

# FORT WALSH

National Historic Site



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# Welcome to Fort Walsh National Historic Site

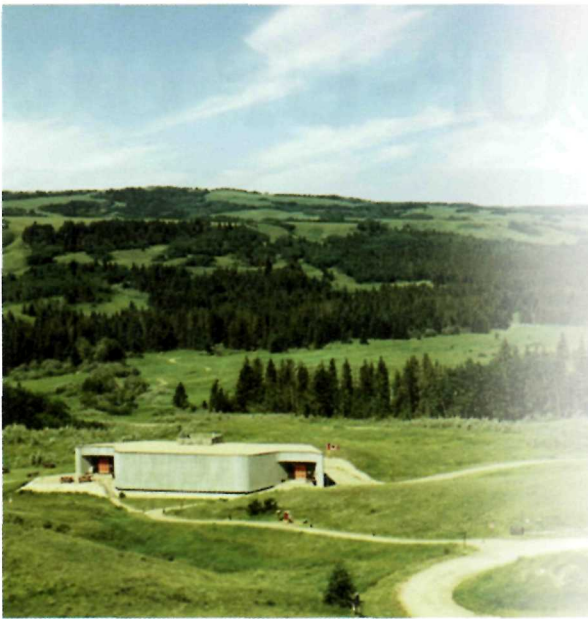


This publication outlines the site's history, facilities, and services. As you tour the site you will meet costumed guides reliving the lawless days of the early west, learn of the events that led up to the Cypress Hills Massacre, and visit one of the first forts that brought law and order to western Canada. Explore and enjoy the unique flora, fauna and geology of Saskatchewan's spectacular Cypress Hills and discover approximately 5000 years of dramatic human history.

Help us protect this site for the enjoyment and education of future generations. Fire is a primary concern, as it is for adjacent provincial parks and for local ranchers. Please observe all fire hazard postings and the smoking ban on the historic grounds. Although camping and open fires are not permitted within Fort Walsh National Historic Site, camping is available as close as the West Block Ranger Station in Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park.

## VISITOR RECEPTION CENTRE

You'll find an orientation museum, video theatre, public washrooms, food concession and gift shop in the Visitor Reception Centre. Staff can provide site publications, brochures, travel information and details about other regional attractions. A regularly scheduled bus service takes you from the Visitor Centre to Farwell's Trading Post and Fort Walsh. You'll also see other highlights along the way.



## PICNIC SITES

Picnic tables are available at the parking lot, just outside of the Visitor Reception Centre and behind the Fort. The site behind the fort is more secluded and there, in the shade of the spruce trees and beside Battle Creek, you can relax and take in the beauty of the Cypress Hills. Fire stands, toilets, a water faucet, picnic tables and a cook shelter are provided at this site. Hike there with your lunch or ask Visitor Centre staff about bus service to the picnic site (this service is subject to availability). Please help us maintain the natural beauty of the picnic areas.

