



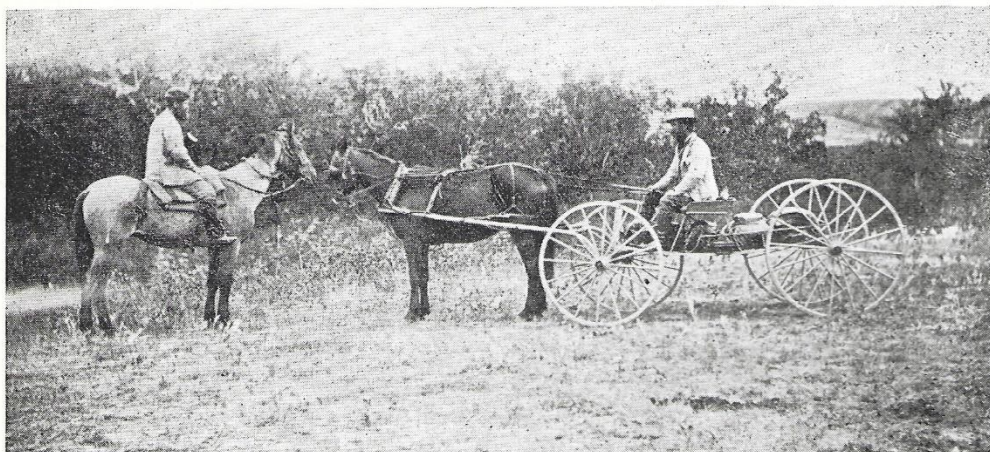
The Historic Forty-Ninth

by

John Peter Turner

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Mounted Police
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Top—Commr D. R. Cameron and interpreter.

Centre—Officers of Canadian Boundary Survey. From left to right, *standing*: Sub-Assistant Astronomers Burpee, King and Coster; Commissary, Captain Herchmer; Chief Astronomer, Captain Anderson; Geologist, Professor Dawson; Surveyor Russell; Sub-Astronomer Ashe. *Sitting*: Assistant Astronomer Galwey; Secretary, Captain Ward; Commissioner, Captain Cameron; Assistant Astronomer, Captain Featherstonhaugh; Doctor Burgess; Veterinary Surgeon Boswell.

Bottom—Royal Engineers detachment.

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by JOHN PETER TURNER

Sixty-nine years ago a band of men laboured and toiled westward along the 49th parallel into an unsettled land. And out of their work evolved the most friendly boundary in existence—the line between Canada and the United States.

DISPUTES concerning international boundaries clutter the pages of history.

Difficulties bearing upon territorial limitations have resulted in countless wars and the dissolution of many dynasties. But resort to arms for the purpose of establishing tangible or imaginary walls between territorial claimants has not always followed. Goodwill, equitable interchange of human energies, co-operation, trust—these are a few of the inevitable blessings that have accrued from well-defined and well-respected boundaries. Nowhere has this been more fully exemplified than in the New World. No international demarkation stands more firmly rooted or enjoys more wholesome respect than the border line between the Dominion of Canada and the United States.

Happily, there have been no Maginot or Siegfried lines in North America.

The story of the actual marking of the 900-mile link from Lake of the Woods to the Rocky Mountains by the North American Boundary Expedition of 1872-4, is one of remarkable foresight, unbending courage and high achievement.

* * *

TO LOOK back. Upon the completion of the 'Louisiana Purchase', in 1803, the boundaries of the vast territory thereby ceded to the United States presented a geographical problem. Subsequently, in an endeavour to arrive at a definite solution to the vexatious question, it was claimed that, by the Treaty of Utrecht, concluded in 1713,

the 49th parallel of latitude had been adopted as the dividing line between the old French possessions of the west and south and the British territories of Hudson Bay on the north. Concerning the limitations of the vague, unknown Louisiana, especially beyond the Rocky Mountains, no-one could speak with finality. There were the unsettled claims of Spain, Russia, and Great Britain besides those of the United States. The latter proposed, as a basis from which to work, that the dividing line should run from the north-western extremity of the Lake of the Woods, north or south as the case might require, to the 49th parallel of latitude, thence to the Pacific. At the convention of London, Oct. 20, 1818, the commissioners appointed respectively by Her Britannic Majesty and by the President of the United States agreed to admit this line as far west as the Rocky Mountains.

Negotiations bearing chiefly on the regions of the Pacific were carried on over a period of years. In 1845, the British minister at Washington suggested a completed east and west line which would have given Great Britain two-thirds of Oregon, including the free navigation of the Columbia River.

This proposal was promptly rejected, and no further attempt at adjustment was made until the next year. President Polk then insisted that the boundary should be fixed at 54° 40'. An animated debate on the subject began and lasted until near the close of the Washington session of 1846, and the question lost most of its national importance in bitter party conflict. An election was pending.



Top—Half-breed scouts for the Canadian Commission.

Centre—Officers of the U.S. Northern Boundary Commission. From left to right, *standing*: Secretary Bangs; Astronomer, Major Twining; Surveyor, Lieutenant Green. *Sitting*: Astronomer, Captain Gregory; Chief Astronomer, Colonel Farquhar; Commissioner Campbell. *Right side*: Escort officers.

Bottom—Commission employees at North West Angle.

Most of the Democrats adopted the recommendation of the President, and coined the defiant cry: 'Fifty-four forty or fight!' This ultimatum caused a few leaders of the government party, of whom Col Thomas H. Benton was perhaps the most prominent, to unite with the opposition.

Finally, that same year, a treaty was signed and the 49th parallel became the international boundary.

Meanwhile, as a result of the Oregon dispute, the British Government sent out a military force "for the defence of the British settlements". These troops—347 regulars under Major Crofton—were made up of a wing of the 6th Royal Regiment of Foot, a detachment of Royal Engineers and some artillery. The traditional redcoat was thus introduced to the plains. Some of the men were stationed at Fort Garry (the embryo Winnipeg) on the Red River and the others twenty miles down the stream at Lower Fort Garry, known also as the 'Stone Fort'. These troops returned to England in 1848.

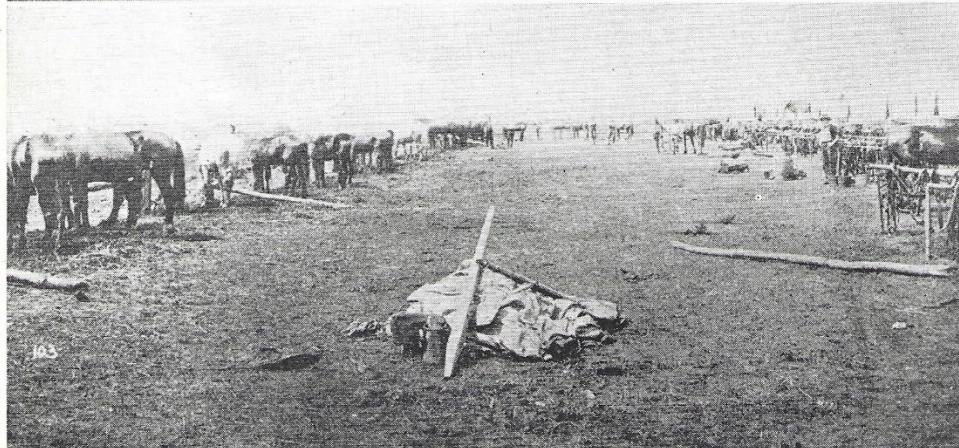
In 1870, Canada completed the purchase of the great realm of Rupert's Land from the Hudson's Bay Company. The time had come for the marking of the Canada-U.S. boundary and the establishment of law and order in the West. Two years later arrangements were made with the United States for the survey and demarcation of the line; and the following year, 1873, was to witness the formation of the North West Mounted Police.

