

# History & Museum Historical Stories

## AN UN-AUSPICIOUS BEGINNING

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When Manitoba was incorporated into the Dominion of Canada on July 15, 1870, Winnipeg was only a small community of about one hundred people located between Fort Garry and Fort Douglas along the banks of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers.

Until the creation of Manitoba in 1870, the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) controlled the entire western portion of what is now Canada. The HBC had received a Charter for trade and government throughout the Hudson Bay drainage basin from King Charles II of England in 1670. The Dominion of Canada purchased the land given to the Hudson's Bay Company for three hundred thousand dollars and title to one-twentieth of all fertile land open for development within that area. Originally Manitoba consisted only of the settlements along the Red River valley — an area which amounted to just over 5% of the size of the province today.

The last policeman under the Hudson's Bay Company was Mr. James Mulligan. In his book *Ten Years in Winnipeg (1870-1879)*, Alexander Begg notes that on one occasion, "*a few fun-loving individuals, headed by Mr. J. H. McTavish, took Mr. Mulligan, bound to a cart, and deposited him in the jail, much to his astonishment*". The Jail and Court House at the time being a small log building just outside the walls of Fort Garry.

The Canadian government under John A. MacDonalld appointed Adams Archibald as Lieutenant Governor for Manitoba and sent him to Fort Garry to establish an interim government and put into operation all the governmental and legal machinery that province-hood required.

One of the first appointments made by Archibald was that of Frank Villiers to the post of Chief Constable for the Province of Manitoba and Louis de Plainval as his Sub-Chief. Both men had been officers in the Canadian Army under the command of Colonel Garnet Wolseley and had been sent to Fort Garry to establish control of the area from the provisional government of Louis Riel before Archibald's arrival. Their appointments were dated September 7, 1870, in a letter from Archibald to the Prime Minister. Villiers and de Plainval immediately began hiring members for a full-time mounted police force and on October 10, 1870, the "Mounted Constabulary Force" was ready to undertake its duties. An old post office building on Main Street, not far from the old Hudson's Bay Company courthouse was fitted up as a police station and courthouse with a log house to the rear of the building transformed into a jail. Initially, this Provincial Police Force was stationed throughout the province in Winnipeg, Portage la Prairie, Pointe de Chiene, St. Norbert and Lower Fort Garry, but as Winnipeg grew larger the force was reduced and the men were stationed almost exclusively in Winnipeg.

By May 1871, the population of Winnipeg had grown substantially and it was reported by Judge Johnston in his address to the first Grand Jury of Manitoba that there were no less than twenty-one saloons, or "dens of wickedness" in the area which contributed to numerous cases of personal violence. He concluded his address by stating that a new courthouse and jail were required to meet the growing needs of the population. By the



end of 1872, the total number of saloons had risen to twenty-eight and brawls, violence, and alcohol seemed to be part of the way of life in Winnipeg. One of the local saloons was often called "The Bucket of Blood" because of the frequent barroom brawls. An annual Y.M.C.A. conference even labelled Winnipeg as "one of the wickedest places in the Dominion".



**By-Law No. 4  
Appointing Chief of Police**

By November 8, 1873, Winnipeg had grown to almost two thousand inhabitants and was incorporated as a city. Section ninety-seven of the Winnipeg Act provided that an elected council of five persons could establish a police force in the City. The first Mayor of Winnipeg, Frank Cornish, was elected on January 5, 1874, and on February 28, 1874, the newly elected City council appointed John S. Ingram as the first Chief Constable for the City of Winnipeg with David Byre (D.B.) Murray and Frank A. Edgar appointed as his constables on March 16, 1874. Edgar quit two weeks later and was replaced by William Bruce on March 30, 1874.

John (Jack) S. Ingram, was born in St. Thomas, Ontario (then Canada West) in 1853, was twenty-one years old when he took command of the new force. He was short but powerfully built and relied on the speed of his fists to solve most of his problems.

Ingram's pugilistic skills had caused much debate within the city council, but it was a necessary skill to have in a town frequented by fur traders, frontiers-men, vagrants and rejects. Ingram even had some police experience. Shortly after he arrived in Winnipeg he secured a position in the Manitoba Provincial Police and rose to prominence by successfully arresting Louis Riel's Adjutant General, Ambrose Lepine on September 17, 1873. (Lepine had presided over the execution of Thomas Scott on March 4, 1870, at Fort Garry and a warrant for his arrest had been issued after the demise of the Riel government).

