

WALSH & SITTING BULL

James Morrow Walsh played a central role in the development of the peaceful relationship between the Lakota and the NWMP. However a combination of the Lakota's reluctance to leave Canada, Walsh's flamboyant and independent character, and the media attention afforded Walsh for his role in the Lakota situation, led to government suspicions that Walsh was encouraging the Lakota to stay in Canada to increase his own importance. These suspicions led to Walsh being transferred to Fort Qu'Appelle in 1880 to remove him from the situation. With their advocate, Walsh, gone and facing death from starvation (as the few remaining buffalo failed to return north), Sitting Bull and the last of the Lakota surrendered into the United States in 1881.



Sitting Bull

THE END OF AN ERA

With the return of the Lakota to the United States and the settlement of other First Nations to reserves away from the Cypress Hills, Fort Walsh declined in importance and in 1882 headquarters was transferred to Regina. With the arrival of the railway to the north of the Cypress Hills, bringing with it the first major wave of settlement, the NWMP dismantled Fort Walsh and moved to the newly emerging town of Maple Creek in 1883.

THE NEW BEGINNING

Following his participation in the 1937 Coronation of King George VI Commissioner Stuart Taylor Wood of the RCMP was so impressed with how the scarlet tunics of the Royal Life Guards of The Household Calvary contrasted brilliantly with their black horses, that Wood resolved that the scarlet clad RCMP would also come to be mounted on stately uniform black horses. The only way the RCMP could acquire enough tall black horses to meet their needs was to raise their own, and in 1942 the site of old Fort Walsh was purchased by the RCMP to serve as their breeding or Remount Ranch. In the construction of the Remount Ranch, which began the following year, the RCMP wanted to be

sensitive to, and commemorate, the 1875-1883 period. Therefore, they constructed the ranch buildings to look like and sit on the sites of where original Fort Walsh buildings had once stood.

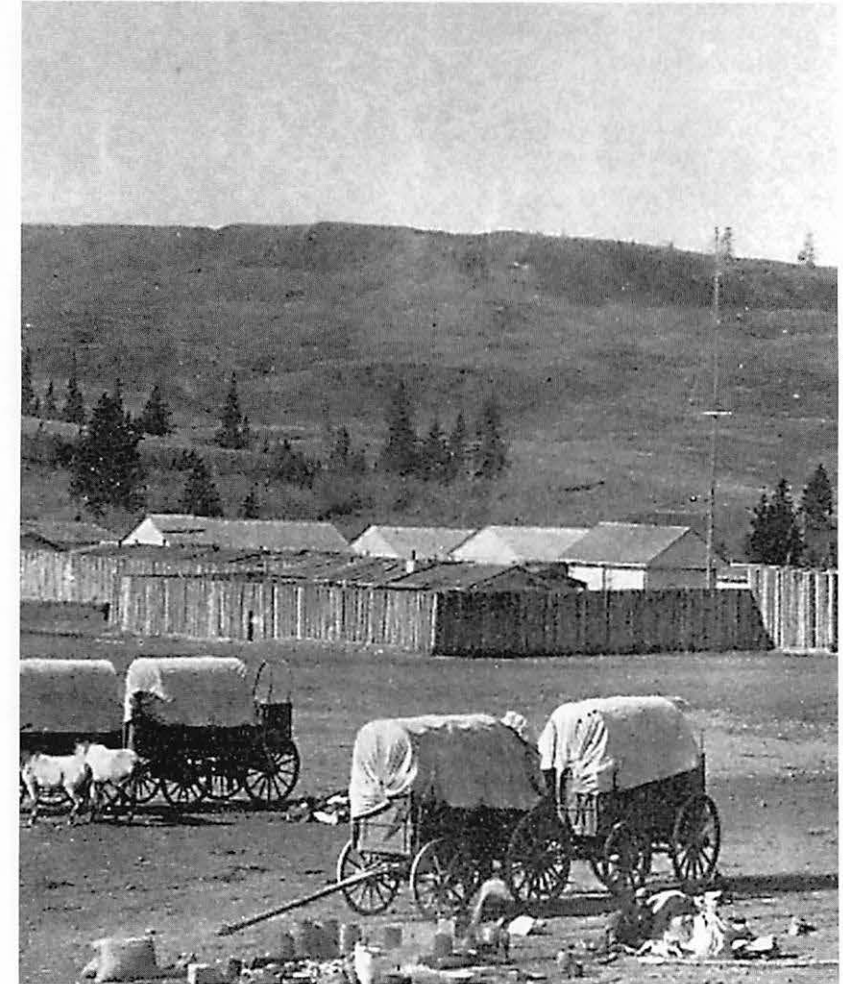
The carefully monitored breeding program at the Fort Walsh Remount Ranch produced the first of the tall, stately, and uniform black horses which have become an integral part of the RCMP's internationally recognized image. Over the years the horses raised at Fort Walsh served the RCMP in equitation training for RCMP recruits in Regina, in law enforcement, drawing the Governor General's carriage, and in the world famous RCMP Musical Ride. In addition, one of the Remount Ranch horses, "Burmese" was presented to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and quickly became a favourite of the Queen and a feature at the annual Trooping of The Colour Ceremony.

In 1968 the RCMP Remount Ranch was moved to Pakenham Ontario, and the land was transferred to Parks Canada which opened the site to the public in 1972.



Fort Walsh 1881

FORT WALSH NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE



INTRODUCTION

Prior to the arrival of the North West Mounted Police (NWMP) in Canada's newly acquired North-West Territories (NWT), Canadian law was ignored and the unwritten communal laws of the First Nations and Metis were no match for the ruthless American whiskey traders. The whiskey trade in Canada's NWT with its vile and poisonous "Montana "Red Eye" and "Rot Gut" whiskey had devastating effects on the native people of the southern Canadian plains or "Whoop Up Country". The lawlessness of Whoop Up Country came to a head on June 1st, 1873 when a group of wolf hunters and whiskey traders attacked a large Nakoda (Assiniboine) camp in the Cypress Hills killing several men, women, and children.

