

Welcome to Fort Battleford National Historic Site.

Begin at the Barracks #5, just behind the Visitor Centre.

Welcome to Fort Battleford.

Uncover the central but little-known role of Fort Battleford in the Conflict of 1885. Discover the stories of the First Nations, Métis, North West Mounted Police, and settlers in these difficult times.



Stop #1:

The Town of Battleford was the first capital city of the North West Territories. Canada created the North West Territories after buying land from the Hudson's Bay Company without involving Indigenous Peoples. After the North West Resistance of 1885, the Mounted Police garrison at Fort Battleford was increased. The additional men needed a place to live, and Barracks #5 was born. Follow the path over to the flags.

Stop #2:

This region has long been Cree, Nakoda, Saulteaux, and Métis land. Here, you can see flags from the Métis Nation, Poundmaker and Lucky Man Cree Nations, Moosomin, Stoney Knoll, Sweetgrass, Little Pine, Red Pheasant, Saulteaux, Thunderchild, and Mosquito–Grizzly Bear's Head–Lean Man First Nations, as well as the Treaty 6 flag. These flags help us remember that Indigenous peoples remain on Treaty 6 territory today. Signed in 1876, Treaty 6 covers Saskatoon, Prince Albert, the Battlefords, and Edmonton. Treaty 6 was signed in 1876 at Fort Carlton, SK. In the 1870s, First Nations' lives were being changed forever. Buffalo had all but disappeared, creating starvation conditions for Indigenous Peoples. Many Indigenous People were also dying as a result of diseases such as smallpox. The Crown wanted access to the land and resources of what is now western and northern Canada. Through this drastic time of transition, First Nations saw treaties as a way forward to provide for future generations. Step into the Fort through the open gate.

Stop 3:

When the Fort was built in 1876, it had a garrison of 14 officers and men. The original Fort was not defensive, so there were no walls. Of the 1876 buildings, only the Commanding Officer's Quarters, the largest house, remains. The Fort changed over time. In 1879, walls were built. By 1884, 12 buildings were inside the walls.

The first building on your right is the Guardhouse, which is in its third location. In the 1880s, it was near today's Kramer Campground. Then, in the 1890s, it was moved near to Barracks #5 and a cement floor was added. The floor was three times as thick under the prisoner cells as it was under the guard's offices. In the 1940s, it was moved to its present location. Notice the building's similarities with the others (look at the windows, for example). Notice too the yellow brick, characteristic of bricks from local Battleford earth. Walk to the next building, with the ramps.

Stop #4:

Originally, Fort Battleford was supposed to have a large, U-shaped stable to house 160 horses, but it was never built. None of the Fort's stables except for the Sick Horse Stable are still standing. Built in 1898, they were originally outside of the Fort's walls. In the 1940s, it was moved inside the Fort. The ramps on either side of the building were designed to make it easier to move sick horses in and out of the building. Look up at the roof. The Chinese-style dome is unlike anything else at Fort Battleford — borrowing styles from many different places was common in the mid-Victorian era. Walk to the next building, the smaller of the two houses.

Stop #5:

The Officers' Quarters, dates from 1886. It was originally for unmarried officers, who lived on the first floor, with their offices and dining room upstairs. In 1894, it was renovated to make space for officers' families, and for a billiard (pool) room. The Officers' Quarters is a good example of mid-Victorian architecture. Notice the French-style roof, the pointed window frames, and pinnacles that overhang the second-floor windows. Head over to the flagpole.

Stop #6:

After the events associated with the 1885 North West Resistance, including those at Frog Lake, 8 First Nations men, Kapapamachakwew (Wandering Spirit), Pah Pah-Me-Kee-Sick (Walking the Sky), Manchoose (Bad Arrow), Kit-Awah-Ke-Ni (Miserable Man), Nahpase (Iron Body), A-Pis-Chas-Koos (Little Bear), Itka (Crooked Leg), and Waywahnitch (Man Without Blood), were hanged at Ft. Battleford. This was the largest mass hanging in Canada's history. Go now to the large house.

Stop #7:

The Commanding Officer's Quarters is the only structure from 1876 still standing today. Hugh Sutherland, director, and John Oliver, foreman, oversaw its construction. It was difficult to build. Some of the main timber for the house came from north of Edmonton, floated down the river. The smaller logs came from the Eagle Hills, while the windows are from Winnipeg. Notice the gables and crosses, along with the arched windows (that fit perfectly into a pointed sash), and the tall, thin evergreen trees (designed to draw your eye up, towards the heavens) — all of these are characteristic of neogothic, Victorian architecture. Walk out the back gate to the overlook.

Stop #8:

Here, you can see the North Saskatchewan River. To the right is the Battle River. Fort Battleford was intentionally built on the high ground above the rivers. This place, with its commanding views of the surrounding landscape, has been the site of interactions between Indigenous Peoples and the Canadian government during difficult times.

Thank you for visiting Fort Battleford National Historic Site. Check our website for updates on future programming. We hope to see you back at Fort Battleford!

www.pc.gc.ca/en/lhn-nhs/sk/battleford

