



Fort Battleford
National Historic Site



Discovery Booklet



Parks
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Welcome to Fort Battleford National Historic Site!

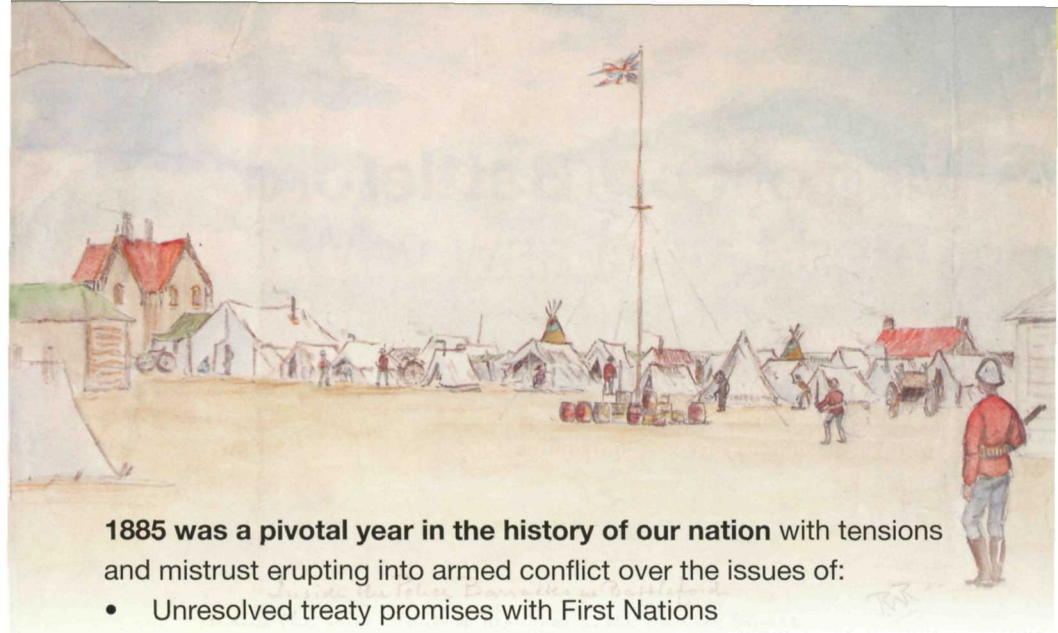
The information in this booklet complements the signage and displays you will find onsite.

Follow the stops and complete activities along the way as you discover the history of 1885 at Fort Battleford.

DID YOU KNOW?

The original stockade was built in 1879 and stood for a little more than 9 years, it was reconstructed in the 1960s by Parks Canada.





1885 was a pivotal year in the history of our nation with tensions and mistrust erupting into armed conflict over the issues of:

- Unresolved treaty promises with First Nations
- Métis rights

The results included:

- sending militia forces to the West, several battles with Métis and First Nations groups followed;
- the arrest and hanging of 8 First Nations men at Fort Battleford and Louis Riel in Regina; and
- implementing restrictions on the movements of First Nations people in Western Canada.