According to Ted Meyers, in his article John S. Ingram Tamer of Tough Towns, Ingram's reputation was cemented that day *"through the simple expediency of Ingram walking up to Lepine, putting him off guard by greeting him as he would an old friend, then knocking him out with a well placed left hook to the head."* Ingram subsequently shared in the \$5000 reward for bringing Lepine to trial along with nine other individuals including two other constables – J.A. Kerr and Leon Dupont – as well as F. E. Cornish (Winnipeg's soon to be Mayor).

This arrest had brought Ingram to prominence within the small province and was no doubt used on his behalf in his application for the position of Winnipeg's first Chief of Police. Nevertheless,

Ingram had also been convicted for severely beating Joseph Debuc, a Winnipeg lawyer (and later Attorney General of Manitoba), after Debuc delivered the names of several participants in the City's September 1872 federal election riots – including Cornish - to the court.

Ingram (aka: Ingraham) originally fled to St. Paul, Minnesota, but subsequently returned and on June 21, 1873, he appeared before the court to answer the charge. He was represented by Cornish who entered a guilty plea to common assault and "a most humble apology for the offense committed against his person, and to express the greatest sorrow and regret for his act."

Cornish explained to the court that Ingram was drunk at the time and under the "evil influence of bad advice" and "urged on to commit the offence by men altogether unworthy of the name — this young man, or rather boy, assaulted Mr. Dubuc." The plea was accepted by Dubuc and whatever sentence was imposed.

With the formation of the Winnipeg City Police and with the official swearing-in of one hundred and fifty members of the North West Mounted Police at Fort Garry on November 3, 1873, the Manitoba Provincial Police (MPP) were no longer required. The MPP was disbanded on February 28, 1874, but Richard Power was re-appointed as Chief and sole officer of the Provincial force because Ingram's jurisdiction did not extend beyond the borders of the town. There was no attempt by the Province to provide general police protection outside of the city limits and the new Municipal Act gave all municipalities the power to appoint their own constables.

With the formation of the Winnipeg Police force, Ingram and his men took over the old jail and courthouse used by the Provincial Police. Chief Constable Power moved into the new courthouse and jail that had been completed in early 1874 and was located at 357 Main St. near William Av. (357 Main St. was re-numbered in 1882 to 496. The difference in numbering can be attributed to the sale of Fort Garry to the City of Winnipeg. Initially Main St. ended at the Fort and when the land was sold the fort was torn down and Main St. was extended). This building also served as the seat for the provincial government as the last legislative building, located on Main St between McDermot and Post Office (now Lombard) had burned down in December 1873.



*John S. Ingram  
Chief Constable  
1874 - 1875*

On August 3, 1874, the Manitoba Free Press noted that the Winnipeg Police Department was wearing new badges. The badges were intended to have a beaver engraved in the center but, when the badges were finally issued, the beaver looked more like a gopher. Badge #3 [possibly belonging to Constable William A. Byers (Byers had replaced William Bruce who had resigned in July) is on display in the Winnipeg Police Museum].

The first execution in Winnipeg (and the entire west), under the authority of the Dominion of Canada, was performed at the new jail on Main Street on August 24, 1874. The accused, Joseph Michaud, had been convicted for the June 18, 1874, murder of James Brown. Michaud, a gunner at the Dominion Barracks, had broken barracks and made a tour of the local Winnipeg saloons. Shortly after leaving the Red Saloon Michaud pulled out a large dirk knife and started to attack a

companion. Brown, a by-stander, stepped in to stop the fight and was turned on by Michaud who stabbed him thirty-two times in the upper body area. According to the Nor'Wester newspaper "*a black flag was hoisted on the Courthouse telling the people that a human being was about to be ushered into eternity. A very large crowd assembled in rear of the jail to witness the execution, and quite a number were admitted into the courtroom by tickets issued by the Sheriff*".

It seems that even after Ingram's appointment to Chief of Police he let his fists do the talking as he appeared several times before the Mayor charged with assault. The first request to City Council to have Ingram dismissed came from William Burke on August 31, 1874. Burke had been charged earlier in the month with "insulting the Chief of Police" and Burke, in turn, charged Ingram with assault. Mayor Cornish dismissed both charges. (Until the Police Magistrates Act came into force in February 1876, the Mayor, or one of the Aldermen in his absence, was the presiding magistrate in all Police Court matters).

Ingram's fists, it seems, were not his only source of trouble. He also had a fondness for the City's prostitutes and rumors circulated that the young Chief was a nightly (unofficial) visitor to the houses of ill-fame. So much so that his two constables, Murray and Byers, handed in their resignations into City Hall on May 31, 1875, in protest over the Chief's conduct. Not only was Ingram frequenting the local brothels, but he was also charged with assaulting Constable Byers on May 19, 1875, and when the mayor dismissed the charges, the two officers tendered their resignations.