* * *

IN 1872, under the titles of 'Her Majesty's North American Boundary Commission' and 'United States Northern Boundary Commission', a dual organization was set up by Canada and Britain on one side and the United States on the other. These commissions were to cooperate in locating and marking the line agreed upon.

The Canadian Commissioner was Capt. Donald Roderick Cameron, R.A. (later major general, appointed in 1888 to the command of Royal Military College at Kingston; a son-in-law of Sir Charles Tupper, Prime Minister of Canada, 1896). He was supported by four officers of the Royal Engineers: Capt. Samuel Anderson, Chief Astronomer, who had seen service at Greenwich and taken part in the survey of the boundary between British Columbia and the United States years earlier; Capt. Featherstonhaugh, senior officer to Anderson; Capt. Arthur C. Ward, Secretary and Paymaster; and Lieutenant Galwey. In addition there were sub-assistant - astronomers Coster, Ashe, George F. Burpee, and W. F. King (subsequently International Boundary Commissioner). There were two principal surveyors, Lieutenant Colonel Forrest, Commandant of the Ottawa Garrison Artillery, and Alexander Russell, brother of Deputy Surveyor - General Lindsay Russell. L. A. Hamilton, who years later was to map out the town-site of Vancouver and become land commissioner of the Canadian Pacific Railway, served as assistant surveyor. Dr Burgess, his assistant Dr Millman, and veterinary surgeon George Boswell were also members of the staff. A company of Royal Engineers served in various capacities. Occupational positions were filled by nearly three hundred young Canadians and Old Countrymen. A corps of mounted scouts, composed chiefly of half-breeds served under William Hallett, a famous Scotch Métis from Red River.

The United States Commission employed about 250 civilians under Archibald Campbell who had been a commissioner in the survey of the British Columbia - United States' line. Other officers were Lt Col F. M. Farquhar, Chief Astronomer, who was later succeeded by Capt. W. J. Twining; Sub-Astronomer Captain Gregory;



Top—Canadian Boundary Commission headquarters, Dufferin, Man.

Centre—Horse corral at Dufferin.

Bottom—U.S. Commission ambulance. In rear seat, Commissioner Campbell. Standing, left to right: Secretary Bangs, Captain Cameron, Colonel Farquhar, Captains Anderson, Gregory and Ward.

Lieutenant Green of the U.S. Engineers, Chief Surveyor; and J. E. Bangs, Secretary. Dr Elliott Coues acted as geologist and naturalist. In addition to two troops of the 7th U.S. Cavalry, there were five companies of U.S. infantry acting as escort.

* * *

ACTUAL field work commenced in September, 1872. By pre-arrangement, the line was run eastward from the Red River to the Lake of the Woods mostly by the British party. Advantage was taken of the late season to negotiate the many muskegs and swamplands encountered. East of the Roseau River, through the forested country strewn with windfall, *brulé* and rock, dog-teams and snow-shoes were the principal means of travel. The winter was exceptionally severe and the hardships were extreme. Quartermaster, Capt. Lawrence Herchmer, late 15th Regiment (fourth commissioner of the North West Mounted Police, 1886-1900), had his hands full keeping two supply posts and the scattered parties replenished from the main depot at Dufferin.

Upon reaching the Lake of the Woods the boundary as defined by treaty was found to turn north-east to the North-west Angle, where boundary commissioners under the Treaty of Ghent, 1814, had terminated their labours in 1825. In determining the point where the 49th parallel strikes the western shore of Lake of the Woods, there was a difference of only twenty-eight feet between the findings arrived at by the British and U.S. astronomers; as a consequence the middle point was accepted as correct. During the winter two men lost their lives, one from exposure, the other by a falling tree.

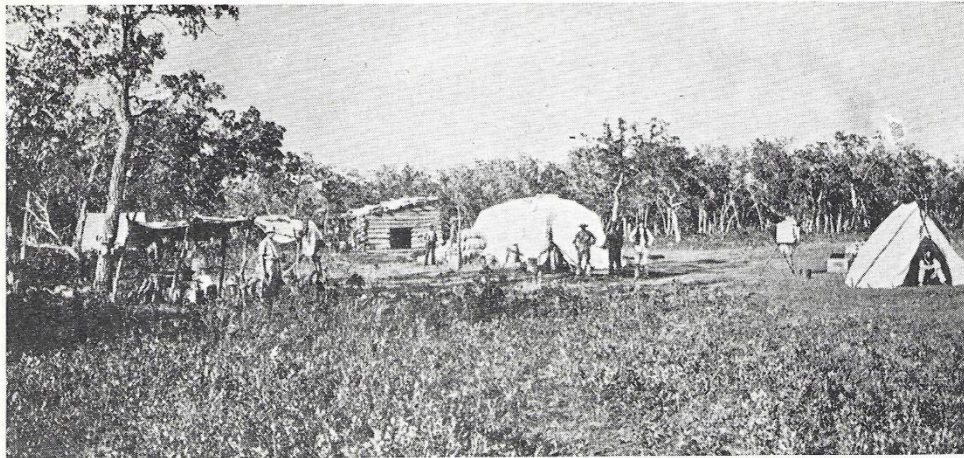
The survey parties returned to the Red River in the latter part of February, 1873, having completed the first part of the work.

On the west bank of the river, a short distance north of the boundary and from the old Hudson's Bay post of Fort Pembina, commodious buildings for the Canadian headquarters had been erected under the supervision of Captain Ward. Near-by was the present town of Emerson, at that time known both as North Pembina and West Lynne; and just south of the border was the U.S. army post also called Fort Pembina, headquarters of the United States Commission.

The new settlement at the Canadian headquarters was named Dufferin in honour of the Governor General of Canada then in office. Facing the river was a large house used as offices, living quarters and mess room for the staff, who were billeted in several one-storey dwellings. Other buildings housed mess room and kitchen, barracks for the engineers, surveyors, astronomers, photographers, axe-men, harness-makers, wheel-wrights, cooks, picket men, blacksmiths and carpenters.

A farm was established where all necessary produce was grown for men and horses. A canteen was stocked with the best of liquors, imported duty-free direct from England; all brands were sold at the moderate charge of five cents a glass. Crosse and Blackwell's potted meats and pickles and many other luxuries were obtainable. Weekly, each man was rationed a plug of T&B smoking tobacco and three plugs of 'chewing' if he wished it. All profits from the sale of 'extras' went towards a library. The food was of the best quality. Supplies were brought in from Moorhead, 150 miles south in Minnesota, and from Fort Garry, sixty miles north. So efficiently was the commissariat handled by Quartermaster Herchmer that complaints were unknown. Necessary articles of clothing could be purchased cheaply.

