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HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
PUBLICATIONS

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Chapters in the North-West History Prior  
to 1890 - - - Related by Old Timers

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The Alberta Field  
Force of '85

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BATTLEFORD  
SASKATCHEWAN

VOL. I. No. VII  
1981

# Canadian North-West Historical Society

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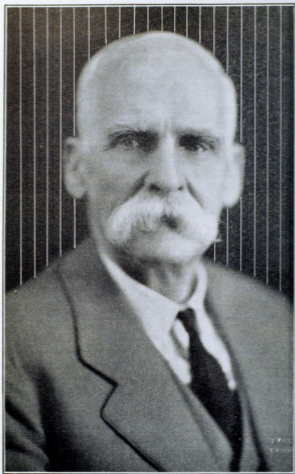
2. The publication of historical works which contain the original stories of the Pioneer. All the stories relating to an historical event will be edited in one publication and will provide an up-to-date source history of the Prairie Provinces. The members will receive the publications of Volume I, of eight publications, on payment of the subscription of \$5.00. A Special offer of Life Subscription of \$25.00 is being offered for a short time.

3. The Historical Archives at Battleford contain books, maps, pamphlets, relics, documents relating to North-West History, for use of the research student.

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5. Historic spots are marked and historic interest in these is created. Public meetings are held to further this work.

6. This is the West's urgent problem. Save the Source History and Honor the Pioneer.



HON. FRANK OLIVER

# The Alberta Field Force of 1885

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EDITOR—COLONEL F. C. JAMIESON, V.D., K.C., M.L.A.

PREFACE—HONOURABLE FRANK OLIVER.

THE ALBERTA FIELD FORCE OF 1885—The Assembly of the Force;  
The March on Edmonton; The Edmonton Home Guard; Preparation at  
Edmonton; From Edmonton to Victoria; Fort Pitt; Frenchman's Butte;  
Loon Lake; The Force Comes Under Middleton's Command.

APPENDIX—I Report of Ed. Hughes.

II Old Timers Who Were There.

III Report of General Strange.

IV Bibliography.

THE HONORARY PATRON—THE IMPERIAL OIL LIMITED

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CANADIAN NORTH-WEST HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
Battleford, Saskatchewan

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## PREFACE

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It is a cause of pride to Canada that the expansion of settlement throughout her prairie west has been accomplished without friction with the native population such as has been almost an unvarying record south of the boundary line. The sole exception was the rebellion of 1885, the events of which occupied a period of not more than three months. The outbreak carried very serious possibilities. Less than twenty years had elapsed since the pioneer settlements of the adjoining State of Minnesota had been devastated under conditions of exceptional horror. Less than ten years before an important United States military force, under a leader of the highest reputation, had been annihilated in the adjoining territory of Dakota.

In the Canadian West the settlers were fewer than had been the case in Minnesota and Dakota, and being more scattered were less fortunately situated for mutual defence. There was tragedy enough in what actually occurred, but the tragedy would have been far greater had the authorities minimized the dangers of the situation or had the need for an adequate military force not been so promptly and efficiently met.

Since 1918 the tendency is to measure all military effort by the standards of the Great War. By comparison the rebellion of '85 was a small affair; but it was neither small nor unimportant to the persons immediately concerned, nor to the country for which it definitely marked the supremacy of constituted authority. Lives were sacrificed—and offered for sacrifice—in 1885 with motives as high as those which governed in the Great War. The occasion of this sacrifice is well worthy of being kept in remembrance. The story of the Alberta Field Force, compiled by Colonel Jamieson, covers military operations in the western part of the region affected by the Rebellion and fills out the picture that would otherwise be incomplete.

FRANK OLIVER

## In Memoriam

JAMES MCKAY, Judge of the Appeal Court of Saskatchewan, was born at Fort Ellice, Manitoba, July 12, 1862. Died December 1, 1931. In 1874 he entered St. John's College, Winnipeg, subsequently attended Manitoba University, from which he graduated in 1882, taking honors in Latin and Greek. He was called to the Manitoba Bar in 1886 and began his legal practice in Prince Albert in 1887. Created Queen's Counsel in 1891. Appointed to the Supreme Court in 1914, and in 1918 to the Court of Appeal. In the Rebellion of 1885 a private in the 90th Regiment, Winnipeg, and attached to Captain French's Scouts. Organized a force to assist in the capture of Almighty Voice. A member of the Church of England. Chancellor and Registrar for the Synod of the Diocese of Saskatchewan. Member of the Masonic Order. President of the Victoria Hospital at Prince Albert. President of the Boy Scout Council, Prince Albert. Fellow of the Historical Society and continually pleaded its cause. An eminent jurist. A citizen of unflinching industry, courtesy and patience, and a kind and gentle man.

