

The Establishment of the North West Mounted Police

On May 23, 1873, the Dominion Parliament passed an act to provide for the establishment of a "Mounted Police Force for the Northwest Territories". The Force was recruiting men between the ages of 18 and 40, of sound constitution, able to ride, active, able-bodied and of good character. The pay was set at 75 cents per day for sub-constables, \$1.00 for constables. Furthermore, the men were required to "be able to read and write either the English or French language."

The Command was to be divided into Troops. The Commanding Officer was to be termed "Commissioner". The term of service was set at three years. The Force was to be a paramilitary body. Its immediate objectives: to stop liquor trafficking in the North-west; to gain the respect and confidence of the natives; to collect customs dues; and to perform all the duties of a police force. The North West Mounted Police (NWMP), as it was soon called, actually came into existence on August 30, 1873, when the provisions of the Act were brought into force by Order-in-Council and recruiting began.



The authorized strength of the Force was 300 men. Initially, however, only three Troops of 50 men each were formed. These Troops were quickly organized after the government received reports from Cypress Hills that white wolf hunters had massacred a band of Assiniboine. In the Autumn of 1873, they were sent west over the Dawson Route. They reached Red River in late October and proceeded to Lower Fort Garry, or the "Stone Fort", 20 miles down river from Winnipeg.

It was soon realized that 150 men would be insufficient for the task which lay ahead. The Force's first permanent Commissioner, George A. French, recruited an additional three troops, totaling 150 men, from Eastern Canada during the Spring of 1874. These recruits left Toronto in June 1874 traveling by rail through Chicago to Fargo, North Dakota. Here they disembarked and marched northward across the border, to join up with the original 3 troops at the small boundary settlement of Fort Dufferin.

From [Royal Canadian Mounted Police](#) – Origins of the RCMP

See also:

1. [The RCMP's History](#)
2. "[Without Fear, Favour or Affection](#)" - The Men of the North West Mounted Police - Library and Archives Canada