THE CREATION OF THE NORTH WEST MOUNTED POLICE

The Cypress Hills Massacre made it clear that there was a need for some kind of Canadian presence and authority in the west. Although the Canadian government had already laid out plans in a May 1873 Act of Parliament to establish a paramilitary police force for the NWT similar to the Royal Irish Constabulary (which was created by the British government to exercise its authority over Ireland), it was the shock of the Cypress Hills Massacre which underlined the urgent need to set the plan in motion. Organization of the new force began in September of 1873, and by October 150 men had been recruited and sent to Fort Gary for training. In the spring of 1874 an additional 150 men were recruited and supplies and provisions were assembled for the NWMP's march into the NWT.



Major James Morrow Walsh

THE GREAT MARCH WEST

The two halves of the NWMP were united at Fort Dufferin, Manitoba and set out into the NWT on July 8, 1874. The march west was a disastrous undertaking and the NWMP were plagued with misfortune and hardship.

The men were at the mercy of the elements and found themselves either cold and wet or scorched by the relentless prairie sun. They were also forced to endure shortages of food and water, prairie storms, stampeding horses, plagues of mosquitos, and illness. In addition most of the horses withered or died due to the shortage of quality forage, leaving the men themselves to pull the wagons and carts. If it had not been for the Metis guides, which the NWMP had engaged along the way, they never would have reached their destination and completed their lengthy ordeal with the constructed Fort Macleod that fall.

FORT WALSH ESTABLISHED

In June of 1875, the "B" troop of the NWMP under the command of Superintendent James Morrow Walsh established Fort Walsh in the Cypress Hills 2.5 kms from the site of the Cypress Hills Massacre. The fort had three main objectives: enforce the Queen's law, assert Canadian sovereignty, and peacefully encourage First Nations to sign treaties and settle onto reserves (in order to prepare the west for the coming of the railway and the westward expansion of settlement).

LIFE AT FORT WALSH

A NWMP's life at Fort Walsh consisted of sleeping in a drafty barracks often with a leaky roof, bland and meagre rations, low wages, and endless parades, inspections, riding and foot drills. In addition the NWMP at Fort Walsh were expected to perform fatigue duties which ensured that the fort was as self sufficient as possible. Fatigue duties included tasks like; working in the workshops, hauling wood and water, cleaning the stables, cutting boards and lumber, building construction and maintenance, etc. However, the NWMP did have some leisure time which was often occupied with reading, card games, amateur theatrics, sports, shooting matches, and dances.

PATROL WORK & LAW ENFORCEMENT

The NWMP at Fort Walsh patrolled an area which extended from Wood Mountain in the east (now central Saskatchewan), to Head of the Mountain in the west (now Elkwater, Alberta), to the South Saskatchewan River to the north, and to the United States border to the south. To facilitate this patrol work Fort Walsh had out posts at Head of The Mountain, Wood Mountain, Eastend, Pinto Horse Butte, Ten Mile, and Kennedy's Crossing. Common crimes which the NWMP dealt with were those related to the possession or trading of liquor, horse theft, gambling, or assault. Those caught breaking the law were returned to Fort Walsh and tried in the Officers' Mess by a NWMP Officer who had been sworn in as a Stipendiary Magistrate. Sentences ranged in severity from simple fines or several months imprisonment in the Fort Walsh

guardhouse, to several years imprisonment at Stony Mountain Penitentiary in Manitoba.

TOWN OF FORT WALSH

Shortly after the NWMP established Fort Walsh, a lucrative trading town by the same name sprung up next to the fort. The town boasted two hotels, two pool halls, two general trade stores, a tailor, a barber shop, a laundress, and even a photography studio. At its peak the town had a permanent population in the hundreds which could grow into the thousands during trading times, making it the largest centre between Winnipeg and Vancouver at the time. The town witnessed the mass slaughter and decline of the buffalo herds, marked by events such as nearly 20,000 buffalo hides in 1878 being shipped from the town to market in the United States. When Fort Walsh was abandoned by the NWMP in 1883, the town's people abandoned the town as well.

NWMP DIPLOMATS

The NWMP played a central role in the Canadian government's "Indian Policy" in the NWT. This entailed earning the trust of First Nations people, encouraging them to sign treaties, and peacefully settle onto reserves. As the First Nations people saw their old way of life disappearing with the buffalo which they depended on, and as the NWMP had illustrated to First Nations people that the force was committed to equal and impartial justice, the NWMP were able to successfully accomplish this objective. Blackfoot Chief Crowfoot expressed his thoughts on the role of the NWMP at a treaty signing in 1881; "If the police had not come, where would we be now? Bad men and whiskey were killing us so fast that very few indeed of us would have been left today. The police have protected us as the feathers of a bird protect it from the frosts of winter. I wish them all good. I am satisfied. I will sign the treaty."

FORT WALSH AS HEADQUARTERS

Following the Battle of the Little Bighorn in the United States, Sitting Bull and nearly 5000 Lakota (Sioux) followers came to Canada to seek refuge from the American Military. The Lakota presence in Canada created a great deal of tension for the Canadian, British, and American governments as it created strained diplomacy and fear of open conflict. The NWMP at Fort Walsh were charged with supervising the Lakota in Canada (1877-1881), and maintaining the peace during this potentially volatile time period. In order to better monitor the actions of the Lakota, the Commissioner and several officers and men from other posts were moved to Fort Walsh making it the headquarters of the force in 1878.