

# Old-Timers' Column

## Canada's Memorial to the North West Mounted Police

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When Viscount Alexander of Tunis, Governor General of Canada, officially opened the NWMP Memorial and Indian Museum at Battleford, Sask., on May 24, 1948, he said, "When one thinks of Canada, one thinks of the North-West Mounted Police. . . . The memorial is a fitting tribute to the members of the Force . . . and will be a contribution to culture and a source of inspiration for the future."



The official opening.

Tentative plans for the restoration of the site as a memorial, were discussed in 1944. As a result, five of the original buildings have, under the supervision of an administrative association, been repaired or rebuilt, and equipped with mementos illustrating the stories of policemen, settlers and Indians of frontier days. The Hon. J. L. Phelps, Minister of Mines and Resources for Saskatchewan and a pioneer son of the province, was so inspired by the progress made that he whole-heartedly supported the project. Through his efforts a stockade similar to that which surrounded the barracks in former years was erected.

Located in a natural beauty spot, the museum embraces what remains of the original NWMP barracks built at the juncture of the Battle and North Saskatchewan Rivers under the guidance of Insp. James Walker in 1876-77. Early in 1877 the site became an important centre of state when the seat of government for the North-West

Territories moved from Swan River to newly-built quarters on the south side of Battle River. In 1880 under Supt. W. M. Herchmer, the barracks were renovated and made more serviceable, and the stockade which had been worked on intermittently, was completed. Even after the removal of the government in 1882 to the new capital, Regina, Battleford remained an important police post, and with the increasing unrest of the Indians and half-breeds in 1884, necessary additions were made. Through the days of the North-West Rebellion and on into the early years of the new century Battleford was a centre of Mounted Police activity. But when RCMP Headquarters for the district were moved to North Battleford during the days of the First Great War, Battleford was gradually deserted, and became the stamping ground for souvenir hunters and vandals.

The opening of the Museum and Memorial was an impressive occasion. Warm, summery weather did its part in rendering the setting most suitable for the event. The large crowd in attendance was entertained by three bands, and enjoyed a delightful buffet supper in the old barrack room of the 80's served by the Battleford Chapter of the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire.

A colorful touch was the presence of Indians from the surrounding reserves. Led by Chief Sam Swimmer, the various chiefs filed out of a tepee that once belonged to the notorious wily Poundmaker, and were introduced to His Excellency. The Governor General expressed his pleasure at meeting them and exhibited interest in the few veterans of the NWMP who had been among those who withdrew to Battleford during the Rebellion of 1885.

Girl Guides and Boy Scouts assisted members of the Force in controlling the crowds, and a guard of honor was composed of St. Thomas College Cadets, North Battleford Sea Cadets and Battleford Air Cadets.

Battleford is a place rich in frontier history and memories of the Force. The restoration of the barracks will provide pleasure