

With the Midland Battⁿ during the North West Rebellion of 1885

On the 1st of April 1885, the Millbrook and Manvers contingents took train for Port Hope to join there the other companies which were to form the Midland Battn under the command of Lt. Col Williams of P Hope. Our company was under the command of Capt. C. Winslow, Lieut Preston. We joined the Lindsay Port Hope Companies in the Drill Shed at P. Hope and were paraded and addressed by Col Williams, and received order to go to Kingston, to be clothed, and to have our accoutrements examined. At the Railway station of course there was a scene. Mothers, wives, sisters & somebody else's sisters seeing their dear ones off. Many tears were shed on all sides; and after all it was quite a relief to us when the train moved off amid a burst of cheers which lightened us up a great deal, and many of our lads hung out the windows to catch a last glimpse of the "Girls they left Behind Them" Along the road to Kingston, we picked up the remainder of our Battn or rather the balance and were heartily cheered at every station we passed through by immense crowds of people; this was all very pleasant of course, and everyone felt willing to put down the Halfbreeds first and then follow the gallant Colonel to Russia & help the Queens forces in case of War.

We reached Kingston at 4 pm and were marched into the Barracks and paraded, the Battn was formed & companies placed in their respective places. Our Company being placed fourth. "D" or rear company of right half Battn, and then, after being inspected and addressed were dismissed to our quarters appointed. D.&C. were sent to Fort W^mHenry. Our quarters there were not very pleasant, but being soldiers now, we had to give up all luxuries, and be content with what we could get. We managed to get tea somehow, and sometime in the night. After being going through a little drill, we retired to rest, our beds consisting of three blankets and a rubber sheet stretched on the floor. There was little sleep in the room that night, the boys were up to mischief and our old Sergeant was vainly striving to impress the lads with an idea of the kind of service they were going upon, but his words were in vain.

Next morning the officers had a busy time trying to lick us into some kind of shape for many of our men knew nothing whatever of drill and many very amusing mistakes were made.. After dinner I was warned for guard at 6 pm to strengthen the guard of the Fort. It was a dreadful night, Thursday night before Good Friday (the night of the Massacre at Frog Lake) my post was on the Glacis, and I got the full force of the snow storm that was raging all night, fortunately we had been provided with good overcoats mufflers and mittens, and of course did not feel cold much. I was on from 8 pm to 10 pm & 2 am til 4 am & 8 am till 10 am. I felt that soldering had commenced in good earnest. This was no "going down to Niagara or elsewhere for 12 days"

On Saturday 4th April we were inspected again by the Col, and other Militia and were ordered to the Barracks that night so that on Sunday the 5th we might get what new clothing was necessary.

We were pronounced fit to proceed to the front at a moments notice, by Sunday night, for that day had been a busy one for all. Not so busy but that service was held, and our church service read by our new lieutenant McCartwright, son of Sir Rich^d C.. In the evening another service was held by the W.M.C.A. of Kingston and several addresses were made, let us hope with good effect. We also received orders for the front. The reveille sounded at 4 am and everyone was of course busy. Breakfast over we "fell in" on our markers on the parade ground. After a little manoeuvring, the Battalion was "told off" and then ordered to "Stand at - Ease -" then along comes the Colonel, who after a word and salute from the Major, roared out an awful "**Shon**" whereupon the Battⁿ as one man, sprang to attention and we were at once marched to the Railway station and after an hour or two we got into the cars that were going north. Now all this was very military and well calculated to inspire the uninitiated with proper respect of military pomp & glory. Few of the lads had friends in Kingston so the parting was a cheerful one. And about 10 am on Monday 6th April we commenced our journey to the North West. The Battn mustered 350 besides officers, 8 companies. The first 4 ABCD forming the Right half & EFGH the left half Battn. The Caps Laxier(A), Bonicastle(B), Hughes(C), Grase(C), Winslow(D), Dingmall(E), Evans(F), Burke(G) & Harrison(H). Adjutant Portou, Major Smith Col Deacon & Col William.

Matawa was reached 2 am on Tuesday 7th. The syndicate had a hot breakfast prepared for us, to which we did justice for our meals on the train, were simple & cool. The country through which we passed was very rough, timbered with small pine tamarack, white birch & cedar and judging from the amount of track to be seen through the snow. I think it will not be fit for agriculture. The country at present seems to be in the hands of lumbermen for logs, square timbers, cordwood, ties etc are strewn along the track in large quantities.

