

Museum Musings: The Saskatchewan Provincial Police

Unfortunately, we do not always get things right. It might be as a result of incorrect reference material, or a lack of understanding of the materials we are using. But it is not deliberate.

Over the holiday season I fell into conversation with a friend who has an impeccable knowledge of the Mounted Police. Although we were discussing a police force, it was the Provincial Police, not the Mounties, who were the topic of conversation. My knowledge of the Provincial Police stems from the fact that they were headquartered locally in what had been built as the Prince Albert Men's Club and which, for most of us, is the former library on 12th Street West. The Provincial Police worked out of that building from 1916 until very early in 1929.

We had started out discussing Charles McDonald, a local pharmacist who is the only Canadian who was elected to Parliament, appointed to the Senate, and sat in neither house. McDonald, when he was a sitting member of the Provincial Legislature, had travelled with the local Provincial Police inspector to capture the two remaining suspects in the Steep Creek murders. McDonald and the inspector were certain that the suspects were hidden in a hay stack, and when they took them into custody discovered that the two men were in possession of loaded guns.

That led to us discussing the fact that, at one time, every province in Canada had had a provincial police force. Ontario, Quebec, and Newfoundland/Labrador are the only provinces which have retained their provincial forces.

We discussed the establishment of the Saskatchewan force in 1916 as a result of the large number of men from the municipal forces, as well as the Mounted Police, who had enlisted in the armed forces to fight overseas, leaving it difficult for these forces to handle their regular police work. The provincial force was organised to fill the gap.

Locally, the Provincial Police worked along side the six - man City Police force, assisting in maintaining law and order, locating missing persons, apprehending neglected children, and incarcerating insane persons. The Provincial Police were required to enforce the Prairie Fire Act, The Children's Protection Act, The School Attendance Act, The Motor Vehicle Act, The Games Act, and The Temperance Act.

We were able to agree on much regarding the Provincial Police until we came to the date of termination of the force. It was my contention that the Force was disbanded in the latter part of the 1920s, while my friend insisted that they lasted until 1932. To substantiate his claim, he referred to Wikipedia, where it was noted that the Saskatchewan and Alberta forces both existed until 1932.

Further research in various sources vindicates my claim that the Force was in existence until the early months of 1929. The Provincial government of the day, when faced with an estimated operating budget of about ten times greater for the Provincial force than was estimated by the Mounted Police, decided to utilise the national force once more.

Another source of misinformation can result from relying on resource material such as the Henderson's Directories. They do not always reflect changes in street addresses. I was asked this autumn to research a home on 22nd Street West. I was fairly certain that the house had at one time belonged to the Arthur Pechey family. But the street address did not match up with the Directory. Knowing from my own street address that the City had changed some street numbers in the mid-1950s, I did some further

research and discovered that I was correct. The home had belonged to the Pechey family. I also discovered that the twin sons, Bill and Bud, had built a tennis court in the house's backyard.

Another cause of misinformation can come directly from the source. We have a panoramic photograph from the James Art Studio on which the studio had printed across the front "BPOE Lodge Flag Day picnic August 1st, 1923 for the children of St. **Mary's** Orphanage". I was asked by one of my colleagues if I were familiar with St. Mary's Orphanage. I admitted my lack of knowledge, and began to research it further. Another colleague was also asked and had no knowledge of the facility. Upon reviewing the Daily Herald archive for August 2nd, 1923, I found an article describing the Elks picnic held on Flag Day for the children of St. **Patrick's** Orphanage.

In my last column, I noted that the Historical Society had been nominated for a Governor General's award, and was one of 25 communities being given further consideration. This weekend our Curator, Michelle Taylor, will be at Rideau Hall in Ottawa receiving one of three honourable mentions. The Society thanks all those who contributed to the success of this project and congratulates them on their effort!

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