Buckskin and leather clothing, mocassins and woollen mitts were issued for



Top—Supply depot at Pembina Mountain.

Centre—Royal Engineers building boundary mound.

Bottom—Supply depot at Turtle Mountain.

winter use; and as bedding, each man received a large oilskin sheet, a buffalo robe, and two pairs of 'four-point' Hudson's Bay blankets.

In the winter of 1872-3 a grand dance and feast was given in honour of the Canadians by Commissioner Campbell and his staff at the U.S. army post. Later the same winter a similiar compliment was paid the Americans on the Canadian side. Both events were attended by many guests including the fair sex from Fort Garry. In season there was hunting, skating, snow-shoeing, boxing matches, an occasional theatrical, and other diversions.

* * *

IN April, 1873, preparations began for the greater part of the work. Enough men, horses, oxen, wagons, equipment, regulation army tents, instruments and provisions had been carefully assembled.

The Dominion Government had deemed it advisable that the Canadian part of the expedition should move through the Indian country without show of force. It would have been unwise for the British party to travel through the United States as, in that event, the Indians would have had no visible evidence that British interests were distinct from those of the United States. Although every member was furnished with arms and ammunition, there was no display of special precautionary measures. Parties and individuals prosecuted their work and hunted on the prairie without apparent fear. No escorts were in evidence. Indians were given free access to the camps.

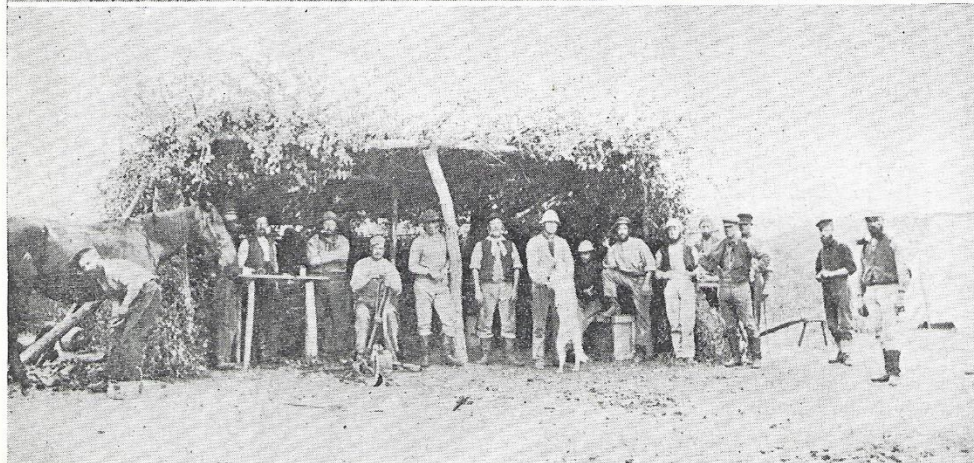
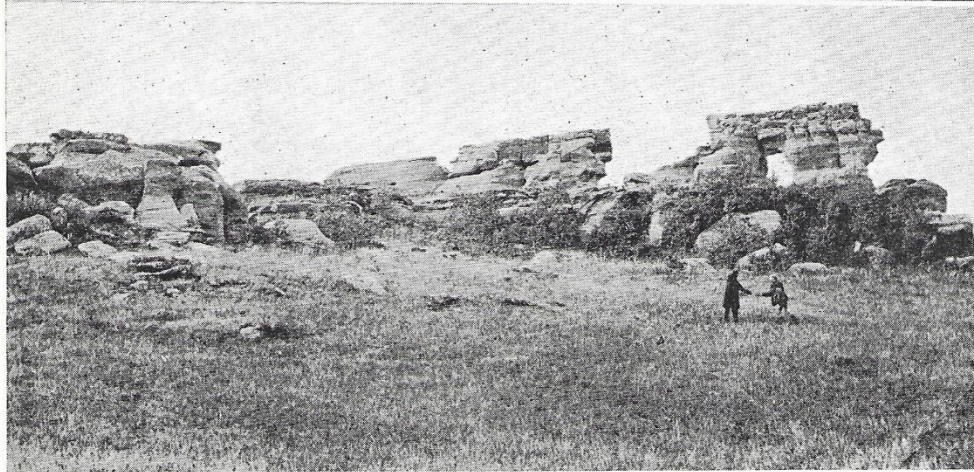
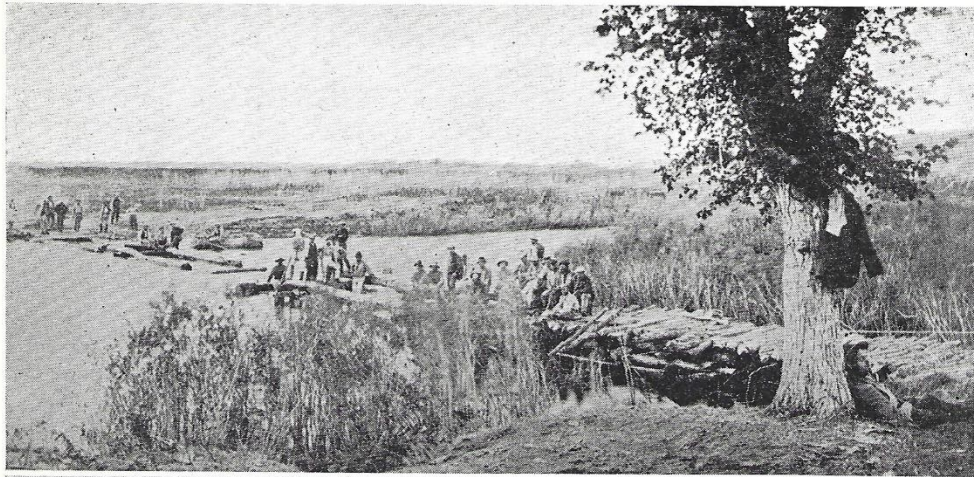
At any time the natives might have sacked supply stations, have necessitated a concentration of the labourers, and generally delayed operations; but it had been felt that a friendly attitude and good behaviour by the expedition would obviate these possibilities.

Conversely, the United States Commission, because of the Indian wars raging on the trans-Mississippi and Missouri plains, saw fit to travel under military escort.

As the prairies stirred beneath softening winds, a start was made. To the west lay a savage land. This way and that, the eye rested upon space. The wooded course of the Pembina River paralleled the line of travel along the south, and far ahead rose the Pembina Mountain. League on league of virgin soil, that down the centuries had put forth naught but successive growths of grass and flowers, spread westward.

Like a ship at sea the joint expedition travelled mostly by observation, marking the boundary as they progressed. Astronomical stations and supply depots were established. Cattle were driven to furnish meat until the buffalo country could be reached. A road-making party, preceded by native scouts, went ahead of the main body. Rivers that were not fordable had to be bridged, often necessitating wide detours to obtain suitable timber for the purpose. A chain of field depots, strategically placed to ensure wood and water, was thrown out from the main station at Dufferin.