About 9 am a soldier jumped through one of the car windows while the train was going about 18 miles an hour per hour. The train was stopped and run back to where the man had alighted on the snow. Some blood marks were found & tracks leading to the woods, though he was tracked some distance his pursuers did not catch sight of him, and he escaped, he was after arrested, and found to have been crazy probably "delirium tremers". The country was much the same, except that the timber was smaller, and at 4 pm we arrived at Biscotasing, a small place consisting of a few boarding houses, a saw mill, some tents & half a dozen log houses. A large number of men were on the station and I learned on enquiring that this was the chief pay station, on the new construction works. We got orders to "fall in" on the platform, and were marched to a large shanty at the saw mill where the syndicate had another meal for us, railway fare, molasses & pork, potatoes & tea. Our next stop was Nemogasenda and on Wednesday the 8th we reached

Michipicoten, the end of the track, and here commenced the first portage. The snow was very deep, and large gangs of railroad hands were engaged shovelling out a road for us. The sleighs were waiting for us over the gap 47 miles. We got away by noon; ten men in each sleigh, every man taking rifle knapsack etc with them. Our teams kept as much as possible on the unfinished track leaving it when coming to bridge gaps. At sundown we reached Portman Road & cool comfort, the treatment we got here was very bad, who was to blame, I cannot tell, but most of us started off again at 8 pm hungry and cold. The night was clear and cold, freezing hard, the teams were very far apart and we, the team I belonged to, were alone for 2 or 3 hours. When about ten 10 miles out, we pulled up at a shanty and went in to get a warm up. The only man stirring was the cook, the men numbering I believe 40 were all asleep, the cook was rather a good sort of man & indeed proved a "good Samaritan". Here we lost our appetites, the happy cause was a hearty meal of meat, cakes, etc etc etc etc etc, after which, like guests or rather volunteers refreshed we bade god bye to our friend and resumed our journey. At 1:30 am we reached the end of our gap and if our reception at Portman Road was "cool" here it was decidedly "cooler" Several bivouac fires were burning one for each company, and around each fire were lying in the snow those of our comrades who had arrived, close at hand was a large tent of marquee, erected for sleeping accommodation, I went in, and such a sight I never had witnessed, was before me. The floor covered with spruce poles, two small stoves with equal small fires in them were being kept by a number of half frozen citizen soldiers, others were lying huddled together as close as possible on the floor. I tried the tent but after waking up once and finding that I had slipped between the poles on to the damp ground and thinking that perhaps I might freeze there. I took my blanket & sheet to one of the fires outside and scraping away a little of the snow. I lay down as close as possible to my nearest be fellow and lay there till day light. This is not a bit exaggerated, on the contrary, it is beyond my powers to describe the misery of that terrible night. Our breakfast was cold meat biscuit & canned meat. We looked very different from the smart Battn of Monday (return back to page one), the men shivering & dirty, the officers tired & cross. The cars were ready to convey us to the next gap. Flat cars too boarded up the sides & open overhead, fortunately the day was fine though very cold. We travelled in this way 140 miles and by the time we reached our destination we were suffering with cold & hunger. It was dark when we left the cars, and we had a mile to march to McKellar's Harbour on Lake Superior, part of our Battn were catered on a schooner, laid up in the ice. The rest of us slept in tents. Early on the morning of Friday 10th we left McKellar and marched out on the Lake, to go to Jackfish Bay. The right half went first followed by the left under Col Deacoa. The distance was 20 miles, but the guides took the wrong direction and made it 23. The March was heavy. A storm raged the whole time and with the heat of our bodies, melting the snow upon us, our overcoats got very wet & consequently heavy to carry. We accomplished the journey in less than 4 hours. Many fell out and got on baggage sleighs, and shame to buy, it was our heaviest men who gave out first. I kept to the ranks right through, but was very lightheaded when we reached the station. Here a meager supply of beef tea was served out & cold biscuit, with a promise of something better later on. All wet, cold, tired & hungry we again got on the miserable flat cars, and went 60 miles on the track, till nearly frozen to death, we arrived at Jackfish Bay. All ceremony for once was dispensed with and after giving directions for proper disposing of the men. The officers hurried them off to their quarters as quickly as possible. It would have been ludicrous under any other circumstances to see our "soldiers" with their frozen clothes, red tukes on their heads, hobbling and trailing rifles & knapsacks, the very picture of frozen misery. We hadn't washed for 3 days. Our company were quartered in a large boarding shanty. A good red stove was throwing out a terrific heat when we got there and as soon as possible the frozen clothes were thawed and dried and then such a meal, pork & beans, bread & butter, luxuries, a comfortable room, seats, good "lively" beds, here was paradise. Ah who wouldn't sell his farm & be a soldier.

We also with pleasure received orders to lay up all Saturday, of course no one needed pressing, and if the day was spent, washing, shaving, sewing & a general clean up. -two good nights sleep did wonders, and a good humor reigned supreme.

On Sunday morning 12th April we took the sleighs again to cross the third portage, we went on the lake again, and made very good time. After a halt at noon we again resumed our journey, the day was very cold. At 3 pm we completed the third portage & and again got on the flat cars for a 50 mile ride. Nothing of importance occurred, and on reaching the forth & last portage at dusk. We started out to march to Red Rock 15 miles distant to where we expected the train was waiting to take us to Winnipeg. It was a beautiful night, clear & crisp and we were just cold enough to feel in good trim for a brisk march and very soon our fifteen mile were covered and we came in sight of Red Rock and the Pullman cars and at 2 am on Monday 13th we started for Winnipeg with no prospect of a dreary gap to cross or any more laying out.

