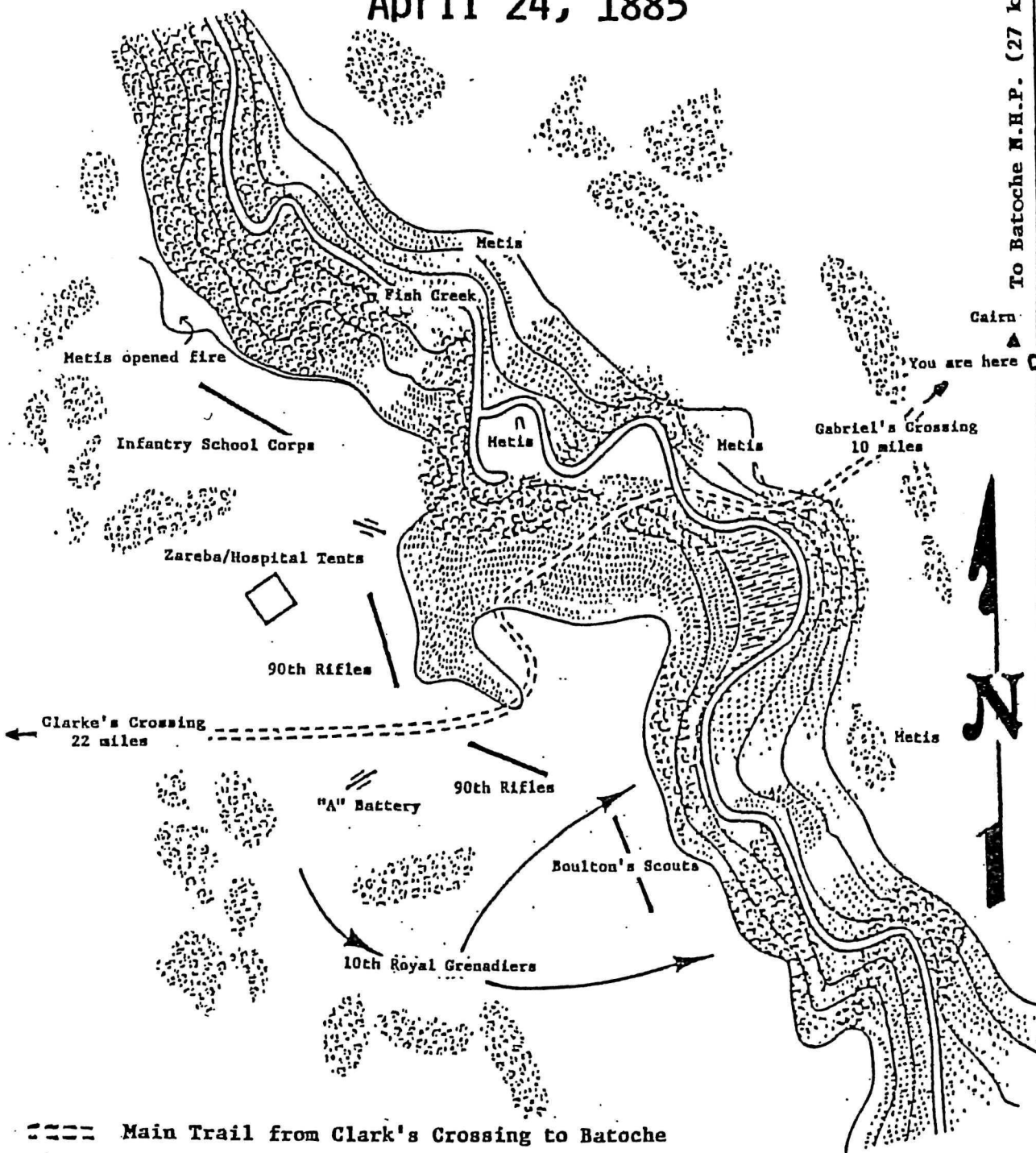


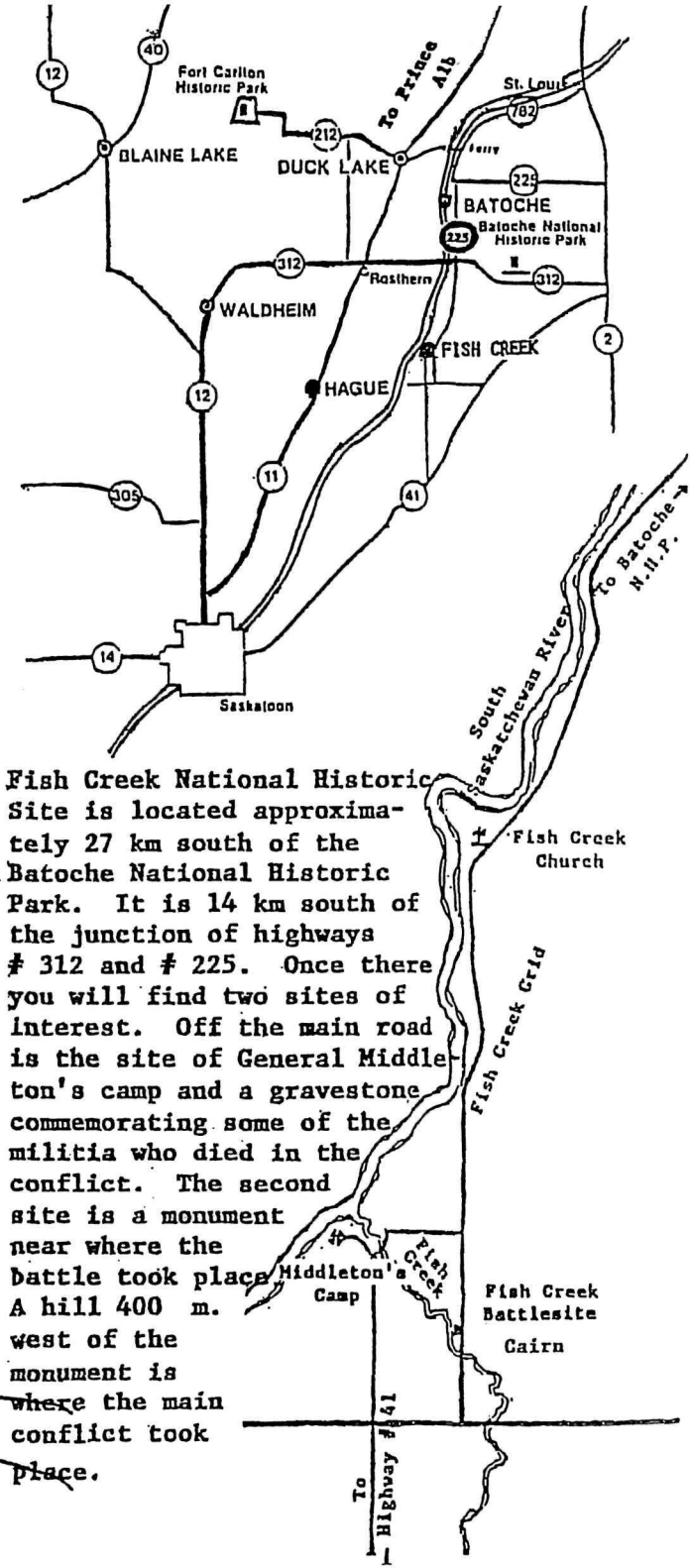
FISH CREEK BATTLE

April 24, 1885

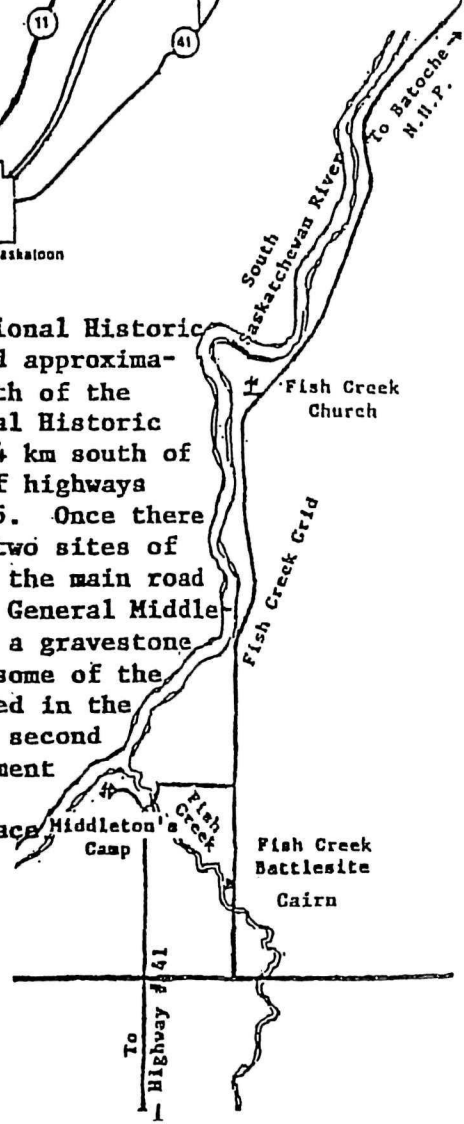


----- Main Trail from Clark's Crossing to Batoche

To Batoche N.H.P. (27 kms) ↑



Fish Creek National Historic Site is located approximately 27 km south of the Batoche National Historic Park. It is 14 km south of the junction of highways # 312 and # 225. Once there you will find two sites of interest. Off the main road is the site of General Middleton's camp and a gravestone commemorating some of the militia who died in the conflict. The second site is a monument near where the battle took place. A hill 400 m. west of the monument is where the main conflict took place.



On March 26, 1885 a confrontation occurred near Duck Lake between the Metis and natives led by Gabriel Dumont and a force consisting of N.W.M.P. and volunteers from Prince Albert commanded by Inspector Crozier. These were the first shots fired of what is now known as the North West Resistance.

Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald replied by mobilizing the North West Field Force under the command of Major-General Frederick Middleton. Their orders were to advance on Batoche and quell the uprising.

