

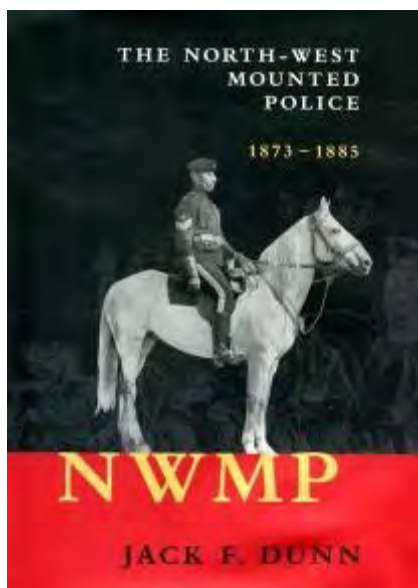


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Weapons of the NWMP Excerpts of Member Jack Dunn's Book

The Mounties were armed with revolvers and carbines. The officers and sergeants also had swords in a scabbard, more for appearance than utility. Major-General E. Selby Smyth, in his 1875 report, suggested that the officers wear swords, which have a "great effect upon the Indian mind." Although limited sword drill was practised both mounted and on foot, the weapon was considered an encumbrance while on patrol and was kept in storage, for the most part, except for formal occasions.

NWMP Sergeant in 1884 wearing 1853 Light Cavalry Sabre



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CEF Battle Patches



*Two members of the 54th Battalion displaying a battalion flag which uses the battalions battle patch as its device. This style of flag was used to identify battalion headquarters.
National Archives of Canada PA 4087*

Late in 1916, and through to the end of the war, the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) authorised that shoulder patches be worn by the Canadian Divisions then in France. Termed "battle patches", these were designed to quickly identify units to other Canadian troops. This was considered to be especially important when the Divisions were in the line at the same time and, in battle, individual small units would cross over Divisional boundaries and create confusion among their own troops. It was also felt that the use of a patch would help a unit's morale and esprit de corps.

Initially, in 1916, there was no question about the colours to be used to identify the divisions; 1st Division was to use Red; the 2nd Division was to use Blue; the 3rd Division was to use White and if ever there was a fourth Division it was felt that they could use Yellow. The 3rd Div. Colour was changed to black for a short period prior to settling on French grey and the 4th Division settled on green. As we know there were actually five Divisions, although the last was broken up and few 5th Division troops went to France. Those that did were mostly Artillery.

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Weapons of the NWMP continued.

Revolvers were carried in a holster on the man's left side. The first sidearm was the Adams Revolver, First Model Mark 11, caliber .450, holding 6 bullets in its cylinder. Many of the 330 weapons, purchased in England for \$15 each, were damaged during shipping and the necessary repairs delayed the 74 March several days. The 50,000 rounds purchased were of poor quality. Most of these handguns soon became unserviceable and, by 1876, they were replaced by the "Second Model," a double-action revolver that could be cocked and fired by pulling the trigger.

In 1883, 200 Enfield revolvers Mark 11 were ordered as an improved handgun. In September 1885, an additional 600 Enfield revolvers were purchased along with 100,000 rounds of ammunition.



Revolver and carbine descriptions added by Sabretache Editor

The first side arm of the force was the Beaumont Adams revolver, which arrived from England via the British War Department in the summer of 1874 at Fort Dufferin, near present day Emerson, Manitoba. The Beaumont Adams was an evolution of the Dean and Adams percussion revolver of 1851, which was the first double action pistol to receive a patent. Being without a hammer spur and costly to manufacture, a veteran of the Crimean War, Lt. Frederick E B Beaumont, improved the design with body improvements and a hammer spur to

allow for true single action – double action capabilities. It is widely said this successful design ran Samuel Colt out of England.

Rather than the Mk II the NWMP may have been expecting in 1874, a shipment of 330 Mk I revolvers arrived, all of which were converted 54 bore (.442) percussion cap and ball, five shot revolvers of the previous Beaumont Adams. The new revolvers now fired Adams' .450 Boxer cartridge, a round that would see relative long term use in several firearms as late as the 1930's. While the converted Mk I revolvers weren't a particularly poor revolver, on the contrary; it was poor quality controls in their shipment overseas and across the continent by rail which rendered many inoperable and many more barely serviceable. Immediate requests to replace the Mk 1 were made and, after some delay and testing of other revolvers such as the Smith & Wessen Model 'Old Model Russian', procurement of the Mk III began in 1875 and would remain the standard issue side arm of the NWMP until 1886, when they were completely phased out by the Mk II Enfield.



Mk II Enfield Revolver Used: 1882 – 1905

Cartridge: .476 Enfield Capacity: 6 round cylinder

In 1882, NWMP Commissioner A G Irvine requested a new supply of Mk III Beaumont Adams and was surprised to learn from the British War Department that they had been supplanted by a new pattern Enfield revolver.