City Council refused to accept the resignations of Murray and Byers and Alderman John Villiers publicly accused Ingram of operating a primitive system of protection and using his authority to hide his participation in the vices of the west end. Ingram retaliated by filing a ten-thousand-dollar libel suit against Villiers on June 3, 1875, but also continued his unofficial visits.

Unfortunately for Ingram, on the night of June 7, 1875, Constables Murray and Byers swooped down on Ella Lewis' brothel and arrested Ingram who just happened to be there and charged him with "frequenting a house of ill-fame". Ingram appeared in Police Court before Mayor Kennedy (Cornish had lost the last city election in January) at 4:00 pm on June 8th, pleaded guilty and was fined eight dollars plus costs.

Ingram subsequently returned to his hometown of St. Thomas, Ontario. However it would not be the last Winnipeg heard of Ingram as he soon returned, and on Friday, September 10, 1875, he found himself in Police Court arrested for being drunk and fighting with Lyster Hayward. They were both found guilty and fined ten dollars and costs. In time, however, Ingram's rough and tumble skills would be required again to lead the Calgary Police Force in 1884 as their first Chief of Police and as Rossland, B.C.'s Chief of Police in 1897. (Interestingly, in 1897, Thomas Mayne Daly was the Police Commissioner for Rossland, B.C. Daly was a Manitoba lawyer and politician who went to Rossland and perhaps had known Ingram. Daly returned to Winnipeg in 1901 to be the Police Magistrate for the City and a Judge of the Juvenile Court until 1911. Ingram died in 1905 while handling some dynamite for the Silver Star Mining company in Rossland.

On Monday, June 14, 1875, Ingram handed his resignation to City Council and it was accepted. In the same sitting, City Council appointed Robert H. Clarke and George R. Miller as interim constables for the City of Winnipeg and took applications for the position of Chief Constable. Five people tendered their names for the position: Frank Ritchie, Alexander MacPherson, James Donahue and D. B. Murray.

Until a new Chief was appointed, Constable D. B. Murray acted as Chief of Police. On July 5, 1875, Andrew Hunter was appointed as a constable to fill the position vacated by Ingram. On Tuesday, July 13, 1875, D. B. Murray was officially sworn in as the new Chief of Police. Chief Murray was a very likable person and, according to newspaper articles at the time, Murray "*[was] a genial gentleman whose very presence (he is six feet tall and weighs two hundred and twenty-five pounds) is calculated to frighten offenders, but who makes friends wherever he goes*".



**D.B. Murray**  
**Chief Constable**  
**1875 - 1887**

Murray was born in 1844 and raised in Pictou, Nova Scotia. He had been a school teacher before coming to Winnipeg and, at 31, brought a much more respectable approach to policing. As Alexander Begg noted in his book the police force "*gradually improved under [Murray's] management until now we can boast of as fine a body of police officers as can be found in any city of the Dominion*".

One of Chief Murray's first requests to City Council was that he might be given the power to suspend any member of his force for conduct unbecoming and that he might be authorized to increase the size of the force to six men from three. City Council granted Murray the power to suspend members but only authorized the force an increase to five men and *pro tem* constables Clarke and Miller were then taken on as full-time members.

On August 16, 1875, Murray used his new power as Chief and suspended the new constable, Hunter, for overstepping his authority. Hunter indicated that he really didn't know what he could and could not do, so he did not realize that he was overstepping this authority. Chief Murray accepted Hunter's explanation and reinstated him with only a reprimand. However, Hunter published a letter criticizing the actions of the City Council and he was dismissed for "contempt of council" on September 6, 1875.

On August 4, 1875, a group of concerned citizens petitioned the City Council regarding houses of ill fame, demanding the something be done about the "great scandal and nuisance arising from the unrestricted commerce allowed". The petition continued:

Some of your petitioners have purchased lots near the Portage Road with the intention of building and residing thereon but cannot do so exposing our families to such contaminations nor would you wish to do so yourselves in like case.

The flaunting of those bad characters around the neighbourhood of their houses in full sight of the high road, which is so extensively travelled by Residents and outsiders from the settlement has for some time been an ongoing nuisance and public disgrace.