After disembarking from the Canadian Pacific Railway at Troy (Qu'Appelle) the North West Field Force started their long march towards Batoche. Upon reaching Clarke's Crossing, Middleton divided his troops into two columns so as to attack the Metis on both sides of the South Saskatchewan River. Half the column commanded by Lord Melgund marched on the west side of the river, while Middleton led the remainder of the force on the opposite side. Through their network of informants the Metis under Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont, were aware of the North West Field Force's movements. Indeed a teamster with the company supplying the North West Field Force had specifically informed Dumont of Middleton's plan. Riel and Dumont did not agree on the strategy that they should use in fighting the on-coming Field Force. Anxious to exploit the obvious weaknesses of a large, cumbersome force, Dumont preferred bold guerilla assaults, while Riel favored a defensive stand at Batoche. Limited assaults on the approaching column was agreed upon. Dumont and 200 men prepared to ambush the advancing force. The spot chosen was a dog-legged coulee on the Fish Creek Trail known as Tourond's Coulee or Fish Creek.

On the morning of the 24th of April 1885, Middleton's men marched forward led by Boulton's Scouts. The Metis lost the element of surprise when the Militia scouts came across fresh campfires and detected the Metis in the final preparations for the ambush. Nevertheless, Middleton experienced considerable difficulty with the hidden riflement under Dumont's direction who opened fire on the inexperienced North West Field Force. With the surprise attack foiled, the battle ended in a stalemate.

While Dumont had tried to prevent the flanking action of the militia by starting a prairie fire from the south, the militia were able to extinguish it. Numerous times the poorly defended flanks of the Metis were attacked, but on each occasion, were repelled by the deadly accurate fire from the Metis marksmen. By mid afternoon both forces decided to withdraw. The Metis retreated to Batoche where they entrenched themselves, digging a series of rifle pits. Middleton withdrew to a defensive Zareba approximately one mile west of the battle zone.

Delayed by his wounded, anxiously awaiting reinforcements and supplies and cautioned by his knowledge that he had underestimated both the training of his own forces and the strength of his foe, Middleton would need two weeks to arrive at Batoche, a few miles away, where on May 9-12 the decisive battle would be fought.



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