

# The Early 1900s



Researched and Written by Jack Templeman

## CHIEF JOHN C. MCRAE



*Chief John McRae*

The next man to serve as Chief Constable was **John C. McRAE** who was then a sergeant on the force. Chief McRae had a distinguished career and was a very respected officer. In 1885 he was shot and wounded during the escape of a cattle rustler. The bullet lodged in his groin and could not be removed. This reminder stayed with him for the rest of his life.

When Chief McRae took over the department the morale was low but his leadership brought it back to a well-organized force. As the new century got closer the city continued to grow in size and population and so did the police force. Chief McRae was responsible for introducing the rank of a Sergeant- Major into the force in 1900 as his assistant. At this time there were only the ranks of constable and sergeant along with the chief. In 1904 Chief McRae also established the rank of Inspector of Police and this became the first officer rank of the force. The Sergeant



Major continued to serve but was under the Inspector and acted more as a disciplinarian.

The increase in manpower caused overcrowding in the police station and the Chief started to campaign for a new station. Chief McRae also had the foresight to ask for sub-stations around the city. In 1907 when the population of the city grew to 115,000 the department had 90 members. City Council finally approved the construction of a new station on Rupert Avenue and it was opened in 1908. The police force had grown to 108 members by the time the station opened.



*Rupert Street Station*

Although Council eventually agreed to construct sub-stations it was not until 1911 that one was built in the north end and one in Fort Rouge.



The stations were designated "B" Division for the south or Fort Rouge station on Jessie Avenue and "E" Division for the north end station at Magnus and Charles Street. The city had purchased properties in Elmwood and the West End on Arlington Street for sub-stations but these were never erected. It appears that the missing designations of "C" and "D" Divisions would have been used for these divisions.

Chief McRae was also responsible for other advancements in the department. He was able to convince the Council of the need for a police signal system with which patrolling officers could communicate with the station both regularly or in emergencies when they needed help. The Seimens Corporation developed the system and Winnipeg became the first in North America and the third in the world to use this system when it was installed in 1913.



*E Division - Magnus Ave & Charles St*

Early in his career Chief McRae had purchased bicycles as the first means of transportation for the use of the detectives and the sergeants. All other officers walked the beats. The first car was purchased in 1906 but was for the use of the Chief and the detectives. The next means of transportation was the purchase of motorcycles in 1910.

It was also during the long and distinguished career of Chief McRae that the Winnipeg Police Force suffered the loss of the first policeman killed on duty. Constable **John BEATTIE** had only been on the department for 27 days when he was accidentally electrocuted at the scene of a fire at Water and Main Street on April 13th, 1911.

Chief McRae retired in November 1911 but was honoured in 1913 with the award of the King's Police Medal for his long and distinguished service.



*B Division - Jessie Ave*