



Commissioner A. G. Irvine, "Old Sorrel Top" as he was popularly known, urged the government to establish a permanent training centre for several years. He finally got his wish on November 1, 1885, with the creation of Depot Division.

that affairs on the prairies had been neglected for too long. One of the corrective measures in the government's reconstruction policy was to put the NWMP on a more permanent and sound footing. In August the strength of the Force was doubled from 500 to 1000 men.

Depot at Last

Commissioner Irvine created five new divisions that fall. One of these, with the minister's approval, was Depot Division. It was located in the territorial capital of Regina, on the site which had been the headquarters of the Force since 1882. At last the Force had a permanent training establishment with a full-time staff whose job would be to instruct recruits, and later, other ranks.

Depot was the first and only division to be commanded by a commissioner.

At its establishment on November 1, 1885, Commissioner Irvine placed himself in that position. Commissioner Herchmer continued to hold the command when he replaced Irvine on April 1, 1886. However, it seems that in May of that year he had second thoughts about his ability to run the Force and a division, and the command was handed over to Supt. E. W. Jarvis. From that point until 1920 when headquarters was transferred to Ottawa, the headquarter's staff, the commissioner, adjutant, supply officer, quarter master, senior surgeon and the like, were simply "attached" to Depot Division for administrative purposes. In the meantime, the commanding officer at Depot was in the unenviable position of knowing that the commissioner could see everything that happened on the parade square from his living room window.

The creation of Depot enabled the commissioner to revive the position of senior NCO of the Force. By a General Order of April 1886 the sergeant major of Depot Division became ex-officio regimental sergeant major (R.S.M.). The first to hold the position was R.S.M. Robert "Bobbie" Belcher, who had served in the 9th Lancers before coming to Canada and joining the Force as an "original" in 1873. The R.S.M. was to be a key figure in the maintenance of discipline and the smooth running of the training programme. Of this august personage, one recruit of the time wrote: "He carried a world of weight about the place."³

Original Instructors

The original instructors were a notable group. Staff Sergeant George Kempster, the senior riding instructor, had served in the 11th Hussars and the 2nd Life Guards. The Riding Master,

³ C. P. Dwight, *Life in the North West Mounted Police*, Toronto, 1892, p. 24.