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# The Alberta Field Force 1885

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## I. THE ASSEMBLY OF THE FORCE

Towards the end of March, 1885, the situation in the District of Alberta became very alarming to the white settlers who were chiefly in and around the villages of Edmonton, Calgary, Macleod and Lethbridge. The increasing ferment amongst Riel's followers at Batoche had resulted in Colonel Irvine, Commissioner of the North-West Mounted Police, being ordered to the Prince Albert-Carlton-Battleford area with every man that could be spared. Only a half dozen policemen were left at Fort Saskatchewan, the same at Calgary and a score at Macleod. There was no organized Militia in the district.

It was well known that Riel's emissaries had been active with all the bands and on every Reservation the Indians were restless. The disappearance of the buffalo seven or eight years before had changed their condition from one of ease and plenty to one of misery and want. They were thus ready to listen to those who suggested that the white man was to blame for their troubles.

The Indian population was relatively large. Near Macleod were the Bloods and the Peigans, east of Calgary the Blackfeet, west of Calgary the Sarcees and Stoneys, all fine fighting material and possessing many horses. Forty miles south of Edmonton were the Crees of Ermine skin and Bob-tail and the Stoneys of Sharp-head. Just across the Saskatchewan River from Edmonton were the Crees of the Papaschase Reserve and a few miles to the west and north-west were the Tommy le Potac, Callihoo, Alexis and Alexander Reserves, mostly Crees with a few Stoneys. A hundred miles down the Saskatchewan River were the Saddle Lake and Whitefish Lake Reserves and near Fort Pitt were the Onion Lake and Frog Lake Reserves—all Crees. At Lac la Biche were Crees and near Cold Lake, Chippewyans. At the Frog Lake Reserve as "visitors," were the band of Plain Crees headed by old Big Bear. These were restless trouble-makers who had recently returned from the American side of the line. They had refused to settle on a reserve of their own.

On the last day of March came the news of the successful attack made by the half-breeds on the Police and Prince Albert Volunteers under Major Crozier at Duck Lake, forcing the Police to concentrate at Prince Albert and Battleford, where they were virtually besieged.

Many old-timers who ought to know, including the late Lt.-Col. Justus Willson, who was with the Prince Albert Volunteers at Duck Lake, believed that Riel and his friends had planned to defer the actual outbreak until the grass would support the horses of the Indians and that Dumont's hot-headed attack at Duck Lake lost the rebels the co-operation of many powerful bands.

On the second of April the news that Big Bear's band had massacred nine white men on the Frog Lake Reserve and carried off the women and children as prisoners, struck terror into the hearts of the settlers, especially those in the Saskatchewan Valley, and those who had not already done so, rushed for safety to Edmonton, to the Mission at St. Albert, and to the Police post at Fort Saskatchewan. The Scotch half-breeds of Victoria left their homesteads and assembled on a headland on the Saskatchewan, a few miles above the Hudson's Bay post. This camp was well situated for defence.

There is not much evidence that the French half-breeds of the St. Albert and Lac la Biche settlements were at any time influenced by Riel and it seems clear that the murder of two Roman Catholic priests, Pèrè Fafard and Pèrè Marchand by the Indians of Big Bear's Band at Frog Lake, ended all danger from this source. In the Laboucan Settlement on the Battle River, east of the present city of Wetaskiwin, Riel had many friends. This is mentioned below in dealing with Fort Ethier.

At Edmonton a Home Guard was formed, under command of the late Major Stiff with the late Wm. Ibbotson and Mr. J. A. Mitchell, then of the Indian Department and now residing at Pakan, as Lieutenants. They garrisoned the Hudson's Bay Fort and repaired its bastions and palisades.

The response to the call for mobilization of militia units was all that could be desired and the Dominion Government

was able to send to the north-west sufficient troops to deal with the situation promptly. Winnipeg units were the first in the field.

The Minister of Militia, the late Sir Adolphe Caron, early thought of using the fine fighting material to be found amongst the cowboys of Alberta and even before the attack at Duck Lake had telegraphed to a veteran officer of the Imperial and Canadian services, then ranching near the Blackfoot Reserve east of Calgary. This was Major General Thomas Bland Strange, the central figure of the stirring events in Alberta forty-five years ago.

This officer, who died in England a few years ago at a great age, saw service in many parts of the world, including service in the Indian Mutiny. In 1871 he entered the service of the Dominion as Commander of Artillery at the Fortress of Quebec and Inspector of Artillery. He retired in 1881 with the rank of Major-General and took up ranching in Alberta as manager of the Military Colonization Company's Ranch. His story of his life, "Gunner Jingo's Jubilee" is a fascinating record of an adventurous career.