We, therefore, pray your honorable body that they may be driven from the City and its reputation thereby preserved. And your petitioners as bound will ever pray

Chief Murray got the message and on September 9, 1875, the Winnipeg Free Press reported that the police had swooped down on Madame (Carrie) Lyons' den of iniquity arresting Ms. Lyons and her stable of girls – Carrie Rowand, Nella Foster and Addie Booth. Ms. Lyons was fined \$40, and each of the others \$25, with costs in each case.

Further arrests were made on December 6, 1875, when the houses of Ella Lewis and Carrie Lyons were again raided, resulting in the arrests of both women plus Maude Seymour, Estella Gretton, Carrie Rowand, Fannie Ellsworth and about a dozen gentlemen. There was no report of any policemen being among them.

On Monday, September 13, 1875, Patrick Lawler was appointed as a police constable to replace the dismissed Hunter. Lawler, a seasoned military officer who saw service with the British army in the Crimea, Malta, India and China would become the first Sergeant of the young force and eventually took command of the Provincial Jail on Vaughan Street as its first Governor in 1880.

It appears that things started to change rapidly after the appointment of Murray as Chief of Police. The first appearance of "wrist snappers" and revolvers was reported in the September 15, 1875, issue of the Manitoba Free Press. On November 1, 1875, the council authorized the purchase of "buffalo greatcoats" for the five policemen for eighty-five dollars. In a special City Council meeting on November 3rd, the Chief of Police was to become, *ex officio*, Inspector of Licences under the Licence by-law. On December 27th he was made fire inspector, and on Monday, January 24, 1876, he was appointed to the Office of Health, Fire and Licence Inspector.

The new year also brought a new city hall. At great expense to the taxpayers (\$40,000), the new city hall was opened at 361 Main St. (became 504 Main St. in 1882). The cornerstone had been laid for the new city hall on August 17, 1875, and it took less than four months to complete. City Council had their first sitting in the new building on December 27, 1875, but it was not formally opened until March 1876. Before the completion of the new building, City Council had been meeting in a variety of buildings around the city including a furniture store. During the early years, city hall was only one of a few substantial buildings in the city but, almost from the outset, it proved structurally unsound. The building had been built over Brown's Creek, which crossed Main Street near William Avenue, and the landfill on which the structure was erected could not support the building. Shortly after its opening, the building began to settle into the creek bed and ominous cracks began to appear. This building was finally torn down in April 1883, after an archway in the building collapsed. The police were also getting a new building. It was to be located in the new Market Square site close to the new city hall at 1 William Avenue. It was not completed until later in 1876. It could not come too soon, as their existing quarters could not accommodate the men or the prisoners.



The second hanging in Manitoba under the Dominion of Canada took place on January 4, 1876, at the jailhouse on Main St. Angus McIvor was hung September 1, 1875, for the murder of George Atkinson. McIvor had been hired by Atkinson to help him deliver some freight from Winnipeg to the Hudson's Bay Company in Carlton. McIvor decided that he wanted the freight all for himself so he pulled out a revolver and shot Atkinson through the head. McIvor also attempted to kill the other member of the party, Baptiste Charrette, by shooting him in the head as well. Charrette was not killed and was able to take McIvor in to the police. Alexander Begg reported that the execution was bungled by the executioner when McIvor, whose neck was not broken by the fall, (the noose having slipped,) died by strangulation.

On Monday, January 10, 1876, the Licence and Police Committee handed City Council their expense and revenue account for 1875. The total cost of equipping the police (salaries, food for the prisoners, uniforms, etc) came to \$3,657.01. The total amount of fines collected by the police amounted to \$1,341.48, or almost half of their operating budget. By comparison, the total amount spent on the police during their first year was \$1,711.53, but the fines brought in were minimal. In his first six months as Chief of Police, Murray recorded that he and his men had made 173 arrests and collected \$942.00 in fines. Over two-thirds of these arrests (126) were for either being drunk or drunk and disorderly which carried fines anywhere from \$2.00 (drunk) to \$10.00 (drunk and disorderly).

February 28, 1876, brought to a close the second year in the history of the Winnipeg Police Department. It ended with a request by Chief Murray for new uniforms for his men and a desk for himself.

Chief Murray was widely popular in the City in both sporting and social circles. He remained with the department until 1887. After leaving he went to Washington territory in the United States and engaged in mining enterprises. He moved to Greenwood B.C. and died in London,



Ontario in 1908 at the age of 69. His daughter, Ethel Murray, married Dr. Arnot Leishman, a well-known physician and surgeon in Shoal Lake, Manitoba.

The rest of the career of D.B. Murray and J.C. (John) McRae, who led the department into the 20th Century, will be explored in further issues.

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