

Although Richard Power was not the first chief of police in Manitoba, he was arguably the province's original pioneer police chief. Hired on October 10, 1870, three years before the NWMP (the forerunner to the RCMP) came into existence, Richard was among the first constables appointed for the Province of Manitoba and the only Chief of Police who ever lived in the Red River Settlement prior to Confederation. He would also become the second Governor of the Provincial Jail after the death of his father in 1876.

Young for the position he filled, Richard was considered worthy of the Chief's position when he was appointed in 1874 and distinguished himself in a number of important cases in the Province's early history. The local newspapers described Richard as "*a fine looking man, magnificently proportioned, every inch a soldier with the courage that nothing could daunt*". He was also a Second Lieutenant in the Winnipeg Troop of Cavalry, formed in 1878, and his trade mark was a Cold 45 with a 9-inch barrel slung around his waist with enough cartridges to take on a small army. While the newspapers considered him a "*terror to evil doers*", his friends numbered in the hundreds. As Richard constituted the entire Manitoba Force for a time after the formation of the Winnipeg Police in February 1874, he was often responsible for making arrests and conducting investigations on his own, or with the assistance of town constables or duly appointed deputies.

Born in Portsmouth, Bristol, England in 1850 or 1851 to Michael Power, a Sergeant-Major in the 2nd Dragoon Guards (Queens Bays), and Annie Wallace Scott, a Scottish midwife or nurse, Richard came to North America with his parents and his older sister Annie in 1855. His father, having retired to pension after 25-years with the 2nd Dragoon Guards on June 27, 1854, took a position teaching swordsmanship and athletics in Memphis, Tennessee.

RICHARD POWER

DEATH

← OF →

MANITOBA'S

PIONEER

POLICE CHIEF

By John Burchill, MACP Director at Large

In 1866, after the conclusion of the U.S. Civil War, Michael packed up his family and headed back to British territory. By the end of the year his family was living at Fort Garry in the Red River Settlement where Michael worked for the Hudson's Bay Company under the Council of Assiniboia. Albeit retired, the settlement of loyal, well trained and disciplined soldiers bolstered the defence capability of the community as well as supplemented its economic development. Indeed, Michael's military pension in Fort Garry was similar to the salary of a company official in terms of the money it brought into the settlement.

Eventually the Power family moved to St. Charles where Michael obtained patent or title to Lot 96 on the north side of the Assiniboine River. Three kilometers east from the Power's river lot lived the Honourable James McKay on a sprawling homestead.

McKay was arguably one of the most prominent men in the Metis/ Red River Settlement for most of his life. In 1867, prior to Confederation McKay was appointed to the Council of Assiniboia, the governing body of the Red River Settlement. He was later appointed to the Executive Offices and Commissioner of Indian Affairs of the Provisional Government of Assiniboia as well as Justice of the Peace and President of the Whitehorse Plains District Court in 1870.

In 1871, after the first provincial elections in Manitoba, McKay was sworn in by Lieutenant Governor Archibald to sit in the Legislative Council, or Upper House (senate) of the Legislature. McKay was also appointed Speaker of the Council from 1871-1874, and was appointed a member of the North-West Territories Council in 1873. These appointments were made in response to Métis demands for representation in the government. Because of his linguistic skills and cross-cultural background, McKay was also involved in the negotiations of Treaties 1, 2 and 3, and served as a government commissioner for Treaties 5 and 6, covering all of Manitoba and the central parts of Saskatchewan and Alberta today.

James McKay had three children of his own, as well as an adopted daughter named Augusta from the Santee Dakota Nation, who had fled to the Red River Settlement with her mother after the Dakota or Sioux Uprising in the fall of 1862.

With the formation of Manitoba on July 15, 1870 and the arrival of Lieutenant-Governor Adams Archibald in September, an appeal was made for young men from the community to apply as constables

APPOINTMENTS.
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PROVINCE OF MANITOBA.
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{ **GOVERNMENT HOUSE,**
Fort Garry, February 6, 1874.
His Honor the Lieutenant-Governor
has been pleased to make the following
appointments :
To be Jailer for New Jail :
Michael Power.
To be Chief Constable for the Pro-
vince :
Richard Power.
The Provincial Police Force hereto-
fore existing will be disbanded from and
after the First of March next.

for a provincial police force. Richard was one of the first nine civilians appointed to the force on October 10, 1870.