On receiving the Minister's telegram, General Strange left the ranch for Calgary and at Gleichen station received another telegram directing him to report with his corps to General Middleton at Qu'Appelle. On reaching Calgary he found great excitement and some opposition to men being enlisted for general service on the ground that all were needed for home defence. However, the cowboys came forward—splendid fellows with no military training but accustomed to handling horses and firearms and ready and willing to do what was required of them.

General Strange was now placed in command of the District of Alberta and proceeded to organize for the defence of the settlements as well as for general service.

Major Hatton, a former officer of the Canadian Militia, who had at one time been foreman on the M.C.C. Ranch, was appointed to command the Alberta Mounted Rifles, with Messrs. Dunn and Lauder, former sergeants of the Mounted Police as Lieutenants.

Inspector Steele (afterwards Major-General Sir Sam Steele) of the Mounted Police, who was on duty with a detach-

ment in connection with the building of the C.P.R. in British Columbia, was at the General's request called to Calgary and authorized to organize a corps of Scouts of which his detachment of about a score of Police, formed the nucleus. This corps the General named "Steele's Scouts." The other officers of this corps were Captain Oswald and Lieutenant Coryell, a graduate of the Royal Military College. The well-known Police figure, Sergt. Fury, was with Steele.

Major James Walker, one of the "old original" superintendents of the North-West Mounted Police, then ranching at Calgary, was appointed to command the Calgary Home Guard. Major Stewart of the Stewart Ranch raised a corps known as the Rocky Mountain Rangers, which were stationed at Fort Macleod and Lethbridge and patrolled the Reservations and ranch country along the border. His officers included the late Senator Deveber as surgeon, Captains Lord Boyle, Gilpin Brown and John Herron, Lieutenants J. R. Scott, Hon. H. Boyle, W. F. Powell, James Christie, George Ives and Charles Smith. A Home Guard was later formed at High River.

A constant exchange of telegrams between General Strange, General Middleton and Militia Headquarters was kept up. Strange was informed that the 65th Carabiniers Mount Royal, under Lieut. Col. J. A. Ouimet, M.P., and the 92nd Winnipeg Light Infantry under Lieut.-Col. W. Osborne Smith, C.M.G., were being sent to Calgary; also that the 7th Voltigeurs de Quebec would follow later.

On April 7th, a message to the General from Edmonton, signed by Messrs. J. McDougall, Hudson's Bay Chief Factor; George A. Simpson, J.P., and Donald Ross, chairman of the Defence Committee, stated that the Indians were on the war-path and asked for men and arms at once. Mowat's ride from Edmonton to Calgary with this message, changing horses frequently, and galloping the whole 200 miles, is one of the famous rides of Alberta History. On the 11th a telegram from General Middleton ordered Strange to march at once to Edmonton with whatever forces he could command. April 12th saw the arrival at Calgary of the first troops from the East—the 65th Carabiniers Mount Royal. Lt.-Col. Ouimet returned East at once, leaving the battalion under his second in command, Lt.-Col. Hughes, who had been an officer of the Headquarters Staff of Military District No. 6 (Montreal). The adjutant

was Captain Cortlandt Starnes, now Commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

The story of the part taken by this Battalion in the campaign was published by Charles R. Daoust, a sergeant of the unit, under the title, "*Cent-vingt Jours de Service Actif.*" Daoust says that during the evening of the 13th a runner brought in the report that a band of Indians was only two miles away. A picquet of twenty men under Captain Starnes was posted "on a neighbouring mountain." On another day a snow storm which the inhabitants of the "village" called a "chinook" drove the 65th from their tents to the shelter of the Mounted Police Barracks.

On April 17th the 92nd Winnipeg Light Infantry arrived at Calgary, under command of Lt. Col. W. Osborne Smith, C.M.G., a former commander of Military District No. 10 (Winnipeg). Capt. C. Constantine, afterwards a well-known Mounted Police Officer, was adjutant. The battalion consisted of seven companies of forty men each.

One company was left at Calgary, one at Macleod, and one at Gleichen with a detachment at Crowfoot. Four companies marched with Strange's force.

Inspector A. B. Perry, a graduate of the Royal Military College, who had served for a time as an officer of the Royal Engineers and who was afterwards Commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, was given the rank of Major in the Militia and was ordered from Macleod with 20 Police and one muzzle-loading 9-pounder Field Gun—the Artillery of the Alberta Field Force. This old gun, even then a veteran, after being hauled and floated all the way to Frenchman's Butte and Beaver River, now rests with an old companion in front of the Old Timers' Cabin at Edmonton.

All of the troops which General Strange expected to arrive in Alberta at an early date were now assembled and he made plans to move on Edmonton without further delay. These plans were telegraphed to General Middleton.

Transport consisted of some Government survey cars and hired farm wagons.