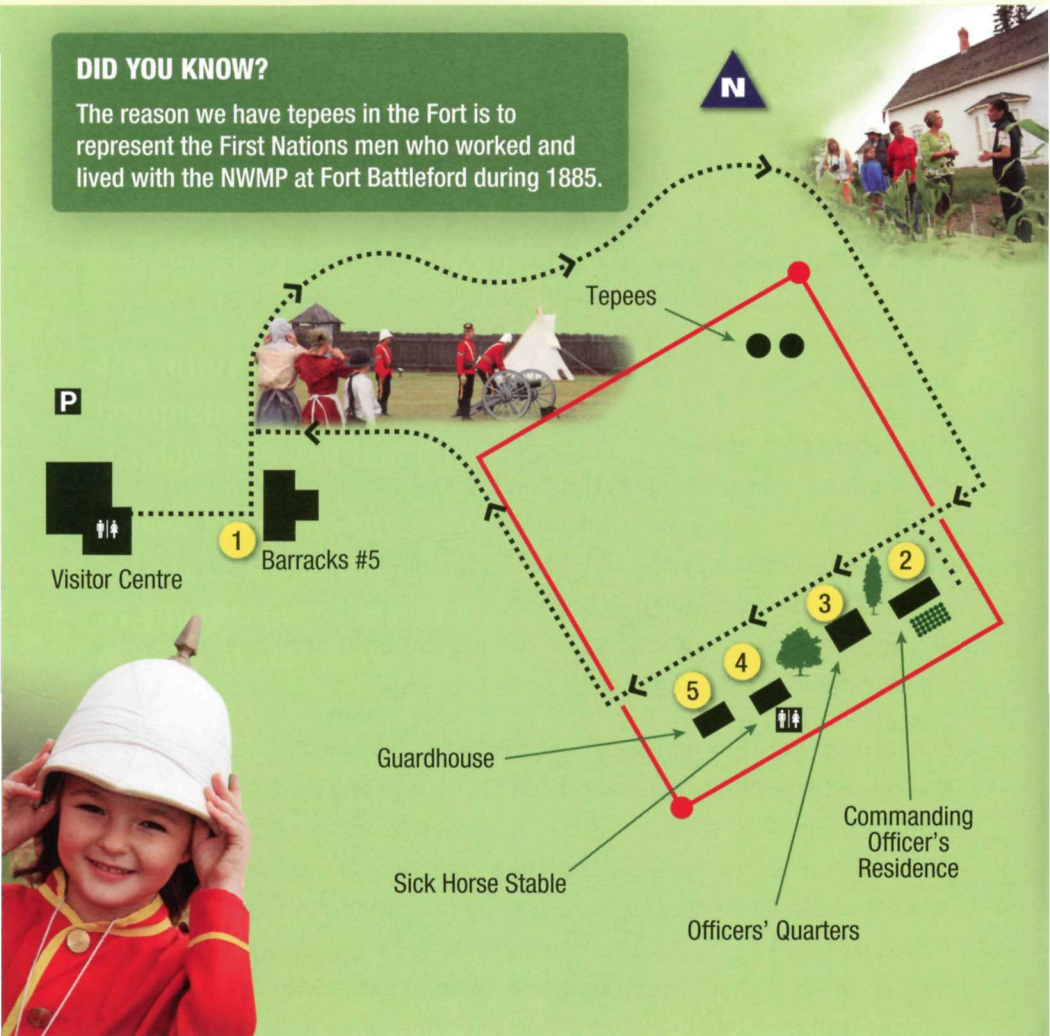
During the conflict of 1885, Fort Battleford served as the base for military operations at Cut Knife Hill and Fort Pitt. The Fort also provided protection to approximately 500 local settlers who feared for their safety following the news that the Métis had defeated the North West Mounted Police (NWMP) at Duck Lake. Their fear was heightened by the fact that Chief Poundmaker was making his way toward Battleford with a large group of Plains Cree.

Photo Credit: Glenbow Archives P-1390-8

Map of Fort Battleford

DID YOU KNOW?

The reason we have tepees in the Fort is to represent the First Nations men who worked and lived with the NWMP at Fort Battleford during 1885.



- 1 Tour stops
- ... Trail
- P Parking
- Washrooms
- Garden

Why was the Fort built? Why was it built here?

Fort Battleford was built as a part of a larger government strategy to extend control over a sparsely populated area in Western Canada. The National Policy included:

1. Implementing tariffs to protect Canadian markets from foreign competition;
2. Building a transcontinental railway to ensure Canadian sovereignty and grow the economy;
3. Surveying the West for Eastern settlement and signing treaties with First Nations communities to get them settled on reserves.

The NWMP had a major role to play in implementing the Policy. Established in 1876, the location of the Fort was ideal due to the nearby North Saskatchewan and Battle Rivers, as well as its proximity to Battleford — where the territorial capital was located from 1876 to 1883.

DID YOU KNOW?

Until 1905 Saskatchewan, Alberta and parts of Manitoba were considered to be part of the North West Territories.



Stop 1: Barracks #5

Barracks #5 is one of five original buildings you will encounter during your visit to Fort Battleford. This building, along with others similar to it, was constructed in 1886 to respond to the growing number of police posted at Battleford. This increase was a direct result of the events of 1885.

DID YOU KNOW?

It was Louis Riel's proclamation of a Provisional Government at Batoche on March 19th, 1885 and the Métis victory at the Battle of Duck Lake that prompted a hand-full of First Nations warriors to fight for unresolved treaty promises.



Action: Movie Time!



To watch this 8-minute video on the conflict of 1885, simply press the large white button to select your language of choice.

Take note of the different voices used to narrate; these voices represent different points of view from the parties involved in the events of 1885.



DID YOU KNOW?

