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A Century of Law

THE ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE, completing this month its hundredth year of service, has the most extensive area of jurisdiction of any single police force in the world. Its beat is 3,256 miles from Atlantic to Pacific and 3,000 miles from Canada's southern border to the North Pole. Celebrations from coast to coast of this vast territory mark the Centennial, graced by the presence in Regina, site of the R.C.M.P. training school, of Her Majesty the Queen.

Known first as the North West Mounted Police, with a mandate to carry law and the Queen's Peace into the Far West, the Force keeps alive today all the colourful and inspiring traditions of the past while using the most modern methods of law enforcement.

The North West Mounted Police came into being in 1873, when a report to the federal government described the Far West as being "without law, order, or security for life or property." Its duties included suppression of the whiskey traffic, calming unrest among the Indians who had been suffering the loss of possessions to unscrupulous traders, and stamping out lawlessness.

The first three troops of fifty men each were recruited in the Maritimes, Quebec and Ontario. A recruiting notice said: "Candidates must be active, able-bodied men of thoroughly sound constitution and exemplary character. They should be able to ride well, and to read and write either the English or French language." Payment was \$1 a day for constables.

Today's recruitment is nation-wide. The man who joins the Force is a career man who looks forward to pensionable service, with opportunities for promotion based on merit. All officers of the Force are commissioned from the ranks.

The history and development of the Force are told in a 46-page booklet entitled *The Royal Canadian Mounted Police*, issued by the Force, and the terms of enlistment are told in a booklet entitled *A Career in Scarlet*.

Not all glamour

Exciting incidents have been seized upon by movie-

makers, but everyday police life has little of glamour. Much of the Mountie's work is devoted quietly to the prevention of crime.

The R.C.M.P. enforces federal statutes and gives frequent assistance to and in behalf of various departments of the Canadian Government. In all provinces except Ontario and Quebec the Force has an agreement to carry out the duties usually performed by provincial police. In addition, many municipalities, cities and towns have an agreement with the Force to police their areas. In the Northwest Territories and in the Yukon there is no other police force than the R.C.M.P.

Members of the Force have served Canada in three wars. In the South African war, the Lord Strathcona's Horse drew its officers from the commissioned ranks of the N.W.M.P., and 245 members of the Force served with the 2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles. In the 1914-1918 war, two cavalry squadrons from the Force saw service in France and Siberia. In the Second World War the R.C.M.P. engaged in counter-espionage work with such good success that the authorities were able to announce that subversive activities had been almost wholly disrupted by the speedy arrest of hostile elements. Volunteers from the Force formed a Provost Company in the First Canadian Division.

Special Divisions

Riding is a very minor and emergency aspect of R.C.M.P. work, but equitation is retained as an incomparable school of audacity, calmness, perseverance, mental alertness and sportsmanship. Members of the Force are ranked among the world's finest horsemen.

The first N.W.M.P. band was organized at Swan River in 1876, and the band became an official part of the Force's activities in 1938. The present R.C.M.P. Band ranks among the best on the continent.

The Air Division, formed in 1937, has aircraft based at points across Canada, but its work is of particular value in the Arctic and the sub-Arctic, where vast distances that once required weeks and months of laborious travel can now be covered in a matter of

days or hours. The Air Division engages in search and rescue work, carries supplies to R.C.M.P. posts beyond the Arctic Circle, and makes patrols to enforce control of hunting and fishing.

R.C.M.P. boats patrol the Canadian coasts and the Great Lakes as a safeguard against smuggling and infraction of the marine and fishing laws, and give aid to vessels in distress.

How it started

All these duties and services grew out of an urgent need to rid Canada's West of whiskey traders and pacify the warring Indian tribes.

Fortune hunters surged toward Canada's empty land. There came, too, desperadoes fleeing before the law, seeking to live where there was not yet any law. Suffering most from the liquor peddlers were the prairie Indians who rapidly learned to crave the cheap whiskey and willingly traded their robes and ponies and buffalo hides for it.

The westward march of the Mounties has inspired many books and movies. Commissioner George A. French, who was in command, warned his men of the hardships to be expected, and urged those who might have second thoughts to apply for discharge. He entered upon the expedition, therefore, with men who knew what they were letting themselves in for and nevertheless wanted to go.

