

1958 MUSICAL RIDE ON TOUR

Sometimes acclaimed as "Canada's best advertising agent", the RCMP Musical Ride showed before approximately a million people in its latest tour. This is an account of the Ride's 1958 activities.

WITH an itinerary of 20 cities and towns on its agenda covering a period of four months—including eight week-long stands—the RCMP Musical Ride, 1958 edition, commenced training operations at Regina's "Depot" Division last March 15 under Insp. N. O. Jones, selected to lead the Troop. After three months of conditioning, the 36-man unit began looking like a well-oiled machine and final selection of personnel to make the trip was made in the latter stages of June. Included in the party were S/Sgt. C. W. Anderson, Ride-Master, Band-Master S/Sgt. C. C. Bryson of the RCMP Regina Band and Mr. A. L. Sims, Farrier.

Members of the Musical Ride pulled out of Regina Sunday evening June 29 bound for their first engagement on the far-reaching tour—a three-day stint at the Swift Current, Sask. Rodeo commencing Dominion Day. Prior to lifting the curtain on the 1958 Ride, the complement appeared in the Frontier Days' Parade during the morning.

After being well received in the southwestern Saskatchewan centre, the Troop headed into Alberta for the first of its week-long encounters, to take part in what Cowtowners like to refer to as the "Greatest Outdoor Show on Earth", the annual Calgary Stampede. Bolstered by the RCMP Band from Regina, the two groups led the colorful Stampede Parade through downtown Calgary the morning of July 7 and the great annual spectacle was under way. With daily performances in the infield in front of the Grandstand, the Ride was greeted warmly by capacity audiences, and at the end of the week, some 545,960 patrons had clicked through the turnstiles—a new record in Stampede attendances. Proof that the Musical Ride was one of the big hits of the affair was

contained in an abstract from the Calgary *Herald*, "... the most critical audience of all was that standing around the stock chutes only a few feet away. They were the cowpunchers who knew their horse-flesh and how to ride it. They were unanimous in their praise."

The Ride and Band conducted a similar program the following week at Alberta's capital, taking part in the six-day Edmonton Exhibition, following which the Regina Band headed for home and the Musical Ride departed for the first time to Canada's most western province to take a hand in the British Columbia Centennial celebrations. The next five weeks would actually be the cumulation of three birthday parties in one—the province of B.C. on the threshold of its second century, the Mounted Police completing its 85th anniversary and the RCMP Band its first "score" years.

First stop was Cranbrook in the southeastern corner of the province, and this time the Ride was accompanied by the RCMP Band from Ottawa, also on a tour of B.C. Nearly 8,000 persons were on hand for the performance there on July 23 at Moir Park, and two days later in Nelson, 10,000 applauded the scarlet-coated Riders at the Civic Centre. From there they left for the heart of the Okanagan fruit centre with performances at Penticton July 28, Kelowna, July 30 and Vernon the following evening. Prior to swinging down to the west coast, the Ride and Band appeared before some 8,500 at the Riverside Ball Park in Kamloops, gateway to B.C.'s fabulous Cariboo country, on August 2.

Following the trip down the awesome Fraser River canyon to the coast, the group steamed over to Vancouver Island for appearances at the province's seat of government and "garden city", Victoria.