During times of conflict in the 1880s, War Chiefs assumed authority of the camp from the Chief. Many band members were motivated by government inaction and indifference and looked to their War Chiefs to lead them in their fight.



Stop 2: Commanding Officer's Residence

During the Conflict of 1885, when tensions were high, people sought refuge inside the walls of the fort. This building was home of Fort Battleford's Commanding Officer. In the spring of 1885 it housed 72 women and children.

When you are upstairs in the first bedroom to the right, imagine how crowded it would be with all the people in the house and all the bedrolls on the floor!

Photo Credit: Glenbow Archives
NA-919-20



Action:

Games and Dress up



Explore the other upstairs rooms in the residence. In one room, you will find old-fashioned clothes to try on while another has a table set up with period games. These games helped pass the long hours women and children spent inside during the conflict in 1885.

Try them out and don't forget to take some cool photos!



DID YOU KNOW?

In 1885 when the women and children looked out the window at the end of the hall upstairs they saw the town of Battleford burning!



Stop 3: Officer's Quarters

In April 1885, the Militia finally arrived in Battleford, under the command of Lt. Colonel Otter. Finding all the settlers inside the fort and many buildings in the town of Battleford burned, he immediately wanted to strike out at the First Nations encamped at Poundmaker's Reserve.

In early May 1885, Lt. Colonel Otter sent a telegraph message to his superior officer, Major General Middleton, explaining the situation at Battleford and requesting permission to attack the Cree camp. Before receiving a reply, he left Fort Battleford with 300 men and encountered the First Nations at Cut Knife Hill. After a six-hour battle, he was forced to retreat back to Fort Battleford.

The First Nations had won the Battle of Cut Knife Hill.

Action:

Type a message
in Morse Code!



Try out your telegraph skills by using the Morse code sheets provided in the Orderly Room (office). Tap out your name or a message to someone with you.

Stop 4: Sick Horse Stable

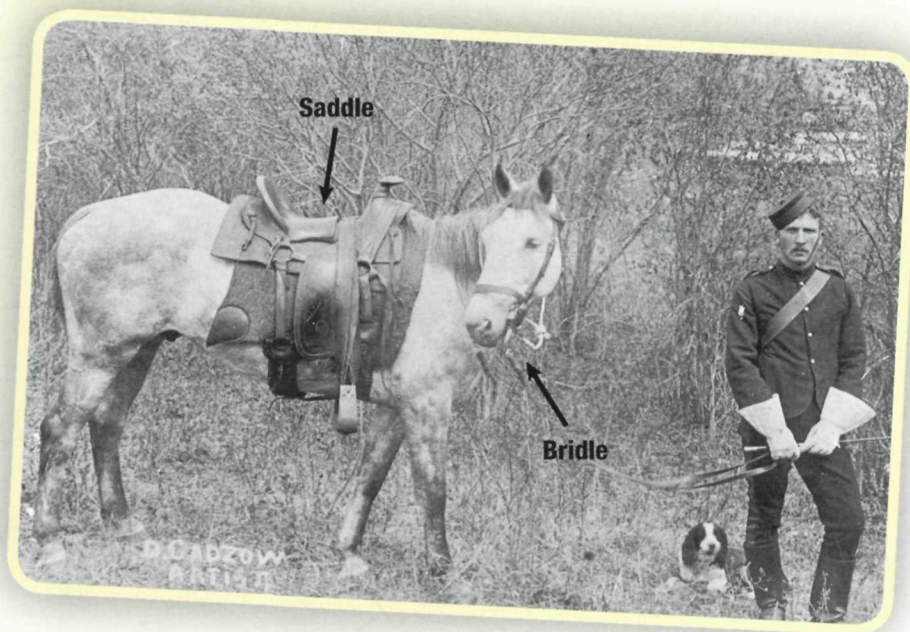
The NWMP relied on their horses to cover vast areas of land in the largely unpopulated Canadian prairies. Because of their horses, it is easy to see why they often served not only as policemen, but as postmen, messengers and scouts.

When telegraph lines went down in 1885, messages had to be delivered in person on horseback. It is not surprising that the health of the horses was extremely important. The main form of transportation for the NWMP was the horse — of course!



Action:

Prepare for Patrol!



To get ready for patrol, a Mountie must prepare his horse, too! Locate Duke the horse to see if you can get him ready for duty by saddling and bridling him. (Please do not sit on the horse).

DID YOU KNOW?