We passed through Port Arthur during the night, and Rat Portage next morning. Tuesday morning 14th we arrived in Winnipeg and received orders to go into camp. We fell in and marched down through the city, not going far however, when a telegram arrived ordering us on to Qu Appelle.

Back to the station we marched and remained there for two or three hours. Meps Tuckett & Co of Hamilton presented us each with 1 lb of tobacco. Whilst standing on the station an instantaneous photo was taken of the scene on the platform. In Winnipeg the news reached us that ladies of Brandon were preparing tea for us, so that we were not so sorry to leave the Winnipeggers who had already had already sent out the 90th boys and were getting up the 92nd Battn. About 5 pm we reached Brandon, and the train stopped in the midst of a perfect furor of cheering, and in a very short time such a bevy of ladies and such a lot of baskets as never was seen. Each soldier received a bag from a lady and his canteen full of coffee from a gentleman, sandwiches, cakes etc, luxuries then. We spent two very pleasant hours with the Brandonians. There can be little doubt about our appreciating the kindness of the kind Manitobans, for I heard several lads express their determination of returning to Brandon & settling there, making only one provision, and that was "if they came through alright". On Wednesday 15th we arrived at Moose Jaw, and eat there.

We had been ordered on to Swift Current, and at 3 pm on the 15th we arrived there. The 35th Battn were already there and in camp. We pitched our tents and went under canvas, the snow had been left behind before we reached Winnipeg and though it was cold, the ground was dry, with ten men in a tent and twelve tents for officers and offices, we pitched a large camp. Cooks were appointed, kitchens made. Guards posted and things began to assume a little more military life.

At Swift Current we remained about a week, forwarding supplies to Middleton. Provisions were very dear here. Butter 35cts cheese 25cts eggs 50 to 75 cts doz. We traded our rations of preserved meat for canned fruits, condensed milk & canned fish. A band of Cree came in one day and pitched their camp. Numbering eight lodges. They were evidently scouts, well armed with Winchester rifles.

A strict march watch was kept over them. Some of Boultons scouts were with us, about 40. We drilled a good deal, and made very good skirmishing, frightening a few old crows that were hovering round the camp after refuse. I "did" one guard at S. Current during the night the "Officer of the day" came and visited the guards, and found the Corporal "old shiner" and the relief sound asleep. I was on sentry at the time, so did not come in for reprimand.

On Wednesday morning 22nd April we struck out tents, and started for the front . The orders were "Battleford". We made a forced march across the prairie, 32 miles. The journey was very monotonous, nothing to be seen but prairie & water holes. We had left S. Current at 7.50 am. At noon we halted an hour and a half. Then a halt from 3pm til 4.30pm and again for tea at 6pm and at 8.40 we arrived at Saskatchewan Landing. G&H companies had been left at Swift Current and E&F had been at the Landing three days having formed an escort to a train of provisions. When within two miles of the river we entered a long valley or ravine which descended to the river. The scenery was wild beyond description and it was so dark. We went on board the steamer "Northcote" and took up our uncomfortable quarters in the hold. The boat drew 2 ft of water being of course flat bottomed the better to navigate among the sand bars of the South Saskatchewan. The next morning as the boat was not to start till the arrival of the transport. I took an opportunity of ascending one of the

hills close to the river. The scene from the summit was wild & grand as far as the eye could reach was high peaks & gullies. One of these gullies had a nice creek in it. I went down to get a drink of good water for our supply had not been of the best quality. Then I went to follow its to the river but it got less & less till when about two hundred yards from the river it finally disappeared. At 10 am the transport arrived and after it was loaded on the boat we got under weigh and commenced that memorable journey down the South Branch a river never navigated by a steamer before. The Captain & Pilot Captain Sheets & Seager had a difficult task before them for they had to find the channel, if there was one, and the water was low. Each soldier was served out with 10 rounds of ball cartridge, for it was expected that the Breeds would attack us on our journey down and try to capture our supplies.

We made a few miles run that day getting stuck on sand bars often. At such times all hands were ordered on the barge, one which was on either side of the steamer. By this means the boat was lightened. As it was cold weather the men would rather stay on the boat than be out on the barges for two or three hours.