Michael Power, for his own service to the community was sworn in as an Assessor for the County of Selkirk and then as a Justice of the Peace on September 8, 1871. On February 6, 1874 he was sworn in as the first Governor (Gaoler) of the Provincial Jail in Manitoba. Michael remained the Governor of the Provincial Jail until December 9, 1876 when he passed away. He was buried with military honours at the St. Charles Cemetery next to their homestead.

On October 25, 1872 Richard was appointed Deputy Chief of Police. With the departure of Chief dePlainval, Richard was officially appointed Chief of Police on February 6, 1874, although he had been acting in that position since the departure of de Plainval on April 1, 1873.

With the official swearing-in of one hundred and fifty members of the North-West Mounted Police (NWMP) and the Incorporation of the City of Winnipeg, there was little need for a Provincial Police force. Although the NWMP were not the police of jurisdiction for Manitoba, being stationed at Lower Fort Garry

effectively resulted in the reduction of the Provincial Police to just one man when Winnipeg formed its own small police department on February 28, 1874.

Besides his role as Chief of Police, Richard would also take on his father's duties as Governor of the Provincial Jail for almost two years until a replacement was found on February 11, 1878. Richard was also appointed License Inspector for Manitoba on September 25, 1874 and Gunpowder Inspector for Winnipeg and the County of Selkirk on May 14, 1877. He gave up both positions on August 6 and July 25, 1877 respectively as his roles of police chief, gaoler, husband and father became busier.

After Richard was appointed Chief of Police he married Augusta McKay at the St. Charles Church on April 7, 1874. On November 15, 1875 Richard and Augusta had a daughter -- Mary Adelaide Power. The couple had two more children, Michael Richard Thomas Power, born 1878, and Marguerite Alexandra Power, born 1879, however neither survived beyond their first few years of life. Marguerite was buried in St. Charles Cemetery in 1880 and likely David Thomas was as well.

In the January 31, 1878 budget discussions Alphone Martin, MLA for Ste. Agathe stated "*speaking of the salary of the Chief Constable, who only got \$958. If there was a man who deserved a high salary it was that official, as his duties were dangerous as well as onerous, being liable to be called upon to expose his life at any time*". Indeed, during his career Richard escaped death twice; once in September 1874 when he was shot at by Frank (Edward)

Martin as he attempted to arrest him in Scratching River (Morris); and again in September 1879 when Edward Daniels tried to shoot him in Kildonan but his gun misfired.

Richard's good fortune ran out in July 1880 when dealing with Michael Carroll, frontier "hard case" who had been in and out of jail most of his life, having served time in Eastern Canada for numerous robberies and prison breaks. Carroll's vocation brought him to Manitoba and subsequently to Richard's attention when he was advised that Carroll was wanted for highway robbery in Rat Portage (now Kenora). Richard arrested Carroll and returned him to Rat Portage with the assistance of a CPR detective on July 3, 1880.

Richard and CPR officer left on the Cross Lake train for Rat Portage and subsequently turned Carroll over to the Rat Portage officials for trial. At the time of his arrest Carroll swore publicly that he would drown the Rat Portage officer while crossing Lake of the Woods, even if he drowned himself in the attempt. Those words were to prove prophetic in less than three weeks.

The trip went off without incident and Carroll was tried and convicted before Magistrate James Westropp Brereton on July 7, 1880. However due to Carroll's history of prior escapes Magistrate Brereton sentenced Carroll to serve his 12-month sentence at the Provincial Jail in Winnipeg, believing it offered better security than the one in Port Arthur (now Thunder Bay). Carroll was returned to Winnipeg on July 9, 1880.

On the morning of July 22, 1880, Carroll was taken out of the Provincial Jail and sent out to the

government offices on Main Street with three other prisoners to cut wood. With only one guard sent to watch over the four prisoners, the inevitable happened and Carroll escaped from the job site. Before the lone jailor could secure the rest of his prisoners and summon help, Carroll managed to cross the Red River on the newly laid railroad foundations and headed south along the tracks towards Emerson.

