

Annual Report on the State of the Militia
for 1875.

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The location of the different Posts taken in connection with the duties of the Force and the probable settlement of larger tracts of country at an early date, and the public works about being constructed throughout the territories.

63. Under this head it is natural I should first notice the position selected for Head Quarters of the force. In doing this I merely express the views of a General Officer to whom might be entrusted the task of occupying the territory to the best Military advantage. I am quite aware, however, that many reasons apart from and far exceeding mere military strategy must weigh with the Government, in such a case, and I have no doubt Swan River has been selected for sound considerations.

In considering the conditions which should form a guide for the selection of Head Quarter Station, the following might be kept in view:

64. It is important that the Officer commanding the force should receive the earliest intelligence of any disturbance which might occur amongst the cosmopolitan and mixed races which inhabit the Territory.

65. Were a post selected much to the westward of Fort Ellice it would be beyond the junction of the great trails leading from the Cypress Hills and the Saskatchewan: it is no doubt advisable that the Head Quarter post should be as near as possible to the main trails and also to the line of telegraph and railway projected to pass through the Territory.

66. Where the delay and the cost of transport are so enormous, it follows that the nearer the Head Quarter is to the base of supply the less expense will be incurred in the maintenance of the Force.

67. Therefore, wherever the Head Quarters is established there should be the main granary and provision depot to which I have alluded.

68. Good land on which to grow oats, potatoes, plenty of good pasture and hay land, timber and water are all necessary requisites for the Head Quarters, and, indeed, for every detachment of the force.

69. The vicinity of the South Saskatchewan where the railway will cross, probably fulfils the above conditions better than any other point, it is in the very heart and centre of the great North West Territory.

70. Failing that, the next point of most advantage which presents itself, is the vicinity of the Little Saskatchewan or Shoal Lake, but for strategic reasons, if the main supply depot is established, I infinitely prefer the former.

71. If, hereafter, it should be determined to establish the Head Quarter Station along the line of the Railway, at or near where it will cross the South Saskatchewan, the barrack buildings at Swan River would come in well for Railway purposes, or store depots, and for quarters for a small party of police, in view of the fertile country north and east of the Lake Manitoba being filled up by Icelanders and other settlers, which appears rapidly in progress. Hitherto some scattered and peaceable remnants of Indian tribes have been the chief occupants of the country, south of the grand rapids, but the information afforded me does not hold out prospect of the land immediately north of the Swan River being well calculated for settlement, it is said to be rugged, stony,

and broken, covered with a forest of dwarf timber on shallow soil.

SHOAL LAKE.

72. Shoal Lake; here a small post has been established with excellent judgment it commands the trail from Manitoba westward, and prevents the spirit trade; it is pleasantly placed by the lake shore, and affords every facility for cultivation on a large scale, it moreover serves as a check upon the Saulteaux Indians near Portage LaPrairie.

CARLETON.

73. Carleton, a small party was left there on my passing through, I do not know whether they still remain, and I doubt the necessity for them, there being no inhabitants at Carleton House except the officials and clerks of the Hudson Bay Company, the nearest settlement is that of French half breeds at St. Laurent, distant 18 miles, on the right bank of the South Saskatchewan and Prince Albert Mission Station, distant 40 miles, at the forks of its two branches. From the latter settlement supplies of every kind are sent to Carleton, which produce nothing.

74. From Carleton to Edmonton, 400 miles, police are not required. Forts Pitt and Victoria are little frequented Hudson's Bay posts, occupied by clerks and some retired officials. Along that entire distance of 400 miles I met no living soul except one travelling half breed and the monthly postman, it must be inhabited, its balmy climate inviting, warm and genial in the summer, and though the winters cold lasts long the snow does not lie deep, and stock can pasture out all through the year; the land is rich a fertile, and would produce all cereal crops, covered with the most luxuriant herbage and wild vetches, plenty of wood, abundance of water, and I believe, all the way north, till the verge of the great sub-arctic forest is touched, the isothermal lines indicate that the climate is mild and it is well known that the soil is suitable to maintain a dense population.