General Strange tells us that the whole force, except the Mounted Police, wore soft felt hats looped up at the left side;

the 65th were in rifle green uniform, commonly called "black"; the Winnipeg Light Infantry wore scarlet jackets; the Alberta Mounted Rifles were in brown canvas "police" stable jackets, and Steele's Scouts in buckskin shirts and "Schapps." The Police at first wore their usual uniform but later put their scarlet jackets in the wagons and wore stable jackets. Police and Scouts used Mexican saddles which were late in arriving and in bad repair, causing this unit delay in leaving Calgary. Police, Scouts and Mounted Rifles had Winchester rifles, carried across the saddle in a loop attached to the horn. The Infantry used the Enfield rifle.

A veteran friend of General Strange's service in India, Captain Dale of the Madras Fusiliers, then farming in Manitoba, was made Brigade Major, and the General's son, Captain E. Bland Strange, a graduate of the Royal Military College, acted as A.D.C. Captain Wright of the 43rd Battalion, Ottawa, Captain Hamilton and Mr. Desbrisay were Supply and Transport Officers.

Surgeon-Major Pennefather was Medical Officer.

## 2. THE MARCH ON EDMONTON

This little army of horse, foot and "gun" marched on Edmonton in three echelons.

Reports had been received by the General of depredations by half-breeds and Indians at Battle River, Beaver Lake, Victoria and Saddle Lake. From the small settlement at the crossing of the Red Deer, the Gaetz and Beatty families had fled to Calgary.

Five days before the first elements of the force marched from Calgary, the General ordered Lieut. Coryell and a patrol of fifteen other ranks of "Steele's Scouts" to proceed in the direction of Edmonton in advance of a party of the Red Deer settlers returning to their homes. The men of this party had been provided with arms and organized as a "Home Guard" under Mr. Beatty as Sergeant. Coryell was ordered, if he found his patrol strong enough, to secure the crossing of the Red Deer, placing the buildings in a state of defence as quickly as possible.

The Rev. John McDougall was accepted as a Volunteer and with four "mountain" Stoneys from Morley was given the



job of carrying despatches to Edmonton if possible and there arranging for boat transport on the Saskatchewan River.

Canon MacKay was attached to Strange's Headquarters as Chaplain, but also served as a very efficient scout. A young Presbyterian minister from Fort Macleod also served as a chaplain with the force.

The first echelon marched from Calgary on April 20th, under command of General Strange himself. It consisted of Mounted Police and Scouts to the number of 60, under Major Steele, Nos. 2, 5, 6 and 7 companies of the 65th, under Captains des Trois-Maisons, Villeneuve, Giroux and Doherty (now the Right Hon. C. J. Doherty). This section of the 65th referred to by Daoust as "*le Bataillon Droit*" was under Lt.-Col. Hughes with the Adjutant Captain Starnes.

General Strange directed Major Steele to arrange for advance and flanking scouts and to select camp grounds; on arriving at camp ground the wagons (175 in number) were to circle until a complete corral was formed; fires were to be lighted only outside; the Cavalry was ordered to herd and guard the Cavalry and transport horses at night.

At the Battle River the column was joined by Fathers Lacombe and Scullen, who had been trying to induce the bands of Bob-tail, Ermine-skin and Sharp-head to keep the peace. The two former chiefs were presented to the General who refused to shake hands with them as they were reported to have plundered the Hudson's Bay Company's store and were considered "bad." They received a stern warning. Steele says these two chiefs were reputed to be "coffee-coolers" of the worst type.

On the 23rd the second echelon marched from Calgary under Major Perry. It consisted of his detachment of twenty Police with the field gun, Nos. 1, 3, 4 and 6 companies of the 65th under Captains Ostell, Bauset, Roy and Ethier. These companies, called by Daoust "*le Bataillon Gauche*," were commanded by Captain Robert. The march of this group is described by Daoust in great detail. It appears that there was much friction between the civilian teamsters and the men of the 65th, arising out of the old vexed question of who might ride on the wagons. It required the firm hand of Major Perry on more than one occasion to prevent serious trouble. The

crossing of the Red Deer was accomplished with difficulty as the water was high, the cable down and the ferry out of order. With great difficulty the cable was gotten across. A raft was built to be used instead of a ferry and the precious gun placed thereon, escorted by Major Perry and several soldiers. As the raft was pushed out from shore it was caught in the strong current, the ropes broke and away went the raft down stream towards a dangerous rapid about four miles below. Men ran along the bank trying to throw ropes to the Major on the raft. When nearly three miles down stream, Major Perry, by jumping into the water, managed to seize a rope and regain the raft. It was hauled ashore beside a cut-bank and the gun had to be hoisted up in parts. The trails were soft and the difficulty of hauling the gun and wagons was at times very great. The late James E. Green of Edmonton, who was a Police Corporal with Perry, told the writer that they spent nearly a day in crossing the Blackmud Valley.