The officer of the day would have to go down into the hold and try to rout out those who were hiding. Many a row was the result, for on going down into the dark hold the officer could not see anything for a few minutes, and if he did not get pushed over a box or barrel, it would be because he was greeted with a shower of hard tack, otherwise biscuit, The enraged officer would rush forward to arrest the mutinous offenders, bur he was sure to come to grief and lodge a complain with the Col., against the company whose quarters he had visited. A man was stationed on each of the scows with poles, sounding the water. When they could not touch bottom they would call "no bottom" in a loud monotonous voice. "Two feet" "Six feet" "No Bottom" soon became familiar sounds to us, "All hands on the barges and "All hands on shore to cut wood" were rather obnoxious orders to us. Then about 50 choppers went ashore, and the rest of us carried in what was chopped. This had to be done every day. At night the boat was tied up. As we got into the enemies country, chopper were not sent ashore till a well armed piquet had reported the coast clear. Twelve dreary days passed on this trip, with little variation and everyone was tired of the frequent stoppages. On the eleventh day we arrived at Saskatoon where we saw some of the wounded men from the front, from these we learned that Middletons men were badly off for medical attendance. God help them if they are depending on us for our doctors as good as none, for if any of were sick and complained all we would get was "Oh I don't think there is anything wrong with you". I can't excuse you from duty. "Or" We are spoiling you men by taking too much care of you. On the afternoon of the day we left Saskatoon, Sunday 3rd of May. Our sporting or rather I mean our Medical Dept discovered that for eleven days or nights B&D companies had occupied quarters that were unfit and that it would be highly injurious for them to sleep here the twelfth night, everyone thought it rather late in the day to find it out but then two of our men were very sick, one with rheumatic fever, besides it was dangerous to go ashore hunting, so the Drs. had a little leisure to attend to their business.

We learned that Middleton loss was 10 killed and 35 wounded. On Monday 4th May the four companies cast lots as to which two should go onto the front, two having to remain, by Gen Laurie's instruction at Clarke's Crossing. A & C were the lucky ones and B & D disembarked taking all our belongings. And the old Northcote with A & C Company Col William & Col Straubenzie went on down the river to Batoche. Here we heard that we on the Northcote had been given up for lost and that new to that effect had been sent to Ontario, of course news of our safe arrival was immediately dispatched home to relieve the anxiety of our friends.

Our military work commenced in earnest at Clarke's Crossing. Our camp was pitched close to the river, headquarters were established in a stone house vacated by its original owners at the commencement of the trouble. After getting things settled, guards posted, cookeries built, orderlies appointed etc.

We had leisure to take a look at our surroundings, Clarke, the settler from whom the crossing takes its name , lives just half a mile down the river from where our camp was, he had remained on his place through all the trouble and indeed seem very little concerned about it and what is most remarkable, he was never molested, though only 15 miles from Fish Creek. We were kept busy at the crossing, fatigue work, guards, piquets and drill. My turn for duty in common with the others was piquet every third night and guard every fifth day. Piquet is a lonesome dreary duty requiring the utmost vigilance on the part of the person on duty, as the safety of the whole camp depends on the piquet. If he desert his post, he may be punished with death. Familiarity breeds contempt "is an old saw so after" going on piquet a few times we got used to it, and often something amusing would turn up. I remember at the crossing, I was going on piquet one night, Lieut. Cartwright, son of Sir

Richard was "officer of the day" and after getting the piquet together he marched us all around the camp, to make each sentinel acquainted with the position of the camp and its environs. During this march McCartwright informed us that Capt. Winslow & our Dr. had gone out to McIntosh's place about 17 miles distant and would probably pass through the lines at midnight, they were in a buggy belonging to the half breed McIntosh.

I was no.6 & Jack Steinthorpe of our Cot was no 5 my next door neighbour, our turns of duty were 7 to 9 . 11 to 1 . 3 to 5. It was a dark night and Jack and I often met at the end of our beat to pass a word or two. About midnight (we had arranged what to do in case the Capt crossed the lines near our posts). I heard a light a slight noise out on the prairie, and on listening very attentively I made out the tramp of a pony on the grass. A moment later I heard a sharp challenge from Jack "Halt", "Halt, who goes there". "Its all right sentry its Capt Winslow" was the answer. "Get out of that buggy and one advance" was Jack's next order. The Capt. got out of the buggy, "Put your hands up over your head was the next order". It not necessary to do that says Winslow but Jack was immoveable so the Capt advanced the required distance with his hands up as high as he could put them, and his voice betrayed that he was not quite sure but that he might possibly get shot. Then Jack affected to recognise his Captain. "Pass Capt Winslow all's well" and the Capt finding who Jack was muttered something not very complimentary to Jack. Called the Dr. who was doubtless getting a little alarmed himself & the pair drove quickly down to the guard room, where they met the Lieut. who asked them if had any trouble in passing the sentries to which their answer was "no"

The next night we got a "scare". The piquets were posted and everything seemed secure, and the possibility of an attack never entered our minds, when about eleven pm the sentry on No 1 post fired off his rifle in less time than it takes to write this page. All the men the men were up, dressed, armed and out, fell in on the sergeant of the Companies, posted in the most advantageous places round the camp, those not so posted were marched off in the direction of No 1 post. The piquet said he challenged & fired at some persons, who disappeared. The party after reconnoitring for half and hour reported no enemy in the vicinity and we retired to rest with our rifles at our sides, just loosening our belts & sleeping with our clothes on as soundly as f nothing had happened.