A veterinarian was often the only doctor to be found at a Fort so he saw 4-legged patients (horses) and he also treated the two-legged variety (people)!

Photo Credit: Saskatchewan Archives Board

Stop 5: Guard House

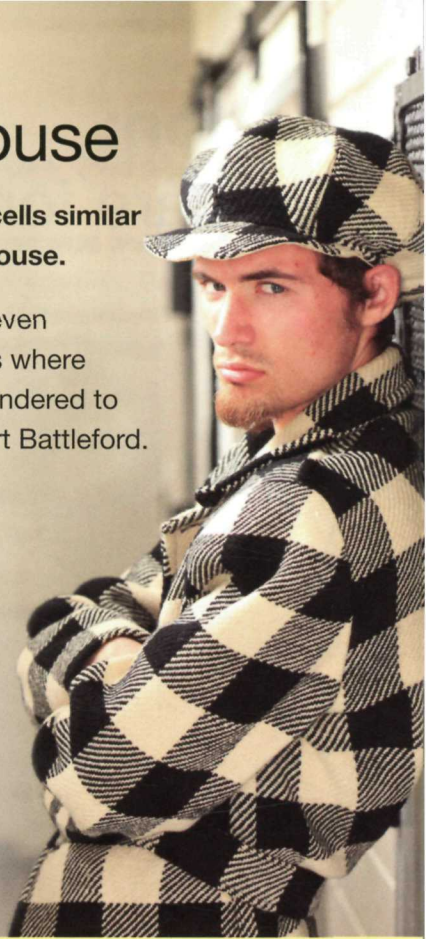
In 1885 prisoners had to be detained in cells similar to the ones you see here in the Guard House.

Some prisoners were held in a stable or even at the former Government House, which is where Chief Poundmaker was held after he surrendered to General Middleton on May 26, 1885 at Fort Battleford.

Step inside a cell and try on the uniforms and shackles prisoners had to wear.

DID YOU KNOW?

Chiefs Pitikwahanapwiyn (Poundmaker) and Mistahi-maskwa (Big Bear) were found guilty of felony treason, sentenced to three years in jail and served their time at Stoney Mountain Penitentiary in Manitoba. Both were released early due to severe illness.



Action: Disc Golf!

Play disc golf around the fort on our NEW course! Discs and scorecards are available at the visitor centre, just ask! Free with entry.





Aftermath of 1885

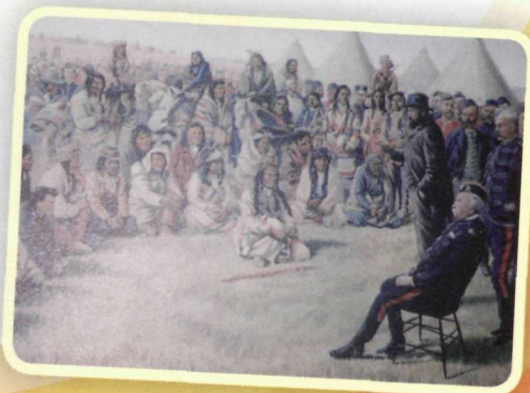
1885 was a time of great uncertainty and fear. Misunderstandings resulted in many deaths on all sides including NWMP officers, Métis and First Nations. In the years following 1885, Fort Battleford continued to be an important part of the Battleford community and maintained a police presence on the northern plains. By the turn of the century, however, operations dwindled until its closure in 1924.

If you would like to learn more about the events of 1885, visit Batoche National Historic site; it was one of the last battlefields in the Conflict of 1885 and was selected by Louis Riel to be the headquarters of his Provisional Government.

If the story of the NWMP has inspired you, then explore Fort Walsh National Historic Site, located in the beautiful Cypress Hills, and discover how the NWMP established Canadian law in the West.

DID YOU KNOW?

The events of 1885 opened the west for agricultural settlement, shaping our nation into what it is today.



Follow this symbol to more great Parks Canada Locations in Saskatchewan!

SASKATCHEWAN

Prince Albert National Park
306.663.4522



Batoche National Historic Site
306.423.6227



Fort Battleford National Historic Site
306.937.2621



North Battleford and Battleford
Prince Albert

Motherwell Homestead National Historic Site
306.333.2116



Saskatoon

Yorkton

Moose Jaw

Regina



Fort Walsh National Historic Site
306.662.3590

Swift Current

Grasslands National Park
306.298.2257 West Block
306.476.2018 East Block

