

The interior of the Chapel at Regina as it first appeared. The chancel, pulpit, and pews were built by S/Sgt. George Service and Cst. (later Insp.) Bill Cunning.



Not a favourite place

Depot Division was not a favourite location for most recruits. Their stay there was something to endure and get over as soon as possible. Commissioner Herchmer was determined that it would be a show place for the many distinguished visitors who came to see the famous North-West Mounted Police. There was a constant grind of parades, escorts and fatigues; and every change in the day's routine was signalled by a bugle call, from reveillé at 5:30 a.m. (6:30 in winter) to "lights out." Discipline was stricter there than anywhere else in the Force. A recruit could find himself in the guardroom, minus a few days pay, for having a button undone. One recruit in 1886 received one month's hard labour for being "inattentive while at drill" and stubbornly persisting in moving his arms "awkwardly, contrary to the directions of the instructor." The most disliked parade was the Sunday morning Church Parade. These became a regular weekly event after the building used as the canteen was converted into a chapel in 1895. There was no sleeping-in that morning after a Saturday night out! The commissioner himself carried out the inspection and everything had to be spotless and gilded like a lily. It was no wonder that most recruits looked forward to the end of their training and a transfer to another division.

The city of Regina in the late 1880s had a population of about 1000 souls. This did not make it much bigger than the "Barracks," as the locals referred to the Mounted Police establishment four kilometres from the town. Counting families, Depot usually had a consistent total strength of around 200 persons. One recruit who arrived from the



East at this time left his impressions of the scene as he alighted from the train that brought him to Regina:

"... all around outside lay a great muddy expanse, with pools of water, while a soaking rain fell from a leaden sky. A few unpainted wooden houses bearing dingy sign boards form Broad Street.... The great prairie stretched away as far as the eye could see, flat and cheerless like a ghostly sea."⁶

New arrivals were directed to the Regina Town Detachment close by the station. It was connected by telephone to the orderly room at the Depot barracks. This was a party line and it could

⁶ J. G. Donkin, *Trooper and Redskin*, London, 1889, p. 19.