Middleton was now moving to Batoche. On Sunday 10th we heard the reports of the guns of artillery at Batoche 25 miles distant, several reports being distinctly heard from the hill at the rear of the guard house. On Monday 11th a train of teams arrived in charge of ___ Seareton who also brought the following order from the General "I want the remainder of the Midland Battn." Our commander hardly knew what to do. If he marched to Batoche he would have to leave some supplies at the mercy of the rebels. However about 80 teams were loaded and orders given to be in readiness to go on to the front, at an early hour next morning. It was not until 10 am on Tuesday 12th that we got started owing to delays with the teamsters. The march was a lively one, rather warm. The troops suffered from lack of water. There were plenty of ponds but the water contained rather much alkali.

We reached McIntosh's at 4 pm and a search for water was immediately instituted, successfully too, for a well was discovered about 100 yds from the house containing what to us seemed the most delicious water we had ever taken. The commandant wisely ordered a halt, giving us to understand we would have to rise & be on the march at daylight. No tents were pitched. The teams formed corral. The soldiers spread their blankets on the grass and at dark everyone except Piquets retired to rest. A scout dashed into our camp with the news that Batoche had fallen that day and the rebels were dispersed and that Riel ----- At an early hour we were off again, passing Fish Creek, the scene of the first fight. Several dead ponies lay there and one dead Indian who had been buried in a very shallow grave was found. Our advance guard reported a body of horse now approaching and thought they looked like breeds or Indians. Corral was formed. The troops formed companies, loaded and prepared to receive the enemy. They proved however to be Boultons horse coming out to escort us in. A little after noon we caught sight of Batoche. As we neared the scene of battle we passed many halfbreed farms, nearing the camp we passed a corral containing many ponies captured by scouts & also one containing cattle. (We had been served with fresh beef at the crossing) We marched at once into the trenches and took up our humble quarters on the ground. I saw an interesting though at the time a painful scene. The first thing was rather laughable too. The members of the A & C companies came up from Batoche to see us, and tell us all about the fight. They were mounted on ponies taken from the breeds. Their heads adorned with slouch hats taken from the store at Batoche. And then the way they lorded over us because we were not at the fight. The colonel was the lion of the day.

Another amusing incident was the sight of groups of breeds getting under the protection of three inches square of white linen tied on end of a short stick and carried by the fortunate possessor very conspicuously, also escorted by priests going to see the General probably to get passports.

I went to see the General too. And of course got into trouble for not knowing anything about the camp. I walked into very order of scantity. Hearing a roar close at hand, I turned and beheld the brave old General seated under a bit of canvass attached to a wagon. He was evidently greatly disturbed (judging from his language) at seeing two vulgar militiamen in his private office. We vanished. One of our sergeants now walked up and said the non coms are all on duty, you are to take charge of a fatigue party and bury some half breeds. On going to the spot indicated I found the party assembled and at once got a grave dug, shallow enough, and without ceremony tumbled them in and pulled down the wall of the trench over them. Many dead and wounded lay in different places.

After tea I went down to the ravine at Batoche passing over the scene of the skirmishes, past the church, and into the village, situated on the top of the ravine. The house of where French was shot is on the left. Fishers store and other houses on the right of the passage down into the ravine. We Midlanders were quartered in Fisher's store and private Henry of C company was energetically scraping out a hornpipe on a fiddle. To the great satisfaction of his comrades. I passed several dead Indians, one a Sioux chief with seven Gatling bullets in him, guess he had enough. I went down into the ravine here a pitiable sight was presented. Up & down the ravine were the tents of the breeds, some torn down & destroyed, carts with rifle pits beneath them, provisions, furniture, clothing, cooking utensils etc lay around in indescribable confusion. Disconsolate cooking women were there too, putting their dead husbands, sons or relations on the carts, to take them away for burial. I confess that I could not stand the sight and soon left the ravine to its sorrowing occupants.

War is a terrible calamity to a people of a nation. Our lads had plenty of loot such as knives, money, guns, moccassins & other Indian clothing. Many stories of the fight were told that night in camp, true or not, it matters little, all were received alike.

Captain Brown of the Boultons Scouts was buried in the ravine close to the corral, his body was laid in a pine box and carried down the steep bank by his men, about sixty scouts followed.

Early the next morning Thursday 14th the forces were under arms and orders were given for a move to Prince Albert. After a heavy march we reached Lepine's crossing and pitched camp. On Friday the work of ferrying the army across was commenced. The steamer Northwest Alberta & Marquis were engaged, each boat took from nine to thirteen wagon teams besides troops & scouts. On Friday evening Riel was brought in to the Generals quarters, a prisoner. Lepine also gave himself up. Tom Owrie (Hourie) a half breed scout made Riel prisoner. Tom is about 6ft3 in height and of splendid physique.

We lay at Lepine's over Sunday. Devine service was held outside the camp. The service was very impressive. The troops were formed in a square on the north side were the artillery and 90th band. East C school of Infantry, south 90th Battn, west Midland Battn. On Sunday afternoon I started across the river on the Northcote to see Riel. Unfortunately for me, the boat made a trip to a sand bar, to take off some wagons, and did not go right across. I had however the satisfaction of seeing Riel's half breed council who were confined on board. Jackson Lepine were both there. It was late when the boat got back to shore & when I reached camp I found that I was in disgrace for being absent when wanted for duty, my punishment was an extra guard. On Monday 18th everything being in readiness the column started for Prince Albert. It was an interesting sight to see the long column winding over the Prairie. We had a heavy march, and everyone was ready for rest, when the bugle sounded the halt.