Twenty men of No. 8 Company, 65th, under Lieut. Normandeau, were ordered to remain as a guard at the Crossing of the Red Deer and to construct a "fort" or strong-point. Daoust gives a drawing and description of "Fort Normandeau" which this detachment built. It consisted of a large log house, loop-holed, with a surrounding palisade, and moat. An elaborate description of this fort, which seems to have been very well built, is given in the Edmonton Bulletin of July 4th, 1885, which also contains a description of "Fort Ostell," constructed at the Battle River, and also a description of "Fort Ethier" at the Government Farm at the crossing of Pipestone Creek.

As Perry's Command passed the Pipestone, orders were received to establish the post at that point. Lieut. Villeneuve and twenty other ranks of the 65th were accordingly assigned to this duty. A palisade and trench surrounded the buildings and a strong log bastion was built after the model of a bastion on St. Helen's Island at Montreal. This bastion has been carefully preserved by Mr. Frank Lucas, owner of the property. In the fall of 1923 the Alberta Historical Society, on behalf of the 65th Regiment, presented Mr. Lucas with a replica of the home-made Union Jack flown by the original garrison of "Fort Ethier."

The third group, having been delayed awaiting the arrival of saddlery for the Alberta Mounted Rifles and for the comple-

tion of transport arrangements, marched under command of Lt.-Col. W. Osborne Smith, C.M.G. It consisted of the Winnipeg Light Infantry (4 companies) and transport. Orders were issued to leave a detachment of the Alberta Mounted Rifles under Lieut. Dunn to patrol the Calgary-Edmonton Trail.

General Strange with his first echelon reached Edmonton on May 1st, having made the march of 200 miles from Calgary in 10 days. Before crossing the Saskatchewan, No. 7 Company of the 65th, under Captain Doherty, was ordered to proceed via Clover Bar and report to Major A. H. Griesbach, in command of the Police Post at Fort Saskatchewan and of the Edmonton area.

The General described his first sight of Edmonton, "The scattered little town of Edmonton peeping through clumps of pine and poplar, the blue sky and brilliant sunshine gilding the grey old stockades of the Hudson's Bay Fort with its quaint bastions and buildings crowning the steep bank over the broad swift sweep of the Saskatchewan," as a sight that lingered long in his memory.

After crossing the river on John Walter's ferry, the little army was formed up and was led bravely up the hill to the South Gate of the Fort, while a salute was fired from the company's three brass cannon served by the Edmonton Home Guard.

A small boy spectator (now Major General the Hon. W. A. Griesbach) remembers that General Strange, a handsome big man with a huge beard, rode a beautiful chestnut horse, wore a soft felt hat turned up at the side, the military garment known as a "frock coat," and a big sword. To the greatly relieved people of Edmonton and vicinity, gathered at the Fort, he and his men represented safety and the power of law and order.

### 3. THE EDMONTON HOME GUARD

The Edmonton Home Guard who had "held the fort" were now disbanded and publicly thanked by the General for their services. Some of the men enlisted in Steele's Scouts and others in the Edmonton Rifle Company which was formed at a later date.

The following information regarding the Edmonton Home Guard has been given to the writer by Mr. John A. Mitchell,

one of the officers, now residing at Pakan, and by Mr. Kenneth A. McLeod, a sergeant of the Guard. It was formed on receipt of the news of the Frog Lake massacre. The officers were Major William Stiff, Retired List Canadian Militia, in command; Lieut. William G. Ibbotson, Retired List Canadian Militia, and Lieut. John A. Mitchell, attached to the Edmonton Indian Agency. The total strength was about thirty. The guard proceeded to occupy Fort Edmonton and made use of the arms found in the Armoury. These consisted of three small brass cannon and about a dozen muzzle-loading muskets of the type in use in the army at the time of the Indian Mutiny of 1857. There was no ammunition on hand. Some of the men of the Guard were set at work moulding lead balls. These were not round but cylindrical with a conical point and a groove at the base to which a gauze sack of powder was attached. The women made up these sacks and also helped in moulding the lead balls and in fastening the powder sacks to them. Mrs. Mitchell and Mrs. Charles Sutter were particularly active. The ball and powder sack constituting the "load," were placed in the barrel of the musket and rammed down without a "wad." A few members of the guard had private rifles, but some had no fire-arms, not even shot-guns. Each man had a "brush-hook" as a reserve weapon.

The bastions and stockades of the Fort had been allowed to get into disrepair and had to be renewed. The "Big House" was outside the stockade.

The members of the Guard slept in the Hudson's Bay bunk-house. At first the men were on duty continuously, but later attended to their own work during the day and were on duty during the nights.

A steam engine and line of hose was secured and placed in the Fort plaza near the well for use in case of probable employment of "fire-arrows" by the Indians.