The first of these depots was erected about forty miles west of the Red River at the Pembina Mountain; others were located at irregular intervals as the work proceeded. There were few dry camps. Barrels, mounted on wheels, carried a water supply over the arid districts. Half way to the Pembina depot at an astronomical station known as Point Michel, observations taken by both parties to determine the parallel gave a difference of seven feet; sixteen miles further west there was a difference of twenty seven feet. These results were considered satisfactory, the difference being divided; and the central point in each case was assumed to be on the true 49th. The greater part of the line was determined in this way. Tangents



Top—Royal Engineers bridging the Souris River.

Centre—Roche Percée.

Bottom—Blacksmith shop, Wood End depot.

of approximately twenty miles were taken turn about by the Canadians and Americans. The working parties on both sides were kept as much as possible within a distance not exceeding sixty miles of one another. Considerations of supply and the presence of Indians forbade any greater extension.

In the swampy country from Lake of the Woods to the western boundary of Manitoba, iron pillars were placed at two-mile intervals as nearly as the nature of the ground would admit or at such sites as were available.

Westward from Manitoba to the line previously run and marked from the Pacific coast, stone cairns or earthen mounds were constructed about three miles apart. Buried in their centres were iron tablets bearing the inscription 'British and United States Boundary Commissions, 1872-74, 49° north latitude'. Square posts four feet high and tapering at the top were also used. These were sunk six feet in the ground having a flange at the bottom to ensure stability. On the north side each post was marked 'British Possession', on the south 'U.S. Territory'.

To provide for the possible disappearance of monuments and the definition of the line in intervening spaces, Commissioners Cameron and Campbell agreed that the line between neighbouring monuments should be held to run from point to point of the astronomically determined 49° north latitude, following the course of a line having the curvature due to a parallel of that latitude.

It had been arranged that throughout the entire distance topographical surveys extending six miles north and south of the boundary would be made by both commissions. By pre-arrangement, an exhaustive collection of western birds was gathered for the British Museum by Prof. Geo. M. Dawson, Geologist of the Canadian Commission, who also re-

ported upon the resources of the region traversed.

Over the well-marked trail of the advancing expedition, covered wagons in horse and ox trains and Red River carts driven by half-breeds continually freighted the Canadian supplies from Dufferin. The American provisions were drawn by bull and mule teams from various trading posts on the Missouri River. Oats for the many horses constituted a large part of the shipments.

The first important halt was made after a strenuous period of axe-work across the Pembina Mountain; and a supply depot was established near the Pembina River. Game abounded. A moose hunt was staged. Prairie chicken and wild duck were served at every meal, until the exasperated cooks insisted that the plucking should be done by those who wanted birds on their bill-of-fare.

From the Pembina depot the line of travel took the survey past the White Earth and Badger Creeks.

A monotonous region stretched ahead. Clouds of grasshoppers swarmed upward with crackling sound; mosquitoes and bull-flies tormented man and beast. Bleaching skulls and bones of buffalo littered the ground. Stunted grasses clothed the rolling uplands; no trees worthy of the name relieved the dreariness. But as days passed, a blue outline resembling a low-hung cloud, which proved to be Turtle Mountain, appeared in the south and west. A large depot was established there. The line now ran directly across brush-clad hills in which were many lakes and creeks literally filled with wildfowl. Many deer were seen; some were killed.

The expedition came upon a large camp of Sioux. The chief was friendly and addressed himself to Commissioner Cameron in peaceful terms:

"I am Weeokeak, head of a hundred lodges—the Waughpatong band of the Dakotas—son of a great chief. I am glad



CANADIAN BOUNDARY COMMISSION OX TRAIN

to see the English. I would like to smoke with any English chiefs I might meet, and would be thankful for food and ammunition. The Canadians and English I respect; and I would be very glad of anything they give me. We all wish for a piece of English ground.”*

A wide expanse was next traversed to the Souris River, where three days were spent in making bridges. For this purpose the Royal Engineers constructed coffer-dams and floated them out to be filled with stones. While crossing the stream in the army ambulance drawn by four mules customarily used by Commissioner Campbell, several officers of the U.S. Commission narrowly escaped calamity when the conveyance upset.

The featureless terrain spread onward to the second crossing of the Souris beyond which towered the Hill of the Murdered Scout. According to legend, a Cree scout had been watching for Mandan enemies from this conical butte. Tiring of his vigil he stretched out and slept. A Mandan who had been spying from another vantage point stole upon his sleeping foe and brained him

*Editor's Note:—As interpreted to Commissioner Cameron, and taken from his diary.

with a large stone. In commemoration the Crees had carved in the turf at the top of the butte a giant figure of a man with arms and legs outstretched. They placed a large boulder near-by and cut a long series of footmarks in the hillside to indicate the Mandan. Each year, these cuttings had been renewed to perpetuate a fanciful twist of Cree mentality. Thus the butte gained its picturesque and lasting name.

A few miles westward just north of the boundary, the remarkable Roche Percée (Pierced Rock) rose abruptly. Its fissured sides were scored with native figures and hieroglyphs; to these were added the names and initials of several men of the 7th U.S. Cavalry who, under General Custer, were fated to fall in the battle of the Little Big Horn, 1876.

Nine miles beyond at a favourable location significantly called Wood End, another depot was placed near a plentiful supply of coal which was used to good account in the camp kitchens and portable forges.

Athwart the entire range of vision to the west spread a stupendous upland—the Grand Couteau du Missouri. In addition to the depots at Pembina

Mountain, Turtle Mountain and Wood End, seventeen temporary astronomical stations, observed by the joint commission, had been set up at Lake of the Woods (joint), Pine River, West Roseau Ridge, Red River (joint), Pointe Michel (joint), Pembina Mountain, East (joint), Pembina Mountain, West, Long River, Sleepy Hollow, Turtle Mountain, East, Turtle Mountain, West, 1st Souris (or Mouse River), South Antler, 2nd Souris (or Mouse River), United States' No. 8 Astronomical Station, Short Creek and 3rd Mouse River (Wood End). And more than four hundred miles of arduous work had been completed.

Summer was over; winter was fast approaching. The commissioners gave orders to return, but a snow-storm delayed departure for more than a week. During these idle days, the weather-beaten men waited impatiently, eager to return to the Red River. Yet eagerness was tinged with speculation. Adventure beckoned. The next spring would see them back to continue the task. They would then discover the secrets of the rolling heights that lay ahead.

What revelations and experiences awaited in the Great Beyond? The following year would tell.

(To be continued)

A Grave Matter

I WALKED out of the post office into a winter's morning as cold and frosty as a bill-collector's greeting on his third call after being stalled off twice. A man stepped up and said he had something important to tell me.

We got into the police car. "Shoot," I said.

He made quite a story of it, giving me all the details. Boiled down, it seemed that he and two chums had discovered what looked like a grave in a wooded area just off the highway where they had been working. There were unmistakable signs of the ground having been dug up and carefully replaced.