On Tuesday afternoon we sighted P. Albert the order to march at attention was given. The 90th Grenadier bands played their liveliest marches, our column was a very long one, perhaps covering two mile & half or three miles. The advance guard was composed of six men of each company of the Midland. 24 men. The support also Midland. Next came the General and staff. Col Williams & Midland Regt. 90th band & Battn. Gatling gun, Boulton Scouts, Artillery, Grenadiers & band. Police & scouts, 200 teams._____

As we marched into town we passed the mounted police under Col Irvine, the P. Albert volunteers & though last certainly not least the Prince Albert Band, which judging from the appearance of its performers was exerting itself energetically. A discussion arouse in our company as to what tune was being rendered. Some

said Rule Britannia. At any rate it was noisy. Our men were in desperate condition. The road for the last ten miles was very dusty and everyone had a fine covering over him. We looked more like half breeds than whites.

We camped about 200 yds from the river Saskatchewan in a pleasant location. Here was civilization at last, here was milk, bread, butter, luxuries to be had, by paying dear for them. 15 to 20cts a quart for milk. 75cts for butter when it could be bought. Bread was scarce to buy. The people were on the verge of starvation. Beardy, chief of a reserve close by came in to see the General.

On Friday 22nd our Battn went aboard the Northwest under orders for Battleford. The others were to follow, as soon as possible. We expected to march against Poundmaker & his Crees on arrival at Battleford. We reached the town on Sunday 24th May and remained on board till Monday. Colonel Otter & Queen's officers came on board to see the General. A battery officers & some men came on. Early Monday morning we disembarked and marched through Battleford to a level plain outside of town and on which the Queen's own, a Battery & Mounted Police were encamped. We pitched our tents a quarter of a mile below the Q.O.R. and a half mile from the Battle river. The 90th arrived shortly after and settled down. On our left the General quarters were with the Midland. The Queens birthday was celebrated in the forenoon. All the troops taking part in the ceremony, "a march past" was gone through and the big guns fired off. The report of the guns must have struck terror into the aborigines for shortly after a messenger from Poundmaker dashed in, and going to the General said the chief would surrender at 10 am on Tuesday. True to his word at 10 am Poundmaker and a train of ponies, carts, half breed prisoners teamsters & teams (captured by the Indian), began to arrive. Two wagon loads of arms were also brought in. Poundmaker and his council held a long Pow Wow with the General. Tom Oure's (hourie) father was the interpreter. A heavy guard was under arms during the council. Poundmaker & some of the chiefs & the Indians who killed Payne were sent to Fort Battle. The others were ordered back to their reserves. One chief had an elegant pair of mocassins on, and one of our men offered him \$1 bill for them, no, he would'nt take it. While the "shemoygan" was cogitating over offering another quarter a comrade whips out a 25 cent plug of Myrtle Navy and offered it to "Nitche" who hesitated not a second and the soldier got the mocassins for his "bacca".

We had a good time at Battleford. We traded our rations to the half breeds for "bannock". A large cake baked in a frying pan. A first rate change from hard tack. Fresh beef was also served out. The Q.O.R. gave a concert in Fort Otter, in old Battleford. It was well got up, and some capital songs were sung. Notably the Charleston Blues. A pugilistic encounter and some step dancing was rendered.

The General was present and one lady, Mrs. Nash wife of Governor of the Fort. As usual Sunday again saw us on the move having disposed of Poundmaker, we had now to settle that wily rascal Big Bear but first we had to catch him. We went on board Sunday 31st and started for Fort Pitt. We landed on Tuesday 2nd June six miles below the Fort. Big Bear was reported close at hand holding a strong position in a muskeg. We lay close to the river on rather a damp ground and during the day an order was issued calling for volunteers to form a column of 150 men to escort two Gatlings to Gen. Stanges camp, so the order ran, but in reality the column was to act in concert with Stange's & Steele's in surrounding the Bear. Seven from each company was asked for.

I volunteered with six others of our comps. And all being ready at 2 pm. We mustered 50 Grenadiers 50 Midland & 50 90th. A storm came up just as we started and we got wet through but that was pleasure itself compared to other experiences of that never to be forgotten Bear hunt. At night we camped on Strange's old camp ground. It was very cold night, and we were wet through, after a cold supper. We rolled ourselves in our blankets, and being pretty wet, tired out, slept till daylight. When our sleepless bugler began droning out "I bought a horse" "I bought a horse" "and a donkey tooooo." there maybe considerable melody in it under certain favourable circumstances. But for the 150 volunteers in our camp, it had rather a harsh sound, especially, when the guard dropt in with "Hello boys, winds in the east, cold & raining." In an hour we were ready to start. At eight oclock we came to a large muskeg, and it was found too deep to wade. The wagons unloaded, and the men ferried across, then the blankets & tents etc. were again loaded & brought across. While the baggage was coming across, we were shivering in our great coats waiting for the last wagon. When one team got down in the mud, many teamsters tried to get the horses up, the wagon turned over and contents tumbled into the water.