STURGEON CREEK POST.

75. Here, 20 miles North of Edmonton, where the Saskatchewan makes its first great easterly sweep, a Post has been established on the right bank of that river, nearly opposite the confluence of Sturgeon Creek. It is 50 miles from St. Ann's, the extreme North West settlement, and but 12 miles from St. Albert, while Victoria lies 60 miles eastward of the same river.

76. The position of this post is better than at Edmonton. Its moral effect is felt all over the settlements, 2 or 3 constables in Edmonton itself, might be useful. Many of the half breeds from St. Ann's and St. Albert have latterly, to the extent of about one third migrated elsewhere, preferring to leave their farms for a hunting life, the half breed as a rule does not like farm work, he takes delight in his horse and gun.

77. White settlers hereabouts are as yet few, but they have been very successful with their farms, since the police post has been established.

78. Claims all round for several miles have been taken, and the boundaries staked out. A few shanties also have been built, and a good number of persons from St. Albert have expressed an intention of moving here, owing to the bad quality of water at certain seasons in the Sturgeon Lake and River. There are but few Indians about these settlements now.

79. The communication between this post and the outer world is interrupted by long

intervals, often of months. A monthly mail is greatly needed, they are at present very isolated and solitary. I suggest they be supplied with books and papers, to lighten the tedium of the long cold months of winter.

80. They have no medical advice within 300 miles, and inaccessible. I suggest the establishment of a medical officer here, for the police as well as for the settlements all round. Indians look upon medical skill with profound respect.

81. Since the establishment of this post, the liquor trade has ceased; and as a consequence, there has been no attempt to break the law.

82. In January it was reported that liquor trade was carried on at Buffalo Lake, 130 miles south, and a party under Inspector Jarvis went in search but without success.

83. There is a hunting camp and a considerable settlement of half breeds about that lake, as well as several free traders. The fall and winter are the seasons for trade and traders following hunting camps all over the Western prairies with their goods, subject to the emigration of the buffalo.

84. It is suggested that a portion of the troop from Sturgeon Creek should be permanently stationed at Tail Creek near Buffalo Lake, a fertile country, likely to become a populous settlement; it would moreover be a connecting link with Fort McLeod, 200 miles distant, and with the new post just established at the confluence of Swift Creek with Bow River from which it would be only about 100 miles distant, in fact, these two posts will form a direct line of communication between Fort McLeod and Edmonton, the distance between each being something over 100 miles.

BOW RIVER.

85. The Bow River post was established on my march south by detaching the troop awaiting my orders at Red Deer River.

86. Lieutenant Colonel McLeod had, with good judgment, fixed on the spot, and made all arrangements.

87. The Hudson's Bay Company, had, years ago, tried to maintain a post there, but their agents were intimidated by the Blackfeet Indians, and soon driven away.

88. Since the establishment of law and order in this remote region by the powerful moral effect of the Mounted Police they have again established a new post lower down the river than the old one.

89. Owing to the Blackfeet having ceased trading furs at Rocky Mountain House, that post of the Hudson's Bay Company has been abandoned for the more southerly source of trade.

90. The Stony Indians, a mild and docile tribe, have now undisturbed occupation of the country west of Gull Lake hills to the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains.

91. The most inviting facilities for a populous settlement exist around this new post (Swift creek) near which Wesleyan and Roman Catholic Missions are already established; but indeed, it may be accepted, that all along the eastern slopes and ridges of the Rocky Mountains, from the American Boundary to the Arctic Forest for full 600 miles, productive land exists in plenty, among the sheltered recesses and glades of this great chain whose spurs and ridges stretch far away into the prairie; the settler will find timber and water in abundance and the fertility of the loamy soil there, as well as along the plateau bordering the Battle, Red Deer, and the Bow Rivers, offer all that can be desired for agriculture and stock farming.

92. In order to ensure uninterrupted