There was always a sentry at the gate which faced the river. A line of sentries extended from the Fort eastward to the Edmonton Hotel (Donald Ross' Hotel which stood at the base of the hill on 101st Street), thence up the hill and across the Hudson's Bay Reserve along or near what is now Jasper Avenue and thence back to the Fort. Later, some rifle pits were dug on the St. Albert Trail, near where the Misericordia Hospital now stands. The brush was cleared from a zone

around the Fort. A plan of defence was drawn up and special "sharpshooters" were detailed for the three bastions. The sergeants in charge of the bastions were Kenneth A. McLeod, James McDonald, and John S. Edmonton. It was realized that the Fort could be fired into from the higher ground where the Parliament Buildings now stand, but it was not considered wise to attempt to construct a new fort on a better site. There were several alarms but no hostiles appeared.

#### 4. PREPARATIONS AT EDMONTON

The reader will remember that there were now three "forts" or strong-points on the lines of communication between Calgary and Edmonton—Fort Normandean at the Red Deer River, Fort Ostell at the Battle River and Fort Ethier at the Pipestone Creek. There were also the patrols of Alberta Mounted Rifles under Lieut. Dunn. A despatch rider service and supply service by means of wagon trains were organized.

The group commanded by Major Perry reached Edmonton on May 5th and the third group, commanded by Lt.-Col. W. Osborne Smith, C.M.G., arrived on the 10th.

A large scow, 100 feet by 25 feet, was requisitioned from the Hudson's Bay Company, and four smaller scows, construction of which had been commenced on Rev. John McDougall's arrival at Edmonton, were rushed to completion. General Strange states that a ferry in use at Clover, with wire cable, was purchased and taken along, so that if required the cable could be stretched across the river and a "cable-swing-ferry" operated to transfer troops rapidly across the river.

A specially built scow had a platform for the gun and barrels and sacks of pork, beef, flour and other supplies were piled around the sides of the scow as "armour." On account of the lack of space the gun was lashed, the whole scow taking the recoil and the gun was transversed by pointing the whole scow—the same principle was used in the Great War by air-pilots in firing their machine guns.

This gunboat was named the "Big Bear" by the lads of the 65th and was no doubt the first warship in Alberta waters.

Some feared that the scows were not "sea-worthy" and Colonel Osborne Smith requested a Board of Enquiry. The

Board was authorized and several witnesses were examined. These witnesses satisfied the Board that the scows were safe.

Some Edmonton men possessing special qualifications were enlisted in Steele's Scouts. These included Troopers W. D. Patton, Wm. Ibbotson, W. Stiff, J. Beldon, J. A. Petrie, W. F. Spearin, F. Walters, W. R. West (Bill West), G. E. White, P. Young, Alex. Rowland, J. Rowland, F. Rowland, C. Whitford, J. Calder and others.

As the supply of case-shot for the field gun was very small, bags were filled with trade balls from the Hudson's Bay Store and proved satisfactory.

The wagon transport of the force was reorganized at Edmonton, many settlers in the vicinity being engaged with their teams. The teamsters were armed with "Snider" rifles. Extra supplies and forage were obtained but as the grass was beginning to grow not much hay was carried, but oats had to be provided for cavalry and transport horses.

Colonel Ouimet arrived at Edmonton before the force moved east, and took up his headquarters in the Fort, where No. 2 Company of the 65th was left in garrison.

Prominent citizens of Edmonton wrote a formal protest to General Strange that the garrison of one company left there was not sufficient, but the General refused to further weaken his small column. A little later Lt.-Col. Ouimet obtained the organization of the St. Albert Mounted Rifles, commanded by Captain Sam Cunningham, a prominent Metis, afterwards a member of the North-West Council, with Lieut. Daniel Maloney, a prominent settler, afterwards a member of the North-West Legislature, and Lieut. Octave Bellerose, a prominent Metis. Later, No. 7 Company of the Winnipeg Light Infantry, commanded by Captain MacIntosh, arrived from Southern Alberta, and remained in garrison at Edmonton.

##### 5. FROM EDMONTON TO VICTORIA

General Strange moved by "bounds" and his next objective was Victoria.

The first elements left Edmonton, by the old Fort Pitt trail on May 5th, and consisted of Major Steele in command with Steele's Scouts and Nos. 5 and 6 Companies of the 65th. Daoust notes that two prominent settlers were met near Fort

Saskatchewan and that these men said that the Halfbreeds and Indians had right on their side and that it would take an army of twenty thousand men to put down the rebellion; that the Halfbreeds had gone too far in revolt to retreat and would sell their lives dearly.

The second group consisted of Nos. 3 and 4 Companies of the 65th under Lt.-Col. Hughes, who marched from Edmonton on May 8th and caught up with Major Steele at Deep Creek.