A patrol armed with two shovels and a pick was sent out to investigate. Sure enough about half a mile from the informer's home we found the spot in the woods, and it certainly resembled a grave. It was about four feet long and eighteen inches wide. Depth? We didn't know that—yet.

We started to dig. And contrary to those ads you see in the papers, brawn was needed, not brains. After a few minutes the pea-jacket was hung on a near-by limb. Sam Browne and tunic followed in short order.

One, two, three, four feet we went down. And then the pick struck something. Not a hard surface. Something yielding,—something that could be flesh.

It was.

We carefully removed the earth in small amounts until we came to the buried object.

For a long moment there was complete silence. I straightened my stiffened back and stared at the informer. He gave a sickly grin and said, "How the hell was I to know?"

We had uncovered a dog's leg.

C.F.W.



APPROACH TO THE GREAT COUTEAU—A LAND BEYOND THE WORLD.

The Historic Forty-Ninth

by JOHN PETER TURNER
(Continued)

The preceding instalment of this article traced the initial evolution of the western portion of the boundary between Canada and the United States. The final stage is here recorded—a brief story of full cooperation between two great friends, who today, with combined resources and regardless of boundary, stand shoulder to shoulder against tyranny and barbarism.

THE WORK on the international boundary had been well advanced. Approximately half the long line of nine hundred miles between the Lake of the Woods and the Rocky Mountains had been surveyed and marked in 1873 by the Canadian and United States joint commission.

The two great Anglo-Saxon countries of North America, in keeping with the spirit of the Oregon Boundary Treaty (1846), had extended their interests westward in full harmony and cooperation. The 49th parallel was on the way to becoming a symbol of peace and concord, an example to the remainder of the world.

Though separated in their respective quarters at Dufferin and South Pembina, the men of the surveying parties under Commissioners Cameron and Campbell lived almost as one community

during the winter of 1873-4. Despite the isolation, there was no lack of diversion. The months passed pleasantly in a continual round of card parties, dinners, dances, get-togethers, sing-songs and various outdoor sports. A free and easy cordiality prevailed and even the natives participated in the dances. In addition there was considerable visiting back and forth in the growing Manitoba town of Winnipeg (Fort Garry) to the north, the neighbouring Dakota and Minnesota settlements and the big north-western town of St Paul several hundred miles away at the head waters of the Mississippi.

In the spring all was bustle and activity.

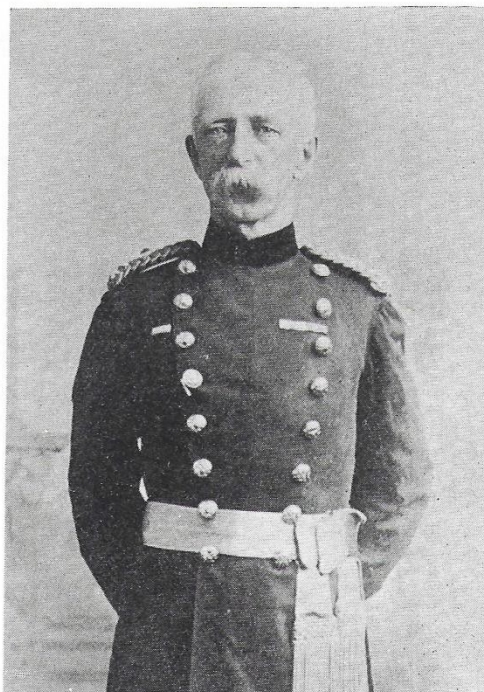
William Hallett, the trustworthy Scotch half-breed who had been in charge of the scouts the previous year, was forced to retire. He had grown too

old. Captain East, R.A., was commissioned to engage forty experienced plainsmen who were to ride in advance of the expedition and report on the country—give the location of streams, lakes, pasturage and wood; and, most important of all perhaps, to act as intermediaries in the event of trouble with the Indians.

All established depots between the Red River and the Great Couteau were replenished with supplies and made serviceable. A reconnoitring party, accompanied by a commissariat train, was sent forward to build a substantial depot at Wood Mountain. And before summer was under way all hands were busy continuing the line beyond Wood End.

It was known that a veritable realm of savagery lay ahead. On the plains north of the 'forty-ninth' probably thirty thousand Indians lived, hunted buffalo and intermittently waged inter-tribal war. In addition to the great Blackfoot Confederacy—Blackfeet, Pie-gans, Bloods and Sarcees—wandering bands of Plain Crees, Assiniboines and Saulteaux occupied the country to the west. Except for the widely-separated Hudson's Bay Company posts and a few scattered half-breed settlements, where white and half-breed traders trafficked for the produce of the buffalo ranges, and a few missionaries who strove to gain dark-skinned proselytes, the red men were the only inhabitants of the interminable grasslands.

South of the international line, Indian warfare was being waged continually, and the scanty white population was running free of the restraints of established authority. Strategic points were garrisoned by soldiers. The westward march of civilization to the trans-Mississippi plains had rendered the Indian lands valuable; and, despite treaties between whites and aborigines, the red men, like the buffalo, were forced to seek sanctuary wherever they could find it. Concurrently, men whose misdemeanours had driven them far out the

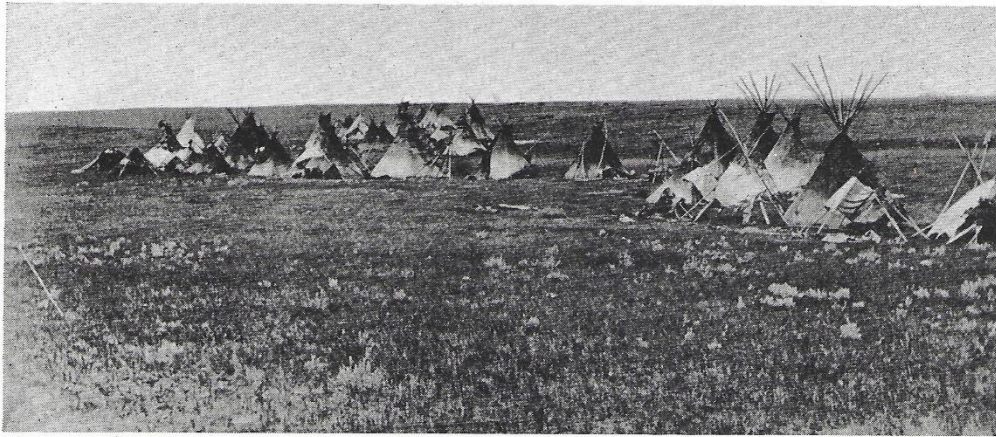


MAJOR GENERAL DONALD RODERICK CAMERON,
C.M.G., F.R.G.S.

western trails had come northward into Canada.

The great Sioux nation was all powerful along the river highway of the Missouri, the natural outlet to the West. But bad elements from the east, many of them men and women 'on the dodge' who sought exemption from the clutches of the law, were in the ascendancy. Ever westward an army of occupation was pressing on. A colossal movement had been launched, a hegira before which all native life faced complete forfeiture of its primordial ways, a wave of bloodshed in which brave men laboured to establish law and justice and liberty in the face of debauchery, breach of trust and murder. An American saga was being written. Outrages by desperadoes, hideous massacres, heroisms, crowning adventures, and violent deaths were commonplace.

