

# The Final Last Post

*reprinted from January, 1946*

Now all are gone. Reg. No. 247, ex-Sgt. Major F. A. Bagley, Reg. No. 52, ex-Sub-Cst. W. Grain and Reg. No. 50, ex-Staff Cst. J. B. Mitchell have followed the others in that order, in quick succession they broke camp and departed; the death of Colonel Mitchell, last of the Old Guard to leave, wrote finis to an important chapter of the Canadian West.

It is more than 71 years since the NWMP first ventured across uninhabited stretches of prairie in the face of unknown dangers. Men of vigour and courage with little incentive other than a spirit of adventure and enterprise they took advantage of the opportunities that were theirs. "Pioneers of the Plains" they have been labelled, but somehow the appellation seems inadequate. A few white men, it is true, most of them now centuries dead, preceded them across the prairies — the LaVerendrye brothers, Henry Kelsey and a smattering of other explorers, traders and missionaries; nevertheless the Bagleys and the Grains and the Mitchells were trail blazers and builders of empire in every sense of those words, sent ahead to make the land safe for the pioneers who followed. They knew the lonely palisades of Forts Calgary, Edmonton and Battleford and some of them witnessed the gradual transition from those palisades to the castellated sky-lines of modern cities, the conversion of Butler's Great Lone Land into a great land dotted with many communities laced together with ribbons of steel and highways. Yes, those early riders of the plains were more than pioneers. That is why we say that, in a way, they were discoverers. All too easily can the achievements of the old North West Mounted Police fade from the mind and memory; unfortunately the average Canadian knows little of the real history of that

band of 300 men who were responsible for the comparative freedom of the West from lawlessness in early settlement days.

The Force is proud to pay tribute to the courageous vanguard that laid its foundation and left the traditions on which, in part, its prestige still rests. But it is sad, too, that the Last Post has sounded for the originals of '74.

\* \* \* \*

In the death of Reg. No. 247, ex-Sgt. Major F. A. Bagley at Banff, Alta., the Force lost one of its outstanding personalities, one of its '74 originals, a man who had served it faithfully and long. Elsewhere in this issue we tell something of his career as a policeman, but on this page the Quarterly wishes to say a few words in more personal vein regarding him. Major Bagley had lived all of