Each wagon contained the baggage of 50 men belonging to one Regiment----- Grenadiers seeing the blankets & -----water thought it belonged to the -----jeered us. :Ah you Midlanders men -including discovery that they were owners of the wet blankets, the effect was rather a damper on them. Afternoon we reached the muskeg where Bear was supposed to be entrenched. Strange had "evicted" him. We had heavy marching and the teams had heavy work, the Gatling was taken separate from the ammunition wagon. We waited two or three hours for the baggage to get through.

We searched Bear's camp ground and found tracks of the white prisoners, some furs, papers and some drawings on paper unmistakable the work of a white female. The country got so dense with brush and this with the muskeg made it impossible for infantry to get through, for mounted men could carry their baggage & provision, but the infantry must have wagons. We camped for the night. Capt. Steele sent back some police to scout for us. In the evening three wounded men were brought in. These men were wounded in the plucky fight which Steele & his 70 police had with Bear & his 300 braves and Steele made the Bear retreat or turntail "climber tree." One man shot through the lungs, one through the thigh the other through the arm.

Next morning we started for Fort Pitt. The mounted men taking the Gatling on to Strange. The march to Pitt was rather a take down to the grannies who made up their minds to tire out the Middies. The Grenadiers were on the lead and set out at a furious rate, thinking they only had 15 miles to go, unfortunately, the guide lost his way and took us five miles astray. Well the grannies began to tire out after 10 miles were covered and word passed thro our ranks to crowd them and cries of "Keep up at the pace you started Granny dears" or "Poor Grannie getting tired" "Move on", "Lift your feet." And going the slopes to the river we crowd them till they would break into a run. They were sick of trying to out march the "Clodhoppers" as they styled us. We found the brigade in good position at Fort Pitt about half a mile from the river.

I saw the place where Cowan the policeman lay for weeks after he was shot by the Indians, his body is laid in a grave close by with a half breed on one side and an "unknown" on the other side. There is nothing interesting about Fort Pitt and Sunday coming round again, we got marching orders. On Sunday June 14th we (Midland) embarked on board the steamer Northwest (Capt Sheets) and made the run up to ___landing (afterward called Midl___ in a few hours ___ ___ ___ for the night.

Early next morning we received orders to march to Frog Lake, to intercept Big Bear. (During the night a large cross had been erected on the high hill close to the landing and an inscription on it, "To the memory of the victims of the Frog Lake massacre." and to commemorate the landing of the Midland Battn. A great number of names were carved on the cross. Frog Lake is 7 miles from the landing and we arrived there at noon, here we saw the bloody work of the red skins. All the houses burnt and many persons killed. We saw the bodies of several laid in holes and covered with boards, they were very much decomposed. It was a sad spectacle and I was not a bit sorry that I was not on the burying party. We pushed on from Frog Lake to Cold Lake, probably to catch up with Stange. It was a difficult March, the country being swampy & full of bush. On arriving at the Lake we received further orders, rather disagreeable too, and we turned around and retraced our steps to Frog Lake with orders to remain there to await further orders still.

We camped on the slope below the ruined village in full view of the beautiful lake and river, good times were in store for us, not before we needed them though and as soon as the camp was arranged, measures were taken to _____fort & convenient.

A small river or creek ran close to our camp and near the place it flows into the lake, there was an abundance of fish. A slide was fixed in the river and a barrier formed of stakes was stretched across from the slide to the opposite bank. At an early hour in the morning ___ with a wagon & team would proceed to the river. Two men on the slide and one a few hundred yards up stream and one in the wagon. The rest get into the water a few hundred yards upstream and stretching across the river drove the fish before them, finding no outlet, the fish were forced on the slide and the two men are pretty busy picking up the fish and throwing them to the man in charge of the wagon. Some mornings as many as a hundred pike, white fish and pickerel have been caught.

We received the supplies from our friends in Ontario while at the Lake, and right welcome they were. Much of the provisions had been stolen by dishonest teamsters or soldiers, blame was laid on G & H companies of our Battn who were in charge of the supplies. The good things were much needed, particularly the havelocks &

jackets. Then the under clothing, socks, needles & thread were more good to us than the canned fruit, fish, pickles ____ juice etc etc too _____ all equally appreciated.

News reached us of a split in Big Bears camp. And that the Chipewayans had secured the white prisoners and were bringing them to Fort Pitt. On Sunday 21st we received orders to go to Pit. We thought we were going home but on arriving at the Fort we went into camp.

The white prisoners had arrived, the families McLean, Mrs. Gowanlock & Mrs Delancy and others who had been prisoners, had quarters given them on the boat. They went down to Battleford shortly after. The Grannies & 90th were still at Pitt. A company of our Battn was sent on to Saskatoon to pick up all who had been left at different points and to escort the wounded to places on the river where the boat homeward could pick them up. This looked like going home and we were in high spirits in consequence.