On July 8, 1874, the long scarlet line of N.W.M.P. rode out from Dufferin, a settlement on the Red River, Manitoba. For two months the ox carts, wagons, cattle, field pieces and agricultural equipment crawled westward. By late September they had traversed a vastness of stark and silent desolation, throughout which there were probably not more than a hundred white people.

The Force reached its destination near the location of present-day Lethbridge, and selected the site of their post. They named it Fort Macleod in honour of their Assistant Commissioner, James F. Macleod, second in command of the expedition.

During the first five years of patrolling the plains, not a single member of the Force lost his life by human violence, nor did the police fire a shot in anger, yet the law was introduced and enforced.

The first outlaws brought to justice at Fort Macleod were four men arrested after an Indian chief reported trading two ponies for two gallons of whiskey. The whiskey traders were fined, and the police seized two wagon loads of liquor.

All Canada west of the Great Lakes was opened up by traders and settlers under the wing of the Mounted Police. The policeman became, as was required, guide, counsellor and friend; doctor, settler of disputes and protector. He fought prairie fires in summer, sought and rescued persons lost in winter blizzards, carried the mail, and arranged weddings and funerals. These services contributed more than merely enforcing the

law would have done: they made the law a friend of all the family of settlers.

Friendly Indians

Meantime, the Force was busy pacifying the warring tribes of Indians and persuading them into new ways of living. The Red Coat became the badge of friendly authority. It meant to the Indians honesty, courage, wisdom and square-dealing.

It was due to this bond of trust between the Indians and the police that the Blackfoot Treaty was successfully negotiated in 1877.

The Treaty, signed by the Blackfoot, Blood, Sarcee and Stoney tribes, surrendered 50,000 square miles of tribal land to the Government of Canada, established reserves for the Indians, and provided for treaty payments, food allowances, and other benefits. The text of this momentous Treaty is reproduced in a history written by the late Archdeacon S.H. Middleton at the request of Head Chief Shot-on-Both-Sides of the Bloods (Lethbridge Herald, Lethbridge, Alberta, 1954).

Chief Crowfoot of the powerful Blackfoot Confederacy, a significant figure in Canadian history, was the great friend of the North West Mounted Police. He refused to join Sitting Bull, Chief of the Sioux, in making war on the white settlers, and later he rejected the Crees' invitation to join in the Riel uprising.

After the signing of the Blackfoot Treaty in 1877, Crowfoot testified to the belief and faith of his people in the Mounted Police: "If the police had not come to this country where would we all be now? Bad men and whiskey were killing us so fast that very few of us would have been left today. The police have protected us as the feathers of the bird protect it from the frosts of winter."

The Sioux invasion

It was an event in the Cypress Hills, named for the cypress or jack-pine forests in the vicinity, that stirred the government to organize the N.W.M.P.

A gang from Benton, Montana, crossed into Canada searching for horses stolen by a raiding party of Salteaux and Crees. They came upon a camp of Assiniboines and massacred the inhabitants. Equally without reason, a camp of Peigans numbering 170 was killed by white men.

Then came the Sioux, the most powerful, fierce and implacable tribe in all the north-western states. In June 1876 the bitter warfare between the United States army and the Indians of the Plains culminated in a battle on the Little Big Horn River. Colonel George A. Custer and his mounted force of 250 men were wiped out by Chief Sitting Bull and his 2,000 well-armed warriors. The Chief and some 5,000 of his people fled to Canada.

The Mounted Police were hard pressed. They had to snuff out threatened uprisings, prevent the invaders from persuading the Canadian Indians to join them in

fighting the whites, and preserve the Blackfoot hunting grounds from the Sioux.

Superintendent J. M. Walsh, with a dozen constables, rode into the Sioux encampment. Walsh explained the laws of Canada, commanded the Sioux to keep peace with the Canadian tribes, and assigned them hunting spaces. Until they returned to the United States four years later, the Sioux behaved well.

In 1870, just as today, many troubles started because of lack of consultation and dearth of communication. The government sent surveyors to lay out the country in townships and sections for settlement. This alarmed the Métis (persons of mixed white and Indian blood) across whose lands the surveyors ran their lines. They feared their homesteads would be taken from them. Their first uprising has been described as not so much a rebellion against the British Crown as an assertion of the basic rights of British citizens.

