

Weapons of the 1885 Resistance

The Canadian Army had various types of weaponry at their disposal during the 1885 Resistance. These included Snider Enfield rifles, Martini-Henry rifles, nine-pound (4 kilogram) field guns, carbines, and a Gatling gun. George A. Flinn, a reporter for *The Winnipeg Sun*, who accompanied the 90th Battalion of Winnipeg Rifles, wrote about some of the army's weaponry. He described the Snider Enfield rifles as being antiquated, with fat, stubby cartridges that held soft lead bullets that were plugged with clay. He also said that when the bullet hit its target, it mushroomed like a small umbrella. Flinn also wrote that teamsters were equipped with "Peabody" rifles that were so ancient that it surprised them when they actually fired. Only a handful of marksmen were given the superior Martini-Henry rifles.

The Army had four nine-pound field guns. Two were from the Winnipeg Field Battery and the other two were from the "A" Battery of the Regiment of Canadian Artillery. These rifled muzzle loading nine-pounders had a range of 3000 yards (2,743 metres) and weighed (with their carriage) close to a ton. The Gatling gun, which was on loan from the American Army to see how it would perform in battle, could fire a thousand shots per minute. It consisted of ten barrels: five of which actually fired, while the other five reloaded. However, it was not very accurate. Philippe Garnot commented that the Métis laughed at the Gatling gun because it made a lot of noise, but did little damage. The Métis even gave it the nickname, "*le Rababou*", which meant noisemaker.

During the 1885 Resistance the Métis used repeating, lever-action Winchesters, double-barreled shotguns, and muskets, as well as captured army carbines. A musket is a muzzle-loading shoulder gun with a long barrel; formerly used by infantryman. Carbines are rifles with a relatively short barrel. When the Métis ran out of ammunition for their guns, they used nails and made bullets from spent bullets. Métis women melted down lead to make bullets. They melted lead kettles, linings of tea tins, and the lead that came wrapped around Hudson's Bay Company goods.

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