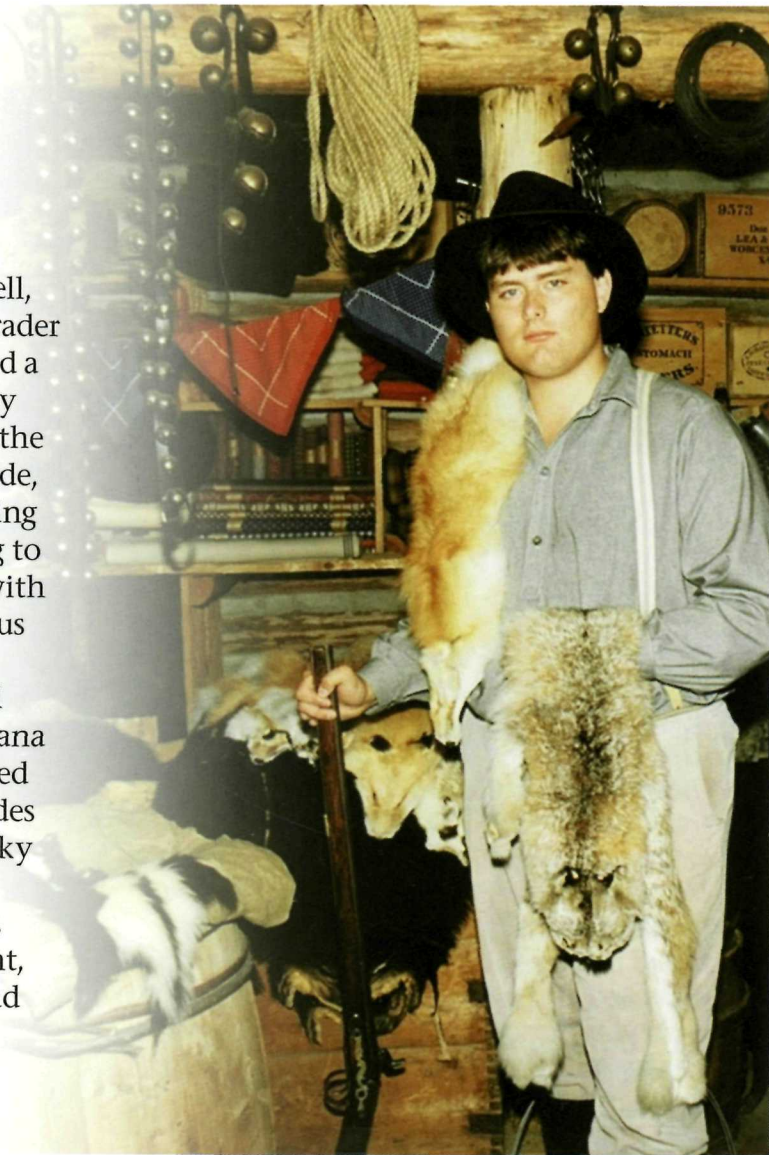




# WHOOOP-UP COUNTRY

## FARWELL'S TRADING POST

In the fall of 1872 Abel Farwell, an independent American trader from Fort Benton, established a trading post at this site. Many traders, like Abe, engaged in the highly profitable whisky trade, which often involved watering down the alcohol and trying to hide that fact by mixing it with vile and sometimes poisonous ingredients, like strychnine, to bring back the colour and flavour. This brew of "Montana Red Eye" or "Rotgut" increased the profits on the buffalo hides they were trading. The whisky trade was outlawed by both Canadian and American law, but without law enforcement, the trade flourished. This had a devastating effect on the Aboriginal People.



## SOLOMON'S TRADING POST

Abel Farwell and Moses Solomon were neighbours that fateful spring of 1873. Solomon's Trading Post played a key role in the Cypress Hills Massacre. Wolf hunters and traders used the bastions and roof tops of the trading post as vantage points for firing upon the Nakota camp. The massacre ended when one of the wolfers, Ed LeGrace, was killed by a young Nakota man named Wahintoknaka. The wolfers retreated to the shelter of Solomon's post and some of them held four Nakota women captive in the post for one terrifying night before Mary Farwell obtained their release the next day. Before the traders and wolfers left the site, Ed LeGrace was buried under the floor boards, and the trading posts were set on fire.

Both Farwell's and Solomon's Trading Posts were reconstructed by the RCMP in 1967 to mark Canada's 100th anniversary. Today Farwell's Trading Post is furnished to the 1873 period and costumed guides re-enact the wild days of "Whoop-Up Country." Solomon's Post is not furnished, but Ed LeGrace still lies beneath the floor.





# THE CYPRESS HILLS MASSACRE

## THE NAKOTA CAMPSITE

The winter of 1872-73 was difficult for the Nakota. Desperate for game, the band undertook a 480 km "starvation march" travelling south from Battle River to the Cypress Hills. Thirty or more of Chief Hunkajuka's people died before reaching the Cypress Hills. They set up camp near the trading posts of Farwell and Solomon and were joined by other small bands lead by Inihan Kinyen and Minashinayen.

Around the same time a group of wolfers had 40 horses stolen from them outside of Fort Benton, Montana. The wolfers pursued the thieves into Canada but lost the trail and eventually arrived at the

posts of Farwell and Solomon. When one of the trader's horses went missing, the Nakota were blamed. The wolfers entered the Nakota camp with the intent to recover the horse or secure compensation. Alcohol was a factor on both sides, tempers quickly boiled over, and a shot was fired. Armed with superior repeating rifles and protected by the cover of a small coulee, the wolfers had the advantage. They indiscriminately shot and killed Nakota men, women, and children as they scrambled to safety. Ironically, the horse the wolfers thought had been stolen had merely wandered off and was found grazing nearby just as the massacre started.





## FORT WALSH

When news of the Cypress Hills Massacre reached Ottawa, it was clear that law and order was urgently needed in the West. The North West Mounted Police marched west and established Fort Walsh in the Cypress Hills in 1875. The NWMP had three goals; to create a Canadian Government presence in the North West, enforce Canadian law in the area, and encourage Aboriginal People to sign treaties and settle onto reserves. The fort became headquarters of the NWMP in 1878 when Tatanka Iyotanka (Sitting Bull) and the Lakota people sought refuge in Canada following the Battle of The Little Bighorn in the United States. Until its closure in 1883, the fort and Superintendent James Morrow Walsh played a vital role in maintaining peace in the Cypress Hills region.