Some good sports were arranged to last three days. Horse racing, foot races, bayon eating. Big Bear etc. Some well contested "tugs of war, bayonetting Big Bear was a mirth exciting affair. The effigy of Big Bear was set up and a man from each company was allowed three passes at the Bear. Each man to be blindfolded & turned around two or three times so that it was quite close to the figure he would not be sure where it was. One man only managed to bayonet old Bear and he did it in good style.

Our Colonel, Col. Williams, had been ill for a few days and was stopping on board the Northwest. On Friday July 3rd we got the welcome order "Home" and embarked at once. The boat left Fort Pitt at daylight on Saturday July 4th. At 10 am our brave Colonel died, it was a heavy blow to the regiment and the unusual silence that reigned on board all that day, showed the great respect the men had for their Col, On our arrival at Battleford the body was taken ashore and was sent in charge of Paymaster Read to Swift Current in a wagon. We then dropped down to Prince Albert, we were allowed on shore and had the satisfaction of seeing Big Bear and his son prisoners at the jail. They were brought out for an "airing"so. We all had an appointment of seeing the Bear we had been so long hunting.

From P. Albert we dropped rapidly down to Grand Rapids where we parted from the Northwest and loading our stuff on the trains. We marched the three miles portage. At the other end of the rapids, two tugs and three barges were waiting for us. During the few hours we stopped at the portage. Captain Bonnycastle caught 65 pike in about 2 hours, with a spoon hook. The fish were large and a fatigue party brought them into camp on poles, the pole being run through the gills of the fish, a dozen on a pole. We embarked afternoon on the barges, and were towed by the tugs. The voyage down Lake Winnepeg was uneventful and we soon reached Selkirk on the Red River. Here on landing we found a good lunch, provided, and we did justice to it. Some of the lads got too much to drink, which led to some painful scenes, a good deal of fighting and bad language. The 90th Q.O.R. & Grenadiers took train for Winnepeg but we crossed the river and at night about twelve we also took train for Port Arthur. At 4 am on Friday July 17th we reached Port Arthur and went on board the Canadian Pacific Company Steamer Alberta. At 4 pm the boat steamed out, and we were on our way to Owen Sound. The 9th Battn (Halifax) were on board with us making 500 men. On Saturday we made a short stop at Sault Ste Marie. It is a beautiful place (to look at). The Stars & Stripes was floating very gaily over the Govt building barracks, guns etc. On Sunday July 19th we reached Owen Sound and were greeted with a most enthusiastic welcome, arches with suitable mottos such as "The Heros of Batoche" "Cut Knife" "Loon Lake" "Middleton" "Caron" "Fish Creek" had been erected, a breakfast was also waiting us to which we did ample justice. The ladies came to our ranks and pinned flowers on our tunics. We spent a very few pleasant hours in Owen Sound and took the train for Toronto about noon. We reached Toronto about 5 pm and found that the citizens were expecting us. Thousands had gathered and cheer after cheer in one continued roar greeted us as we got off the train. We marched through the streets to the Albion House where a regular banquet was served. We would have been well pleased to have stopped till Monday, but our orders were Port Hope at once. We took the train for P. Hope as soon as all the regiment had eaten dinner, and arrived there at midnight. We marched to Protestant Hill in the park, and being too tired to bother putting up tents, we lay down on the grass under the trees with our knapsacks for pillows and our overcoat for cover. We slept till morning. The Port Hope people supplied us with the best of everything and we lived very high. Our camp was blessed day and night by people anxious to hear "all about the war". Our brave Colonel was buried on Tuesday, never had Port Hope seen such a gathering within its streets as was there that day. It was almost impossible to go from one street to others, our Battn formed the firing party.

Our Regiment was disbanded on Wednesday 23rd July and our own company went to Millbrook arriving there at noon. The people were not expecting us so soon and there was no reception to speak of.

On Friday a banquet and entertainment was given to our company, and some presentations were made, each of the returned "Noble Volunteers" received a \$5 gold piece & one dollar bill from the fair ladies of the township. Our company then presented the town with a large bell that we had brought from Frog Lake, to be used as a fire bell. The bell had belonged to the Roman Catholic Mission at Frog Lake and one dark night two of our lads went and seized the bell and nailing it up in a wooden box had brought it home to Millbrook. The authorities had searched for the bell but could find no trace of it. It was the best "relic" brought to Ontario. I conclude this short sketch hoping it may interest someone, that is all I wish,

Yours truly

Will E. Young

Information received from Barbara Martindale who is in Caledonia, Ontario. This is a diary that was given to Rev. H.F. Mellish, Rector of St. Pauls Anglican Church 1875-1899. The document was found among other papers of Rev. Mellish by his granddaughter Mary Mellish when she was clearing out the old Mansion House Hotel before demolition in 1999.

Transcribed from a copy of the diary by Harold F. Morgan U.E. Vernon, BC. October 2001. Received a copy from the "Edinburgh Square Heritage & Cultural Centre, Caledonia.