These conditions had reached British territory. Liquor had come from the Missouri to the Blackfoot country, where



SIoux CAMP ON FRENCHMAN'S CREEK, 1874. BUFFALO-SKIN LODGES.



SURVEYORS' CAMP ON NORTH ANTLER CREEK.



HALF-BREED RESIDENCE AT WOOD MOUNTAIN, 1874.

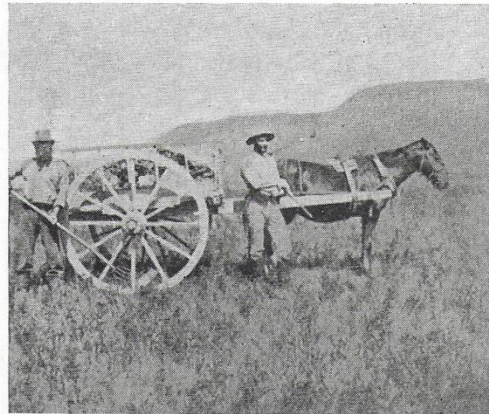
it was said strongholds had been erected to gather spoils from the Indian hunters.

The West was running wild, probably wilder than before the coming of the white man. Flaming colours were being added to the story of a great transition.

For more than six hundred miles across this last retreat of Indian life, the huge glacial moraine of the Missouri Couteau saddled the plains from north-west to south-east. Awesome, treeless and windswept, its interminable undulations, given over to wolves, birds of prey and wandering nomads, seemed like a land beyond the world. And into it penetrated the surveyors of the boundary.

Many days were needed to cross the dreary uplands of the Couteau; finally however as a climax to a scene which had become irksome, the toilers reached a river valley, gloomy and uninviting in its general aspect and devoid of vegetation. Probably the Big Muddy. The surveyors continued on, passing several branches of the Poplar River. Gradually the surroundings improved; and soon, to the relief of all, the Couteau lay behind. Wood Mountain loomed ahead.

Midsummer came, bringing another important movement on the plains. The North West Mounted Police, three hundred strong, had assembled at Dufferin late in June preparatory to its epic march westward. The Canadian Boundary Commission buildings had been adopted temporarily as a headquarters and stepping-off point; and, travelling faster than the surveyors, despite cumbersome transport and 'beef on the hoof', the newly-organized Force had taken a course northward of and paralleling the boundary. As the slower-moving surveyors were overtaken, supplies threatened to run short, and the commissioner, Col George A. French, decided to seek assistance from the nearest settlement. Making a detour from the line of march and reaching Willow Bunch, a small half-breed community nestled in the folds of Wood Mountain,



GATHERING 'BUFFALO CHIPS' FOR FUEL.

the assistant commissioner of the little red-coated army, Major James F. Macleod, accompanied by five men and six Red River carts, purchased a quantity of buffalo pemmican and dried meat from the half-breed traders at that point. Shortly afterwards, he transported a needed supply of oats to the Mounted Police from the surplus stores in the boundary commission depot at Wood Mountain, and arranged for an additional amount to be furnished as required. The following year, the buildings at this depot became the Wood Mountain Detachment of the Mounted Police.

Meanwhile the boundary commissariat, under the able direction of Capt. Lawrence Herchmer, had functioned capably and had tended to sustain a fine *esprit de corps* among the men. Though the food was rough, it was of the best procurable in this distant land. 'Buffalo chips'—the dried dung of buffalo—served admirably as fuel, especially on the Couteau where there was a marked scarcity of wood, and the water carts offset the misery of dry camps.

Soon after leaving Wood Mountain depot, buffalo were sighted for the first time—a small herd browsing quietly on the side hills of Cottonwood Coulee. Antelope were plentiful. By the sparkling waters of Frenchman's Creek, one of the most attractive camp-sites of the entire undertaking awaited the men.

This locality was to furnish a rendezvous for Sitting Bull's refugee Sioux in 1876-7 after the Custer Massacre south of the boundary.

The surveyors spent several days here resting the horses, washing, and making everything shipshape. Here also they had their first meeting with the Indians of the farther plains. A few miles down stream, an adventurer named Juneau operated a small trading post; nearby was an encampment of about forty lodges of Sioux.

The red men received the white visitors with obvious delight, doubtlessly expecting some favours; in turn they visited the boundary camp and were reassured when they received an affirmative reply to their question, "Are you the King's men?" Apparently they referred to King George III. Their forbears had been allies of the British troops, and their chieftains had received medals for their services; but, of more significance, they had gained a lasting respect for the red-coated servitors of the King. They proffered buffalo tongues as special gifts to the surveyors and provided them generously with fresh meat.

"In another two days of travel," the feathered and painted Sioux told the white men, "you will find the buffalo thick upon the plain."

The expedition was reluctant to leave this pleasant camp. But it was imperative they push ahead. Crossing the east and west forks of the Milk River, they encountered more badlands. Here the buffalo were amazingly plentiful. Every slope lay sprinkled with white skulls and skeletons—a slaughter field of centuries. To the westward, a long blue shadow appeared, but instead of the hoped-for Rocky Mountains, it was soon discovered to be the unmistakable Three Buttes of the Sweet Grass Hills, shown on Palliser's map.*

The travellers scanned the prospect in silence. Here was utter loneliness—a high, open plateau broken at intervals by some river-bed, or deceptive hollow,

where a man, a hundred men or a herd of buffalo could disappear in a moment. Little did the spectators realize that a few miles away the bewitching fastnesses of the Cypress Hills, with their infinite variety of forest and glade, lush meadows and tumbling brooks—a paradise of natural beauty—, rose from the encircling prairies. It was there that a fiendish butchery of Assiniboine Indians by Missouri desperadoes had occurred in the previous spring, a base episode that had hastened the formation of the North West Mounted Police.

Slowly but steadily the combined survey parties progressed towards the farther plains, meeting small bands of Indians almost daily. And presently, as the main stream of the Milk River was crossed, the Sweet Grass Hills loomed more distinctly.

The travellers were now in the 'Land of Painted Rocks,' where, according to Indian legend, the spirits of the departed dwelt. Here, amid scenes where they had fought, hunted, performed their strange rituals and passed to the Happy Hunting Grounds, the ghosts of by-gone red men were wont to return and camp among the strangely-moulded and painted rocks. To the Blackfeet, this was holy ground; Writing-on-Stone, they called it. Tribal incidents were crudely etched on the faces of grotesquely-shaped cliffs. Decked in a thousand shades, this region of Nature's caprices was strangely beautiful as sunlight and cloud, alternately, played upon it. At close of day, it was as uninviting as might be a part of Hell with the fires burned out; in darkness, it was a nightmare land of bleakness and weird configurations.