Richard, who had been ill during the day, was informed of the escape. He immediately saddled a horse and with one of his officers he headed south along the tracks in pursuit of Carroll. About ten miles south of Winnipeg Richard discovered Carroll hiding in a haystack, his feet bloodied and bruised (his jailor had taken his shoes from him before cutting wood to prevent or lessen the likelihood of his escape). Carroll was placed under arrest, secured in handcuffs and returned to Winnipeg along the tracks by handcar.

At about 11:30 p.m., the trio arrived in St. Boniface only to find that the ferry across the Red River had shut down for the night. As a result Richard summoned a small night boat owner to assist them in crossing the river. Richard was the first to enter to boat, and when he turned to assist Carroll into the boat, Carroll jumped down onto the gunwale hit Power on the head with his manacled hands, and upset the boat, throwing both himself and Richard into the river. Neither man rose to the surface. After a three hour search Richard's body was recovered nearby.

Carroll's body was recovered almost 12 hours later, downriver towards Selkirk by two of Richard's men. The two officers put Carroll's body

in a coffin and took it to Brookside Cemetery where it was buried in plot 01-0037-0. It will never be known if Carroll tipped the boat intentionally, however he had previously threatened to drown another police officer who tried to return him to jail - even if he perished himself.

Richard's body was subsequently brought to the Provincial Court House where it stayed until funeral ceremonies were held on Sunday, July 25, 1880. The funeral was one of the largest ever to take place in Winnipeg (up to that time), with the funeral procession consisting of members of the Winnipeg Field Battery, the Winnipeg Infantry Company, the Manitoba Militia, the Winnipeg Troop of Cavalry, members of government and the City and Provincial Police Forces. The procession wound through the streets of Winnipeg and after funeral services were held at St. Mary's Church, Richard's body was marched to the St. Charles Cemetery where he was buried with military honours next to his father.

Richard left behind his mother, two brothers, two sisters, a wife and two small children. Fortunately for his family Richard had a \$3000.00 life insurance policy (\$75,000 with inflation in 2020) which would have

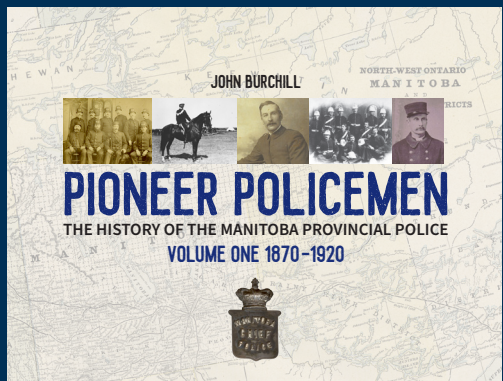


left his family relatively comfortable.

Richard died while serving the people of Manitoba. He was one of the first police officers ever appointed in this province. He served with the Manitoba Provincial Police for nearly 10 years, 6 as their Chief and almost two years as the provincial Gaoler. He also served with honours in the Winnipeg Troop of Cavalry. However, on visiting the St. Charles Cemetery, I found there nothing to record his passing except the columns in a 140 year old newspaper. Through the assistance of the Manitoba Association Chiefs

of Police and the Minister of Justice, Criminal Property Forfeiture Fund, this was corrected in 2020 with the placement of a headstone beside his fathers, signifying his service on the 150th Anniversary of the Province and his appointment as a police constable -- Lest we forget.

More on Richard Power and the Manitoba Provincial Police can be found in the book: *Pioneer Policemen, the History of the Manitoba Provincial Police, Vol. 1 (1870-1920)*.



Pioneer Policemen

The History of the Manitoba Provincial Police Volume 1 (1870 to 1920)

John Burchill

2020. Formed in 1870 the Manitoba Mounted Constabulary was the first police force in Western Canada formed after Confederation. It remained in existence until 1932 when at the height of the Great Depression it was absorbed into the RCMP. Broken into two volumes, this book chronicles the 150 year history of these pioneer policemen for the first time from its inception in 1870 until 1920.