

# Cst. Reading W.T.R.



**READING, WILLIAM T. R. - CST. Regimental No. 2086**  
December 14, 1890 - Calgary, North-West Territories Age: 25

On Cst. William Reading's application for engagement with the North-West Mounted Police, the following query was posed:

**QUESTION:**

*"Do you understand the care and management of horses? And can you ride well?"*

**HIS ANSWER:**

*"Yes. Thoroughly."*

Although Cst. Reading's answer was honest and true, it was also ironic because it was the constable's horsemanship that ultimately led to his death.

William Reading was a bachelor, born in Suffolk, England. In the "old country," he had been an excellent athlete who excelled at cricket and football. Seeking adventure, he had come to Canada as a young man in his early twenties. As soon as he got here, he found a job as a surveyor with the Canadian Pacific Railway which by then was cutting its way through the Rocky Mountains in British Columbia.

When that job was completed, Reading went back east to Ottawa and joined the North-West Mounted Police in April of 1888. He was posted to Calgary where his career as a Mountie began with his assignment to general duties. This included daily sessions cleaning out the stables as well as exercising the horses on a regular basis.

On Sunday morning, December 14, 1890, he saddled the superintendent's horse and brought it out of the barns to give it a good brisk workout. After a twenty minute ride, Reading was on his way back to the barracks. He and the horse were heading down Stephen Avenue at a smart canter when they came to a sidewalk crossing near Laugevie Bridge. Wanting the horse to stop, Cst. Reading pulled it up sharply at the bit. These caused the animal to rear and buck and make a fuss. Reading, trying to get him under control, yanked on the reins again, but this time the horse objected even more wildly. He reared and whirled violently and charged off the street, bucking and kicking until he worked his way behind a small house at the corner.

Thoroughly exasperated, Reading tugged on the bit sharply once more and now the huge beast stood up on haunches. At the height of its stance, the horse's left hind foot went out from under him and he fell over backwards with Reading still in the saddle. The constable was crushed by the full weight of the horse and momentarily lay pinned under its massive

bulk. As the animal struggled to get back up on its feet, Reading had already lapsed into unconsciousness.

The fallen policeman never woke again. He died at 3:30 pm that Sunday afternoon. The doctor in attendance recorded the cause of death as: concussion of the brain and dislocation of two cervical vertebrae and three dorsal vertebrae".

Cst. William Reading's adventures in Canada had come to an unfortunate end. His remains were buried in the cemetery at Calgary. The sad news of his passing was conveyed by mail to his parents and sister in far-away England.