Firing the .476 Enfield, the revolver improved upon the Beaumont Adams in several areas, in particular the top-break ejection principle that saw the spindle plate remain stationary while the barrel and cylinder swung forward. The revolver proved very effective and popular with the force, at least while they were in newer condition. Long term use saw deficiencies with durability creep up. Worn spindles caused issues with extraction and, most noteworthy, further wear of its barrel release bar and the barrel pivoting transverse pin caused barrels themselves to become loose and affect accuracy. Despite this, by 1895 many of the Enfields were still in good repair and the new concern was modern examples of Smith & Wessen and Colt designs rendering them obsolete. While some supplies of replacement Enfields were acquired as late as 1889, the British had long since ceased use of the Enfield for the Webley Mk I. Without a clear replacement in line, it would be 1905 before the force adopted a new standard sidearm to replace the heavy Enfield.

The Force came to the West with **Snider-Enfield carbines**, an outdated, breech-loaded single-shot carbine. Because of the large ammunition supply purchased that was not interchangeable, the Snider-Enfield carbines were only gradually replaced by the Winchester repeating carbine, a favourite rifle among westerners. In 1878, 50 Winchesters, at \$33 each, and 10,000 cartridges, at \$35 per 1,000, were purchased.

By 1880, "A" and "D" Divisions had been armed with the new repeating rifles. In his 1882 report, Commissioner A.G. Irvine had recommended Winchester rifles as the standard carbine of the Force and the forty recruits leaving Toronto that year had these carbines. The outbreak of hostilities in 1885 brought the Winchester into universal service and 1,050 carbines were ordered in the first six months of that year. The Winchester repeating rifle (holding eight cartridges in its magazine) was a decided improvement over the Snider-Enfield. Inspector Crozier spoke to a Toronto reporter:

I was standing outside the stockade talking with Sitting Bull. He looked up towards the loop holes where the muzzles of several rifles were to be seen, and pointing to them said, "You've got repeaters." He noticed the magazine under the barrels of the rifles, and the fact of our being able to fire without having to reload gave the savage a better opinion of our capabilities for offence or defence.

On horseback, a Mountie placed his carbine in a case (bucket) strapped to rings on the right side of the saddle. This proved awkward in mounting the horse and the men preferred placing the carbine in a sling which passed across the rider's chest. The bucket was used on long trips where action was unlikely and the sling preferred for patrol duty. Shotguns were supplied as a unit weapon. With only six shotguns issued on the 74 March (one for each Division), it was hardly an effective weapon.

Snider-Enfield Carbine Mk III / Short Rifle Single shot, .577 Cartridge, Used: 1873 – 1885
Procurement: 398 (352 Carbine Mk III & 46 Short Rifle)

The true first arm of the NWMP, due to the delayed arrival of Mk I Adams revolvers, was the Snider-Enfield Carbine Mk III. Based on the Pattern 1853 Snider Enfield rifle-musket, 1866 saw the Royal Small Arms Factory develop a breech loading variant that would become the single shot Snider-Enfield rifle. Unlike the Mk I, which were converted copies of the Snider-Enfield musket, the NWMP would receive the Mk III, designated as such as they were newly manufactured examples. And unlike the converted Mk I Adams, they would arrive with the N.W.M.P. at Fort Dufferin in good order.



Unfortunately, the Snider-Enfield Mk III carbines were very nearly obsolete by the time of their arrival in the Western territories. Following the American Civil War, there was rapid advancements in firearm technology and the Sniders were simply outclassed by the repeater Winchester, Henry, and Spencer rifles that had begun to show up in large numbers on the prairie. The need for replacement became apparent and forced the NWMP's hand very early.

The .44 calibre repeater Henry rifle from the United States was considered briefly. This was, of course, until it was decided reliance on a foreign government for ammunition and parts for maintenance was not ideal, so ending plans on that front.

Winchester Model 1876 Carbine Cartridge: .45/75 Capacity: 8 round tubular magazine

By 1876, it became clear that the rough conditions were taking their toll on the Sniders and replacement could no longer be delayed. Initial testing of the Winchester began in 1878 when the first Model 1876 Carbine was sent to the NWMP resulting in an immediate purchase of 50 more. The reliance on a foreign government firearms, ammunition and parts was somehow forgotten in the procurement. The first batch of Winchesters were civilian variants and the force would wait another year for an additional shipment of 50, spurred into action for full distribution to the force when the arrival of Sitting Bull in present day Saskatchewan created political tension. It wasn't all good with the 'old pattern' Winchesters though. Despite a report deeming them weak in their construction, full replacement of the Snider was approved in 1881.



1882 saw the arrival of the first new pattern Winchesters, which addressed the flaws as pointed out in Commissioner Irvine's previous report. These would see full distribution to the force by 1885, expedited by the growing threat of rebellion lead by Louis Riel.