Almost on the line of demarcation, the Three Buttes, towering several thousand

*EDITOR'S NOTE: In 1857, the British government dispatched an expedition under Captain Palliser to explore the vast unknown territory of British North America west of Lake Superior. Captain Palliser had special instructions to attempt a practicable horse route on British territory connecting eastern Canada with British Columbia. The subsequent explorations extended over four years.

feet above the plains, and surrounded by deep-cut coulees and broken lands, now loomed in majestic outline. While exploring the vicinity several of the men came upon the bodies of many dead Indians. All had been shot. One corpse bore sixteen bullet wounds. Near-by were small pits strewn with empty cartridge shells as though a defensive battle had been waged. It was learned later that the dead were a band of Crows from the Missouri country who, while on a horse-stealing foray, had been 'cleaned out' by Piegans.

Onward past the Three Buttes the surveyors pressed. And now the snow-capped peaks of the Rockies could be seen, a hundred miles away. The magnificent Chief Mountain showed distinctly, its gigantic sugar-loaf top a distinguishing landmark among its fellows. Buffalo, in prodigious numbers, roamed freely. Little exertion was necessary to kill one or more at any hour of the day; and carcasses, shorn of their skins, lay everywhere.

Beyond the last crossing of the Milk River the land gradually ascended to the foothills. A few miles further west the travellers came to the St Mary's River, which presented the most fascinating and picturesque scene yet reached. Use was made of coal deposits found on its banks. Down stream, near the present site of Lethbridge, Nick Sheran, an Irish-

American from New York, had set up a small coal-mine four years earlier, which was destined to develop into a great industry.

The boundary work became more difficult as the men ascended towards the huge, continental backbone; and, for the first time since leaving Turtle Mountain, the axe-men were fully employed. Many bridges had to be built over the various streams; and wide detours were necessary to get the wagons and other equipment through.

Here was presented to many eastern eyes for the first time a magnificent panorama of snow-crowned mountains, timbered valleys, and splashing streams—a new land in every sense, and a hunter's paradise. Wild life abounded. Luscious trout teemed in the tumbling waters that flowed from the snow-fields among the clouds. An immense herd of elk (wapiti) was seen near Chief Mountain; monstrous moose and small deer were continually in evidence. Mountain sheep and goats stared curiously from their rocky ledges. On more than one occasion, fire-arms were used to provide sport and fresh meat. Grouse were in constant demand. Once, some of the men out ahead encountered a grizzly bear, and preparations were made to lay him low; but, upon the 'silver tip' showing fight, the hunt quickly subsided. Later a member of the U.S. Commission shot a mountain lion.

At last the persevering surveyors and their co-workers neared the end of their task at Kootenay River. The line crossed the river at right angles. Pack-horses were used to negotiate the short distance still to go.

About twenty miles remained. But it was twenty miles of hard work; heavy timber that had blown down during wind storms had become interlaced in a bewildering jungle which obstructed the route of travel. In this last span mounds were erected at only two points: the passage of the Belly River and the crossing of Lake Waterton.



SMALL PITS AND HUMAN REMAINS OF CROW
RAIDERS KILLED BY PIEGANS.



FIELD COOK-HOUSE, CANADIAN BOUNDARY COMMISSION, 1874.

The boundary between British Columbia and the United States had already been surveyed from the Pacific coast to the Kootenay when the American Civil War intervened, and a monument had been placed at the eastern extremity. At that time, it had been intended to continue the survey eastward to the Lake of the Woods; but now, a decade later, the actual undertaking had been reversed.

At last the men lay down their tools. It was the end of the trail.

* * *

IT WAS still early autumn, but the weather at night was cold. Many of the men had hoped to winter in the Rockies, and some equipment for that purpose had been transported from Dufferin. Orders, however, were given for the homeward march.

On the return trip, a rest camp was established by the commissioners at Fish Lake in the neighbourhood of Chief Mountain from where the men visited a Missouri trader's 'hang-out' in the vicinity. The least harmful purchases made were cans of brandied peaches. Ponies were also bought from some traders who claimed to be from Fort

Whoop-Up on the St Mary's River. Inquisitive stragglers from the whisky trading camps appeared on the scene, also a number of U.S. soldiers on a friendly visit from Fort Shaw in Montana.

Another stop was made at the Sweet Grass* Hills. And here on a day in mid-September, the lean and weathered troopers of the North West Mounted Police, under Commissioner French and Assistant Commissioner Macleod, arrived. With fine *cameraderie* and jovial spirits, the two forces commingled for a brief spell. Charles Conrad, a prominent trader of Fort Benton, also turned up with a bull-train loaded with oats and other commodities for the police. At that time Fort Benton was a thriving and riotous centre on the Missouri River. It had been named after Col Thomas H. Benton who had played an important part in Washington in fixing the boundary on the 49th parallel. Not least among those present was Jerry Potts, a

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Sweet Grass was a term commonly used among the plainsmen to designate good pasturage. In this locality it had no reference to the scented grass often used by the Indians in their sacred rituals or in basket-making.

Piegán half-breed who later became famous as a guide in the service of the N.W.M.P.

Long to be remembered was that stop at the Three Buttes! Thither, in curiosity, had come many Indians, among them a band of Unkapápa Sioux under the noted warrior, Long Dog, a fiery individual who was later to take a major part in the annihilation of Custer's command on the Little Big Horn, in June 1876, and who afterwards was to become a thorn in the flesh of the Mounted Police when the Sioux took refuge in the Wood Mountain area. In the 7th U.S. Cavalry, accompanying the U.S. commissioner, was Major Marcus Reno who by reason of an order from Custer to attack the Sioux on a separate flank was to be one of the few surviving officers of that historic blood-bath. The city of Reno, Nev., famous for its divorces, perpetuates his name today.

The time passed pleasantly at the Sweet Grass until the inevitable farewells. Some of the men under the U.S. Commission who were released from duty left hurriedly for Fort Benton, which they hoped to reach before freeze-up. From there they could travel eastward towards their homes in Mackinaw boats. Navigation by river steamers on the Missouri had already terminated for the season.

Shortly after their departure, an immense cloud of dust was seen moving in a northerly direction toward the camp. One of the police scouts watched it with an experienced eye, then declared it to indicate a large herd of stampeding buffalo. Onward they came with Indian horsemen hovering on their flanks. Forty mounted men were sent out to turn the animals aside. A concentrated gun-fire split the herd, one division heading north-east, the other north-west. The shaggy beasts intercepted a train which had previously pulled out, and in no time they were thundering among the men and horses. One huge bull was shot as its horns became entangled in a wagon

wheel. So great was the confusion they created that the surveyors lost twenty-four hours through sheer inability to move on.