The North West Mounted Police took part with militia units in suppressing the second rebellion in 1885.

George S. Howard, former editor of the *R.C.M.P. Quarterly*, has an interesting story to tell about this rebellion, associated with a name famous in world literature. Mr. Howard, now living in Islington, Ontario, retired from the Force in 1939 after 21 years service, with the rank of Sergeant, and has collected an extensive library dealing with the R.C.M.P.

His story has to do with the adventures of a gold watch which belonged to Francis Dickens, third son of England's great novelist, Charles Dickens. He inherited it upon his father's death in 1870.

Francis Dickens joined the N.W.M.P. in 1874, and nine years later he was appointed, with the rank of Inspector, to garrison Fort Pitt with 24 men.

He was in command there in 1885 when, 35 miles away at Frog Lake, all the male inhabitants except one were slain. There were no civilians in Fort Pitt, and the Mounties, outnumbered ten to one by an Indian war party, retired to Battleford.

Included in the personal belongings left behind was Inspector Dickens' watch. It found its way to the belt of Wandering Spirit, war leader of the Cree Indians.

When the rebellion was quelled, the insurgents surrendered their loot, including the watch, which was returned to Inspector Dickens. After passing through many hands it reached E. S. Williamson, grandson of a celebrated Dickensian lecturer.

Mr. Howard, to whose long and persistent search is due the rediscovery of the watch, said: "The watch that had timed the pages of *Mr. Pickwick* in the quiet of Charles Dickens' study and the duties of Dickens' son in a beleaguered N.W.M.P. fort, and decorated the war belt of an Indian chief, had an extraordinary career."

In the Arctic

The story of the North West Mounted Police in the

northern territories is sprinkled with tales of incredible adventure, hardship, and accomplishment. Their duties are to uphold and enforce Canada's sovereignty in an area that covers 1,516,750 square miles, about one-third of the land mass of Canada.

Dealing and living with the Eskimo calls for a sense of humour, fair play, and willingness to do manual labour when necessary. The policeman who does his share and becomes as capable as the Eskimo in travelling and hunting gains respect, co-operation and admiration.

The first post in the true North, beyond the coast, was established on Herschel Island in 1903, where the N.W.M.P. put a halt to the harm being done to the Eskimo by whalers who wintered there.

One incident will illustrate the varied knowledge, the tracking skill, the initiative, and the courage needed by members of the Force. A white trader was murdered by an Eskimo on Northern Baffin Island. Staff Sergeant (later Inspector) Joy carried out the police investigation, found the body, conducted an autopsy, and arrested three suspects. In his capacity as coroner, he held an inquest, and in his capacity as Justice of the Peace he conducted the preliminary hearing of the charge and committed the accused for trial. At their trial before a judge they were found guilty and sentenced to imprisonment.

Discovery of gold in the Yukon thrust new duties upon the Police. The police presence kept serious crime to a minimum in a society where criminal elements abounded, and the trained first aid services of the Police preserved many lives.

Mrs. George Black, who climbed Chilkoot Pass, a 100-yard notch through a 3,500-foot high barrier of rock in 1898, wrote in her book *My Seventy Years* (Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd., London and Toronto, 1938): "We left Dyea on July 12 at noon, to walk the dreaded trail of forty-two miles over the Chilkoot Pass . . . a trail of heart-breaks and dead hopes. It was here that I met for the first time members of the North-West Mounted Police, and I thought that finer, sturdier, more intelligent-looking men would be hard to find."

The St. Roch

The search for a sea passage north of the continent of America to Asia goes back at least to Sir Martin Frobisher's voyages in 1576-1578. Amundsen, 1903-1906, sailed through the North-West Passage from Davis Strait to the Bering Sea.

In 1940 the R.C.M.P. schooner *St. Roch*, used on patrol duties in northern waters and to carry supplies to isolated police posts, became the first ship to navigate the hazardous passage from west to east. Then it sailed back through the passage, traversing waters never before sailed by any vessel. On another occasion *St. Roch* sailed from Vancouver to Halifax by way of the Panama Canal, becoming the first ship to circumnavigate the continent of North America.