Lances were more for ceremonial purposes than for use as a weapon. The twenty-five lances requisitioned for the 7 4 March had a bamboo staff and were held in a leather bucket attached to the right stirrup and held by a sling looped over the rider's arm. As the column approached Blackfoot country in September 1874, Sergeant R . Belcher, a former 9th Lancer, formed a troop of lancers to support the advance guard.



The Force brought two **9-pr. guns and two mortars** on their march west. The weapons were part of a purchase from the Imperial Ordnance stores for \$22,767. A four-horse team was needed to transport the heavy 9-pr. Field pieces. Sub-Inspector Cecil Denny complained that the artillery pieces "gave us more trouble and crippled more horses than all the rest of transport." Rockets were fired to impress the Indians and to signal the camp location. The expected influx of Sioux Indians into Canada after the Custer Massacre pressed the Force to purchase four 7-pr. bronze guns (mountain guns) from the Canadian Militia for \$4,500. These weapons, manufactured in Great Britain in 1809, had been brought to Manitoba by the Red River Expedition in 1870. Sub-Inspector Percy Neale transported the four field pieces to Fort Walsh in October 1876. With the closure of Fort Walsh in 1883, these field pieces were sent to Calgary and Regina. As a response to Indian unrest in the fall of 1884, one of the Regina field pieces was relocated in Battleford. This field piece was moved in March 1885 to Fort Carlton and, shortly after, was used ineffectively in the Duck Lake skirmish.



9-pounder Muzzle loading Rifles, and mortars NWMP Artillery Detachment, D & H Divisions, Fort MacLeod, Alberta, 17 Dec 1890. (Library and Archives Canada Photo, MIKAN No. 3574417)

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Dunn has published *The Alberta Field Force of 1885* as well as a number of articles in historical magazines. Jack Dunn lives in Calgary with his wife, Maureen.



CEF Battle Patches Continued from page 1

In addition to the five Divisions, the Canadian Corps also consisted of Corps Troops - many of these applied for, and were granted, permission to adopt a patch. The Corps Troops included specialty units such as railway and engineering units, tunnellers, and Work Companies as well as the Canadian Cyclists Battalion.

Many of the Battle Patches used by the Corps Troops were actually adopted after the war was over. The patches were only to be worn by soldiers attached to units in Europe and were to be removed from the uniform if the soldier was transferred from a units' effective strength back to England or to Canada. The patch became more than just a means of identifying a unit's boundary, it was used on vehicles as a unit identifier and on flags as a field guide to a Battalion's headquarters.

After the war there was an attempt by the London-based Canadian Records Office to collect a sample of each battle patch used by the CEF. This proved to be impossible as some units wore unauthorized patches, many failed to mention anything



about patches in their unit war diary, while others never wore, or even applied, for a patch. What few records existed by the mid-1920's even conflicted with the memories of those who wore them.

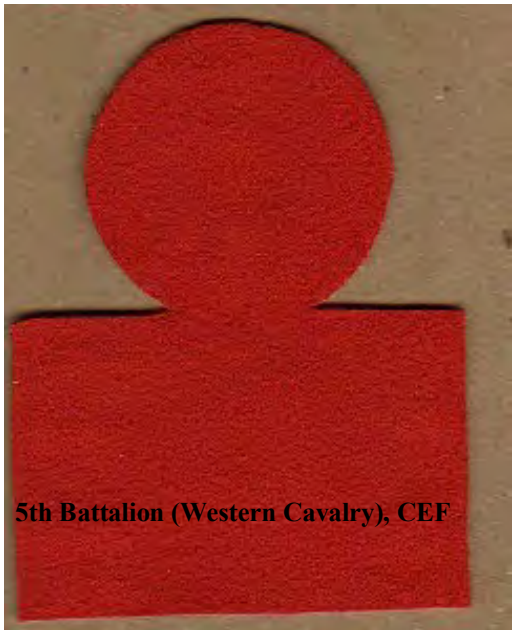
By 1962, when the Department of Defense published the official history of the CEF, they included a colour chart of the patches, since then several of the patches have been shown to be incorrect while others are missing completely. Often mistaken as a patch were the ribbons worn by several of the Cavalry units. These were worn around the base of the epaulettes and usually had the units' brass shoulder title attached.

The formation patch was often used as an identifier on pennants and helmets as well as on greeting cards and other semi-official documentation. Many battalions continued to use the symbol instead of the cap badge on their unit history, and on reunion programmes, long after the war.

Notes;

' National Archives of Canada, RG9, Volume 10,935, File 99-8943

' DHist, Document 009.1266 (D104) dated 17 September 1918.



5th Battalion (Western Cavalry), CEF

Note; Some of this article came from a newsletter by Clive Law that he gave out in the early 1990's

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Someday soon. Hang on everybody, we will be back