Fort Walsh was destroyed by fire in 1889. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police began reconstructing it in 1943 to serve as their Remount Ranch. Here they raised their signature black horses until 1968. Today costumed guides in period furnished buildings interpret the colourful history of the fort. Guided and self guided tours are available in addition to other programming. Eight of the fort's buildings are open to the public. Modern washrooms and a water fountain are also available.







## NWMP CEMETERY

The graves of eight mounted police members can be found under the trees in chained off areas at the back of the cemetery. This is where Constable Marmaduke Graburn, the first member of the NWMP to be killed in the line of duty, was laid to rest following his murder in 1879. The other members interred here were the victims of tragic accidents, illness and natural causes. After Fort Walsh was abandoned in 1883, civilians were also buried in this cemetery. These graves are marked by white crosses and headstones outside the chain enclosures.



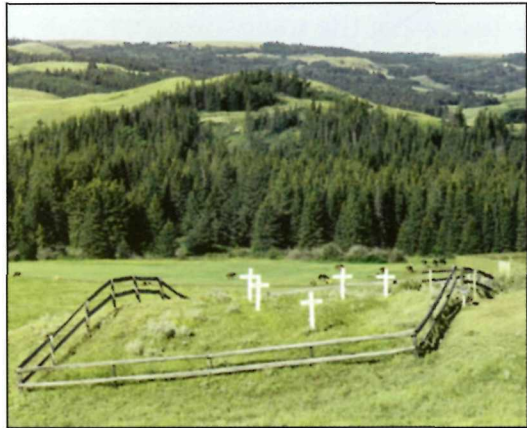
## WOOD & ANDERSON RANCH HOUSE FOUNDATION

Around 1893, partners David Wood and Wellington Anderson homesteaded on the site of old Fort Walsh, and trailed cattle from Manitoba to establish their ranching operation. Eventually each man married

and both families lived together in the two story ranch house. Today the only visible remnants of the ranch are the stone foundation of the house, caragana bushes, and horseradish plants.

## CIVILIAN CEMETERY

This cemetery was used by Métis families and other civilians from the townsite of Fort Walsh prior to 1883. Many of the identified graves are associated with the McKays; a family of Scots Métis, who established a small trading post and farm in 1872 near the site of Fort Walsh. Also buried here is Francis (Frank) Clark, the manager of the I.G. Baker store in the town of Fort Walsh. Mr. Clark fell victim to mountain fever which plagued Fort Walsh in the late 1870s and early 1880s.





## TOWNSITE OF FORT WALSH

Shortly after the NWMP established Fort Walsh, a lucrative trading town by the same name sprang up next to the fort. The town boasted two hotels, a restaurant, two pool halls, a tailor, barber, laundress and even a photography studio. Prominent businesses were the T.C. Power & Bro. store and the I.G. Baker & Company store. The I.G. Baker store held important supply contracts with the NWMP and even trailed cattle from Montana in order to meet the police beef requirements. At its peak, the town of Fort Walsh had a permanent population numbering in the hundreds, which grew to several thousand during trading and treaty payment times, making it the largest centre in Canada between Winnipeg and Vancouver. When Fort Walsh was abandoned by the NWMP in 1883, the town was also deserted as residents and businesses relocated to Maple Creek to be closer to the new transcontinental railway. A self-guided walking tour package with information, artifacts and photographs related to the colourful history of the townsite is available from the staff at the fort.





# HISTORIC TRAILS

## FORT BENTON TRAIL

This trail represents the nearby route which connected Fort Walsh to its supply and communications centre at Fort Benton. Rations, supplies, equipment, mail and even payroll were shipped 150 miles by bull train from Fort Benton to Fort Walsh. Bull trains generally consisted of three wagons being pulled by six or eight teams of oxen. It usually took these bull trains a week and a half to make the trip along the deeply rutted route.

## WOOD MOUNTAIN TRAIL

Seeking refuge from the American military following the Battle of The Little Bighorn, approximately 5000 Lakota people settled 180 miles east of Fort Walsh at Wood Mountain in 1877. The next year Fort Walsh became headquarters of the NWMP in order to effectively deal with the Lakota presence in Canada. The Wood Mountain outpost played a central role in Superintendent Walsh's efforts to ensure that the Lakota presence remained peaceful. By 1881 the last of the Lakota returned to the United States as a result of starvation caused by the disappearance of the buffalo. The trail between Wood Mountain and Fort Walsh was an important and regularly travelled supply and communication route during this volatile period. Remnants of the original trail and two of the 260 commemorative trail markers are visible within the site.

While these historic trails are largely overgrown and difficult to follow, site staff can provide further information on conditions and hiking opportunities.





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Aussi disponible en français.

