



Articles from

The Birtle Observer

July 27, 1885 to August 3, 1885

In 1885, Major Charles Boulton led a group of militia known as Boulton's Scouts to help put down the North-West Rebellion. They saw action at Fish Creek and Batoche.

Below are excerpts from articles that appeared in *The Birtle Observer* at the time.

The Return of Boulton's Troops to Birtle on Tuesday, July 21, 1885

Excerpt from *The Birtle Observer*, July 27, 1885

When it was known that the mounted troops, belonging to this district, were approaching, arrangements were at once made to give them a sufficient welcome. Many of the volunteers were citizens of Birtle and nearly everyone had friends, relatives or acquaintances with the company ... The volunteers were expected to arrive on Tuesday about noon and on Monday the town was astir. The immense tent, the property of the Indian Department, was put up on the level lawn adjoining the property of Mr. J. H. Wood*. The tent is about sixty feet long and large enough to accommodate several persons. In this spacious and airy apartment long rows of plank tables were arranged, neatly covered with white cloths and an immense number of seats were provided. The ladies and their assistants made such preparations as were required.

*J. H. Wood's home was the first wooden frame structure in Birtle and was located on the lot adjacent to The Spring on St. Clair Street. The house was later purchased and lived in by the Walker family. After the house was torn down in the 1990s, the family donated the land to the town of Birtle and designated Walker Park.

On Tuesday morning it was known that the returning company was at Ellice and might be expected at midday. Immediately flags were run up on every pole and the town at once assumed a holiday appearance. Shortly before one o'clock the long line of mounted men were noticed descending the sloping bank of the river north of the town and a general gathering of citizens took place. The bell on the Town Hall was rung vigorously, the steam whistle screamed out a welcome and even the blacksmiths, for the time being, turned their anvils into cannons in order that a proper salute might be fired while loud and continued cheering greeted the arrival of the company, which consisted of upward one hundred men, all mounted, while a number of loose horses without riders kept their places in the troop with regularity.

After an opportunity had been given the soldiers to shake hands with their friends, the men remounted and rode to a proper spot, where the transport wagons came to a halt, a camp was

[established and the horses] turned loose on the excellent grass of the prairie. By this time dinner was on the tables, abundance of good roast beef being one of the chief provisions. After dinner Mayor Crawford of Birtle gave a short and appropriate address, expressing pleasure at the safe

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Boulton's Scouts, No. 2 Troop, Captain J.A. Johnston (centre)
Glenbow Archives

return of the young men, admiration of their gallant conduct in the field and regret that some had fallen in battle. He said that the company present had not only assisted in defending their country and in causing Canada to be respected but they had defended their own homes and perhaps the lives of the people of this district by keeping the war at a distance and by preventing others from joining the insurrection.

Col. Boulton thanked the citizens of Birtle for their hospitality, saying that the dinner was relished all the more

that such a feast had not been enjoyed for four months. He was gratified by the kind words of the Mayor and said that through all the campaign he and his men ever remembered that they were fighting for their own homes and the homes of their friends and countrymen...

A larger celebration to honour Boulton and his troop of volunteers was held for the wider community on July 28th in the form of a picnic.

On Tuesday, July 28th, 1885 a picnic was held to welcome home the volunteers and was declared a civic holiday by Mayor Crawford.

Excerpts from the Birtle Observer:
July 13, 1885

A grove conveniently situated on a hill a little south east of Mr. Dunlop's house has been selected. It is hoped that many from all parts of the counties of Shoal Lake and Russell and outlying points will attend, (with baskets) and make the affair a monster and successful demonstration ... An invitation has been sent through Major Boulton to all the men under his command and it is expected that a large majority, if not all of them, will be present.

July 20th, 1885

Extensive preparations are in the course of being made by the people of Birtle, to welcome home the volunteers who are expected this week ... in a beautiful, romantic grove south of the town. The ground is already prepared, a number of citizens are giving considerable time to the undertaking, seats, platform and musical instruments will be placed in the sheds and every possible accommodation provided. It is known that the ladies are making preparations for a sumptuous feast. A large attendance is expected ...

The Picnic

August 3, 1885

... Tuesday had been proclaimed a civic holiday and the town was gay with flags, and the people generally in holiday attire, while many strangers and persons from a distance had arrived and there was a constant movement of teams on the streets. About two o'clock the grove was crowded with well-dressed persons including many ladies. The feast passed off well amid much merriment and good humour. An address to Major Boulton and the volunteers was read by Mayor Crawford and properly responded to by the gallant Major. About this time the artillery of the skies began to sound in the upper air and a heavy thunder storm accompanied by hail and rain caused a general and fast retreat. The storm was of short duration although quite severe. ... Speeches were made by J. H. Wood, Rev. Mr. Wilson, Rev. Mr. Hodnett and Dr. Morrison. The volunteers from Shoal Lake, Beulah and Russell joined with their Birtle comrades in the festival and one or two were noticed who had not wholly recovered from wounds received in battle.

At the picnic given in honor of the volunteers the following address was read by the Mayor:

To Major Boulton, officers and men of Boulton's Mounted Infantry.

SOLDIERS AND COUNTRYMEN—The citizens of Birtle and the people of this district enjoy the privilege of giving you a cordial reception on your return from the dangerous expedition in which you have been engaged, and of conveying to you their sense of obligation for the services you have rendered and their very high appreciation of the courage and general soldierly deportment with which you have been credited in the report of Major-General Middleton to the Government. The readiness with which you responded to the call of your country, the rapidity of your preparation for fight, the abundance of your resources in time of difficulty and your gallantry in the contest have excited the astonishment and admiration of those most experienced in warfare. As citizens of the Northwest it was your right to stand in the front of the battle and in the face of the foe and most nobly have you done your duty.

When you left us a few months ago we were impressed with a deep sense of anxiety as to what might be the result of your first military experience. We fully recognized the subtlety and fighting ability of the foes you were to engage, but we cherished a fond hope and a lively expectation, knowing that the prayers of the Christian church and the Christian people of the Dominion were constantly presented to the God of battles for your preservation, and remembering that you were young Canadians, that you had inherited in a direct line of blood, the bravery, the pluck and the endurance of the defenders of our flag in the brave days of old. This cherished hope has now been realized, and to-day we join in tendering you our hospitalities, our recognition of your bravery and our grateful appreciation of the services you have rendered to us and to our common country.

While all your comrades in arms are receiving similar acknowledgements from the people of the eastern portion of the Dominion, we feel a just pride in being satisfied, from the reports that have reached us of your having always been to the front in the important engagements as well as having filled the most dangerous posts to which your particular branch of the service as mounted men was exposed, that your soldierly qualities are second to none, and this fact makes it

peculiarly gratifying to us to tender you this hearty welcome home.

In our gratitude and joy we have, however, one dark cloud. Some of your companions have proved that the path of glory leads but to the grave, and our home circles are not all unbroken. The bereaved ones have our earnest sympathy and fervent prayers for consolation in this their dark hour, and while we have a cheer for the victors we have also a kindly tear for those who are called to weep.

To you, Major Boulton and the men of your troop, these sentiments are offered in the hope that the services you have rendered to the Dominion will show to the Mother Country that Canadians are worthy sons of the worthy sires who defended the old flag in the days gone by, and secure to us the character of a self reliant and prosperous young nation.

On behalf of the district,

J. S. CRAWFORD
MAYOR OF BIRTLE



Boulton's Scouts reunion 1924

Birdtail Country Museum