every train stop loaded our cars with stolen dogs, only to lose them at the next station, where a further raid on the

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canines of that place would be staged, we were received with marked friendliness by the people of the various towns and cities we passed through. And I may say here that the conduct of our men, apart from their extraordinary penchant for dog stealing, was exemplary during the whole trip from Toronto to Fargo, North Dakota.

Our arrival at Fargo on the 12th of June ended our railway journey, and we proceeded to empty the railway cars of our horses and impedimenta preparatory to "hitting the trail" on the lone prairie.

The local population, on observing all our worldly goods spread out in apparent confusion over an acre or two of the adjacent prairie, were voluble and free with predictions that at least a week must elapse before we could get all our things together, and make a start on our Western trek.

But spurred on by the driving force of the ubiquitous Commissioner and those fiends of energy the Sergeants, and by dint of all hands working night and day, the wagons, harness, saddles, etc., were quickly assembled, and to the ill-disguised disgust of the Fargo people the three troops, with everything in order, pulled out to their first camp on the bank of the Red River within two days of our arrival at Fargo.

(To Be Continued)



The 1900 annual gathering at the W. R. Hull ranch home (the Bow Valley Ranch) of Mr. Hull (centre, on steps) and his friends. We are not able to name all. Paddy Nolan, K.C., however, is fourth from left; George Peet is ninth from left; Mrs. A. L. Sifton, 12th from left; Lady Lougheed is shown to left of Mr. Hull; on balcony above may be seen E. D. Adams, on right, and D. J. Young, on left. Photograph courtesy Chas. A. Johnson, Water Glen, Alta.