

## NEWFOUNDLAND CONSTABULARY ONE HUNDRED YEARS OLD

The Newfoundland Constabulary is a police force rich in tradition, with a record of service dating back to the early part of the eighteenth century when, in 1729, the Governor of Newfoundland, Captain Henry Osborne, R.N., appointed 31 constables and 20 justices of the peace "for the better Administration of Justice and keeping the Peace and Quiet" of the island. A subsequent reference in the records mentions constables performing police duties in different parts of the country.

In the early 1800s, before licenses were issued for the operation of taverns in St. John's, the licensees were required to perform police duties. Legislation to this effect entitled "An Act to regulate and improve the Police of the Town of St. John's and to establish a nightly watch in the said Town" was passed in the House of Assembly in July 1833; and it was directed by the Governor, Sir Thomas Cochrane, that all persons applying for tavern licenses should pay £8, the money to go towards the salaries of constables.

The elections of Members to the House of Assembly could always be counted on to place extra burdens on the police since they often produced, in the words of Sir Thomas Cochrane, "events of a tumultuary and discreditable description". In the early and middle part of the century, when their services were much required and much called on, the force was not very large, and it was not until reorganization took place in 1871 that it began to shape up into the efficient law-enforcement body that it is today.

### ESTABLISHMENT OF FORCE

In 1870, the last Imperial troops were withdrawn from Newfoundland and the Government requested the Home Government (in Britain) to assist in the selection of a suitable person to take command of the police force, which was then in the process of being reorganized. The appointment was given to a member of the Royal Irish Constabulary, 1st (Class) Head Constable Thomas Foley, who arrived in Newfoundland in April 1871 to assume command and to begin reorganization. A new Act, "to Organize and Maintain an Efficient Constabulary Force, and for the appointment of Special Constables in this Colony", was passed in April 1872, and the force was designated as the Constabulary Force of Newfoundland.

Before the establishment of the new police force



*The mounted unit of Newfoundland's constabulary in 1890.*

only St. John's, Harbour Grace and Carbonear had regular, or full-time, police. Law-enforcement was carried out in other towns or settlements by part-time policemen who served in that capacity while at the same time pursuing their private avocations.

Up to and including 1934, the Constabulary policed the whole island, as well as Labrador. In 1923 a squad of police was sent to do duty at Stag Bay, Labrador, where gold had been discovered. In 1935 a new law-enforcement body was formed known as the Newfoundland Ranger Force, which took over the policing of the smaller and isolated areas and Labrador, while the Constabulary policed the larger towns and settlements. This procedure continued until after union with Canada in 1949. In 1950 the Government of Newfoundland signed a contract with the Federal Government under which the Royal Canadian Mounted Police would take over the policing of Newfoundland with the exception of the city of St. John's, and the Newfoundland Ranger Force was absorbed into the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

The Constabulary had a Mounted Division which was organized in 1873 and, with the exception of a short period of inactivity in the early part of the present century, continued to function until 1951, when it was disbanded and its horses sold.

The original uniform of the Force organized in 1871 was patterned on that worn by the Royal Irish Constabulary. It consisted of closed-neck tunic, black bone buttons with letter "C", and trousers pressed on the inside and then turned out. The material was heavy melton; the single-breasted great-coat was worn 6 inches from the ground, and during