On May 10th the combined groups under Lt.-Col. Hughes marched again and arrived in Victoria on the afternoon of the 11th.

On May 16th the flotilla of boats having on board General Strange and his staff, Major Perry and his Police with the field gun, also the Winnipeg Light Infantry under Colonel Osborne Smith, arrived at Victoria. The flotilla had made a safe voyage, preceded by scouts in canoes. The scows simply "floated down the river."

A Home Guard was enrolled at Victoria under command of the Rev. A. McLachlan, a Methodist missionary, and arrangements made to repair the stockade of the old Hudson's Bay Fort and put the place in a state of defence. Rations were supplied to be issued to the settlers. General Strange states that a half company of the 65th were left in garrison.

The whole force (except the Alberta Mounted Rifles) was now assembled in one camp and plans were made for the advance into the area where contact with the enemy might be expected. The general plan of campaign as sanctioned by General Middleton was that Strange's troops, going down the river and Middleton's troops coming up the river, should get into communication and attack Big Bear or Poundmaker (or both together, as was believed probable) in a joint operation.

Strange says that he felt obliged to proceed although disappointed that the remaining companies of the Winnipeg Light Infantry had not been pushed forward more quickly than they were, to be followed by the 9th Voltigeurs of Quebec under Lieut.-Col. Amyot, who were in turn to have been replaced in garrison duty in the southern part of the district by the Montreal Garrison Artillery (serving as infantry). This latter unit was actually stationed at Regina.

An unsuccessful effort was made to get Chief Pakan of the Whitefish Reserve to provide some scouts for the force.

On the 17th, Major Steele with Steele's Scouts moved on to Saddle Lake, preceded by an advance party under Lieut. Coryell, who seems to have been getting jobs of this sort very often.

On the 20th, the force left Victoria. The Winnipeg Light Infantry exchanged places with the 65th, who embarked in the boats. The men proceeded to name these "Big Bear," "Nancy," "Bauset" and "Roy du Bord." On May 23, the Alberta Mounted Rifles caught up with the force at Dog Rump Creek.

Standing orders for the force repeated the direction that the wagons were to be coralled in a circle in case of attack at night; no tents or "truck of any kind" allowed within the corral; headquarters and units were to pitch their tents in a single line outside the corral and near their own wagons.

On the night of the 22nd, some shots were heard on the shore and the whole of the 65th was speedily under arms, went ashore, climbed the bank, and deployed. After the neighbourhood had been patrolled thoroughly and no enemy found, the troops returned to the boats, but thereafter bivouacked on land at night.

On Sunday, the 24th of May, the scows were tied up at the mouth of the Frog Lake Creek. Mass was celebrated on board one of the boats. From now on the land column and the flotilla kept in close touch with each other. At Moose Hills Creek information was received that a large band of Indians was near Fort Pitt. The field gun was landed and the force proceeded with great caution. Fort Pitt was reached on the 25th. It was a smoking ruin, deserted by its former Police garrison. At Frog Lake Lieut. Coryell's patrol (including the three Rowlands, W. R. West and Calder) found the bodies of the victims of the massacre. The bodies of the two priests were in the cellar of a house which had been burned. The other bodies were lying on the ground where they had fallen. One man's dog was dead across his knees. The bodies were buried. Canon MacKay reading a funeral service.



## 6. FORT PITT

The story of the defence of the post by Inspector Dickens (son of the famous novelist), and his Police is that he had withdrawn his detachment from Frog Lake Reserve, the scene of the revolting massacre, at the request of the Agent, shortly before the tragedy, which occurred immediately after the Big Bear bands heard of the Duck Lake fight. The whole force of Police under Inspector Dickens had then proceeded to strengthen the Fort, which consisted of some five buildings without a palisade, and by building such fences and barriers as they could and pulling down outlying shacks. Doors and windows were barricaded and loop holes made in the walls. Dickens had a number of civilians to protect, including women and children, and had sent a message to Battleford asking for a reinforcement of fifty men but got no reply, the bearer having been intercepted. The Fort was now invested by Big Bear's band, who camped just out of range on the high ground to the north, having with them as prisoner Halpin and others. Big Bear demanded the surrender of all arms and ammunition and privately sent word to Mr. McLean, the senior Hudson's Bay Company representative, asking that some blankets be put aside for him, saying that he was an old man and that when the Fort was taken his young men would get everything. Mr. McLean went out to parley with the Indians, thinking he might induce them to keep the peace, but was treacherously taken prisoner. Strange to say, McLean sent in word for his family to join him, and they went accompanied by all the civilians in the post. They became prisoners of the Indians and were dragged around the country for weeks before they were finally released. They were often threatened with murder and were in danger from General Strange's gun fire at the battle of Frenchman's Butte. Their safety was largely due to the friendly attitude of some Wood Crees with Big Bear.