Her adventures started very simply. While lying in harbour in British Columbia, the most unusual assignment ever given a police vessel was received by Sergeant Henry Larsen, F.R.G.S. (later Superintendent), Commander of *St. Roch*. He told about it in his report *The North-West Passage* (Queen's Printer, Ottawa, 1969): "When our regular duties along the western Arctic coast were completed, we were to proceed to Halifax, N.S., by way of the North-West Passage." En route, the vessel visited the remote Eskimo tribes on Boothia Peninsula and erected many cairns attesting Canada's presence in the Arctic.

Sergeant Larsen found at Winter Harbour, Melville Island, a large copper plate inscribed with the Union Jack and the Canadian Coat of Arms, and the statement: *This memorial is erected today to commemorate the taking possession for the Dominion of Canada, of the whole Arctic Archipelago laying to the north of America, from long. 60W to 141W, up to lat. 90 north July 1st 1909.* It bore the name of Captain Joseph Elzéar Bernier, Arctic explorer for the Canadian Government.

The achievement of the *St. Roch* was a triumph for Sergeant Larsen and the crew of his vessel, but it was also a moment in history shared by every member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

The *St. Roch* made her last voyage in 1958. It was to Kitsilano Park, Vancouver, where she became the central attraction at the Marine Museum.

Not backward-looking

While taking pride in its significant service to Canada over the past hundred years, the Force does not rely upon its misty past, but is pressing on confidently to deal with the future.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police is one of the world's best known and most versatile police organizations. It is continually making refinements and planning new methods to make life even more uncomfortable for the criminal element.

Six crime detection laboratories at Vancouver, Edmonton, Regina, Winnipeg, Ottawa and Sackville, using up-to-date scientific equipment, receive for examination exhibits of all kinds which are involved in criminal investigations. These services are available to all accredited police forces and government departments in Canada.

At R.C.M.P. Headquarters in Ottawa there is one of the oldest finger-print bureaus in the world. Its facilities are available to all police forces in Canada, and there is an international exchange of information between this bureau and the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation, Scotland Yard, and INTERPOL, the International Criminal Police Organization.

The R.C.M.P. creed

The duty of the R.C.M.P. is to prevent criminal acts if possible, to stop their progress when necessary, and to bring accused persons before the courts.

The law which is enforced by the R.C.M.P. is law

which has grown through the ages, approved by succeeding generations as a tabulation of what are good and bad acts in society. The Mounties are not trying to impose restrictions upon society, but to provide lawfulness so that everyone may be free to live his life in safety and peace.

"Honour" is a very great word in the creed of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Seeking to give service to the individual and to the community, members of the Force keep in mind the three weighty principles of the law: justice, mercy and truth.

The desirability of making the creed and practices of the Force more widely known has led to a moderating of the reticence that gave the Mounties the title "The silent force". On taking the oath of office a member of the R.C.M.P. becomes bound to maintain discreet silence on many phases of his duties, thus safeguarding the rights and privileges of all citizens. This regulation still stands, but in 1952 a Liaison Officer was appointed, his duty being to make available news and reports about the Force so as to increase public knowledge of its aims and work.

An attempt is being made to build closer friendly relations between Canada's youth and the police, and to show young people that the police really care.

In many districts there is an enlightened programme of information arranged between the R.C.M.P., the municipal authorities and the schools. Members of the R.C.M.P. visit schools, giving talks on police responsibilities and duties and they participate in open discussions with pupils.

Uphold the Right

The R.C.M.P. have done so well in preserving the peace and curbing crime in Canada because of superior organization, the use of modern equipment, common sense and adherence to their motto: *Maintiens le Droit — Maintain the Right*. They are men who quietly and incorruptibly take the law into the far places of the country because of a sense of duty to be done. They do not use armed oppression, but tact, courage, understanding and diplomacy.

In his book *Canada, The Foundations of Its Future* (Privately printed by The House of Seagram, 1941), Stephen Leacock wrote: "The North-West Mounted Police became everywhere the symbol of law and order." He commented on their arduous life, the patrol of the plains, the control of the desperado, the winter life in the wooden-shack barracks at twenty below zero. He concluded his summary by saying: "A poet could write:

'They need no sculptured monument, no panoply of stone,

To blazon to a curious world the deeds that they have done.

But the prairie flower blows softly and the scented rose-bud trains

Its wealth of summer beauty o'er the Riders of the Plains'."