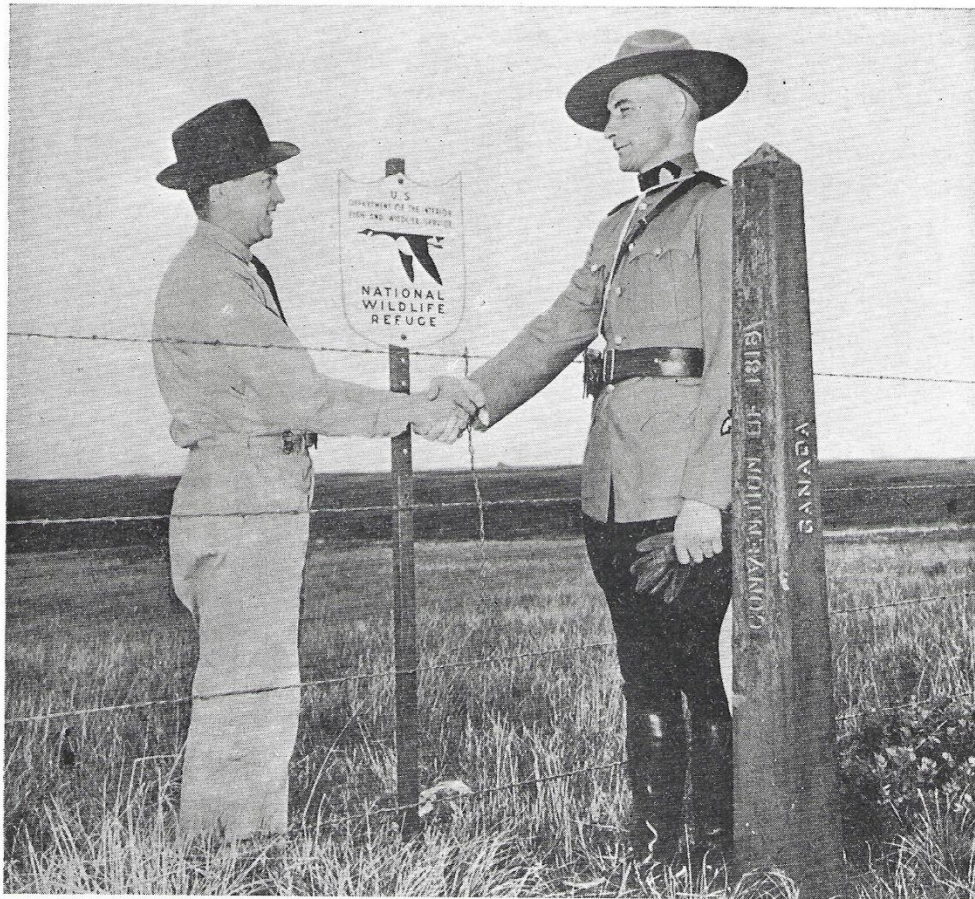
Few incidents happened on the remaining homeward trek. Once, while passing a large camp of half-breeds, the party paused to watch the women making pemmican—dried and pounded buffalo meat mixed with fat and placed in buffalo-skin sacks. As the returning workmen progressed, they found that prairie fires had swept large tracts of country, and thereby deprived of pasturage and the indispensable buffalo chips, they carried wood and forage from one camp to another.

At Frenchman's Creek they came upon a naked half-breed tied to a tree. He was dead, and obviously had suffered terrible agony. To allow the sun full play, the tree's branches had been removed, and a near-by stream had added to the man's torment; for he had been left to die of starvation, thirst and exposure. The on-lookers were stunned at this display of fiendish cruelty by vengeful Indians.

Cameron and his followers experienced trouble with the natives only at Wood End, where one man, who had incurred the enmity of a band, was threatened. Immediately the threat blossomed to include the entire commission. The men formed a corral with carts and wagons, and each was given forty rounds of ammunition. At night skulking Indians were detected, and signal lights appeared on the adjacent hill-tops. Pickets were stationed around the camp, but, naught save a prowling wolf appeared and the expected attack failed to materialize. From then on, however, strict vigilance was maintained; and in due course Dufferin was reached without mishap.

* * *

PART of the N.W.M.P. staff was occupying the buildings at Dufferin, awaiting spring when they would move to the headquarters barracks which were



THE 49TH TODAY. CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES JOIN HANDS.

being erected at Swan River, far to the north-west. Later, two troops under Commissioner French, on their return from the Sweet Grass Hills, also spent the winter here, pending completion of the new buildings. Meanwhile, Assistant Commissioner Macleod with three troops had struck towards the foothills and, on reaching the Old Man's River, erected Fort Macleod—the first police outpost in the Far West. Part of another troop which had accompanied the commissioner eastward, took possession of the uncompleted barracks at Swan River.

The detachment of Royal Engineers, which had formed a large part of the survey party, had left Liverpool on Aug. 20, 1872. The expedition had

commenced work at Dufferin on September 20, a month later. And now, after two years, it had traversed more than two thousand miles of desolate region, a land tenanted by tribes who, in freedom from restraint, were second to none in stark and implacable savagery. The expedition had marked nearly nine hundred miles of boundary and accomplished a survey of over five thousand square miles of British territory. During the last year (1874), between May 20 and October 11, a period of 144 days, the two parties had moved back and forth over fifteen hundred miles in longitude, determined and marked 357 miles of the parallel of latitude, and surveyed in detail fifteen hundred square miles.

In addition to all this, they had to contend with many hindrances: the winding of the main trail; the essential wanderings of the surveying parties; the devious routes taken by those distributing supplies; the obstacles of the country itself; inclement weather; heavy transport. Yet the joint expedition accomplished an average of 10½ miles a day. Truly a remarkable feat. One that redounds to the credit of the men who executed it. For his services, Captain Cameron received the honour of Commander of Michael and George from Her Majesty, the Queen.

Thus, as 1874 drew to a close, an engrossing period of frontier history in

North America had begun. And in the making of this land of freedom and opportunity, the North West Mounted Police were destined to play an important role.

The 49th was now an established boundary line between two great nations. The lure of the West was on the verge of being a tremendous thing.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: With a single exception, all of the official, authentic photographs accompanying this article were generously supplied from the private collection of Mr W. T. Cameron, son of the late Major General D. R. Cameron who was head of the Canadian Boundary Commission. We wish to express our warmest thanks for these invaluable pictures.

Maple Creek - A Memory

MAPLE CREEK! These two words mean much in the annals of the Force. Among the older generation, they recall the story of a task well done. The mere mention of that once glamorous outpost of the police brings up something poignantly commemorative of high adventure and exacting service on the Western plains half a century or more ago.

Old Maple Creek Detachment played a conspicuous role between what might be called the first and second stages of the Force's activity in the West. Fort Macleod, Fort Calgary and Fort Walsh—names to conjure with—stood forth as pioneers in an unbridled realm. Maple Creek, midway between the flaming frontier of Montana and the old trading highway of the North Saskatchewan, came into being with the taming of the red man and the passing of the shaggy herds. By a constructive and tolerant application of the law, it assisted in the transformation of a vast Indian battle ground and buffalo pasture into an immense agricultural and stock-raising area. With the approach to that district of the C.P.R. in 1883, the activity previously concentrated at Fort Walsh to the south was transferred there.

Since the closing of old Maple Creek Detachment in 1922, the buildings stood as silent reminders of a romantic chapter of Western history. But in July, 1941, they came under the auctioneer's hammer, and, with the exception of two structures acquired by the local golf club, those revered quarters of former days have disappeared.

Today, the modern Maple Creek Detachment operates from a town station a short distance from the site where for four decades its historic predecessor rendered such exemplary service.