Constables Cowan, Loasby and Quinn, who had been sent out on patrol to Frog Lake, in returning discovered the Indians between them and the Fort. Cowan and Loasby decided to ride through but the Crees opened fire, killing Cowan and wounding Loasby. The garrison of the Fort then opened a heavy fire on the Indians and Loasby managed to crawl to safety. Quinn escaped for the moment, but later fell into the hands of the Indians.

Seeing it was useless to remain, Dickens embarked his little command on a scow during the night and escaped to Battleford.

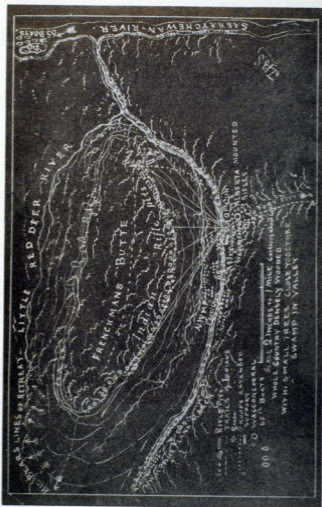
When the troops arrived they gave Constable Cowan's mutilated body a military funeral. His heart had been cut out and stuck on a stick. His body was removed a few years ago by Mr. Lovell and Sergt. Hall of Onion Lake to the Military Cemetery at the foot of the Cairn erected by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board at Frog Lake, to mark the scene of the massacre.

#### 7. FRENCHMAN'S BUTTE

On the night of May 25, the Force camped on the high ground north of the ruins of Fort Pitt. All of the mounted troops were assigned to the task of discovering the trail the Indians had taken with their white prisoners, while an infantry fatigue party was set to work repairing what was left of the buildings and palisades of the Fort.

Major Perry and his Police without their field gun, accompanied by Canon MacKay and Rev. John McDougall, both accomplished scouts, born in the country, were ferried across to the south side of the Saskatchewan. On finding some signs that the Indians and their prisoners had crossed, this party followed the trail, believing that Big Bear and his Indians had set out to join Poundmaker near Battleford. This proved a "false scent" however, and although Perry searched the country as far as Battleford, he got no information of the enemy. Steele, with about 100 cavalry, examined trails on the north side of the river and finally picked up a heavy trail leading east.

With the General's approval, Steele followed the trail, and near midnight found himself on the high bank of the river about three miles east of Fort Pitt. While halted and looking about for a place to bivouac, the Major was fired upon at close quarters by an Indian lying in the grass. The Indian then sprang up and tried to reach his horse, but was, as Steele says, brought down by a shot from Corp. McLelland of the Police. Immediately heavy firing broke out from Steele's men and concealed Indians. This lasted only a few minutes, when the small band of Indians galloped off towards the east. Steele says the band he encountered was an outpost and probably in-



FRENCHMAN'S BUTTE

tended to stampede his horses when his men had got into their blankets.

This incident was reported to General Strange and Steele's men bivouacked for the night. Next morning the trail to the east was followed. In a short time the advanced scouts under Whitford of Edmonton were driven in by a large band of yelling braves. These, however, on seeing the main body, cleared out towards the east.

Shortly after this incident General Strange appeared with the Winnipeg Light Infantry, the remainder of the Alberta Mounted Rifles under Major Hatton, and the field gun manned by an infantry crew, under Captain E. Bland Strange, A.D.C., and Sergt. O'Connor of the Mounted Police. The infantry were in wagons. The 65th Bn., to the number of about 100, under Lt.-Col. Hughes, had been embarked on the "Big Bear," with orders to land when they saw the signal of a white flag displayed on the "mountain" (high bank). One company of the 65th had been left to repair and garrison Fort Pitt. Daoust says the repair was accomplished in 14 hours of work.

On reaching Major Steele, the wagons were formed into a corral, under Major Wright of the 43rd Regiment. The drivers, being armed, acted as a transport guard. The march was then resumed, and about four miles further on touch was gained with the enemy again. The Indians were on a ridge and on a bare summit on the left front of the force a fine band was galloping in a circle, giving the "Red Book" signal to their main body, "enemy in sight." General Strange deployed his force and advanced. The cavalry dismounted and were deployed on the left, the Winnipeg Light Infantry on the right. On advancing no serious opposition was encountered. Both Strange and Steele noted the extreme difficulty of keeping touch while advancing in the thick poplar woods.

The field gun was brought into action and opened on this cavalcade, which at once moved off east towards Frenchmen's Butte. The 65th had come up just in time to fire a few rounds at the retreating cavalcade.

The advanced scouts kept in touch with the Indians which Steele says could be seen before dark, moving up the slopes of the well-known old-time landmark, "Frenchman's Butte"—Steele had seen it last in 1876 and remarks that it