
WILLIAM MICHIE STALKER

First Chief Constable, R.M. North Kildonan

*Written by John Burchill, President
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Constable William Stalker

William Michie Stalker was born to a single mother on April 6, 1884, in Tillicoultry, Clackmannanshire, Scotland. He would live with his mother and grandfather, a retired miner and handloom weaver, in Tillicoultry until he was 8.

On September 18, 1890, his mother married John Redpath in Glasgow, Scotland. They immigrated to Canada in 1892, just a few months after the death of William's grandfather.

The Redpath's eventually settled on parts of Parish Lots 69 & 70 in the Municipality of Kildonan, which today would run parallel to McLeod Avenue from Henderson Hwy to Lagimodiere Blvd through Rossmere Golf Course.

On April 16, 1908, William married Annie Robertson at the Elmwood Presbyterian Church, which would be located in the area of Henderson and Riverton today. Together the couple would have nine children, two of which died in infancy.

William and Annie lived on a farm occupying the east part of Parish Lots 70 & 71 in the Municipality of Kildonan near Birds Hill Road (now Molson/De Vries). The children went to nearby Rosewell School, a one-room schoolhouse on McLeod Avenue, then to Lord Kitchener School (now John Pritchard School) on East Kildonan Road (renamed Henderson Hwy in 1928).

The family farm consisted of mainly market vegetables with a few animals; horses, cows, chickens, and at one time or other, a goat, rabbits, and later mink.

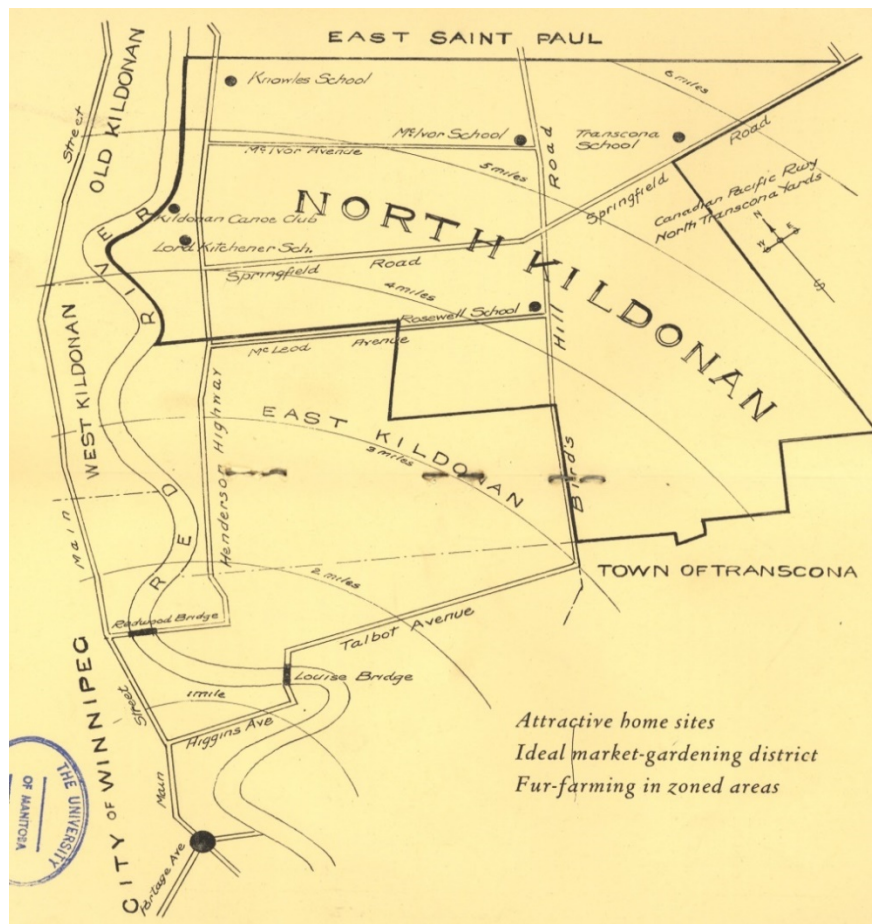
From 1876 to 1914, the Municipality of Kildonan covered a large area on both sides of the Red River, just north of the original City of Winnipeg. In 1914 the municipality was divided, with the area of Kildonan east of the river becoming the R.M. of East Kildonan, and the area west of the river becoming the R.M. of West Kildonan. In 1924, residents in the primarily rural northern part of East Kildonan said to be burdened by high sewer and water taxes from the built-up area to the

south asked to be separated from East Kildonan. The provincial government granted the request, and the R.M. of North Kildonan came into being on January 1, 1925.

The east part of Parish Lots 70 and 71, where William farmed, fell into North Kildonan. The west, bisected by the CPR Mainline with Raleigh on one side and Gateway on the other, remained within East Kildonan.

At the time North Kildonan was created, sections 759 and 760 of the Manitoba *Municipal Act* stated that every rural municipality could appoint one or more police constables for the municipality and that every constable so appointed would have the same powers and privileges and be subject to the same liability and to the performance of the same duties as a constable appointed by the provincial government. Until such time, investigation of any serious crime would be the responsibility of the Manitoba Provincial Police out of either Winnipeg or Selkirk.

As the sparsely populated community was more in need of someone to corral runaway farm animals and prevent the spread of noxious weeds into farmers' fields than it was to appoint a police officer, William was initially appointed as the Poundkeeper for North Kildonan on June 15, 1925 (By-law 15), followed by the Noxious Weed Inspector and Dog License Inspector in 1926. He was paid .70 cents per hour and compensated for the use of his car (a Model-T Ford) for his work. It wasn't until August 1926 that William was appointed as the Constable for North Kildonan as well – a duty for which he was to be paid at a rate of .50 cents per hour.



William's appointment as constable coincided with the planned expansion of North Kildonan, which subdivided 20 acres of land into 21 lots near what is now Edison Avenue along Henderson Hwy. The lots were sold to a developer (W.J. Wilson Co.), then to Mennonite settlers in 1928. William was also elected as School Trustee for Lord Kitchener School (renamed John Pritchard School in 1967), a position he held until 1933. His tenure as Trustee likely concluded when the last of his children graduated from school.

William was the embodiment of the early police constable in Canada. Besides being the only regular police constable for the Municipality of North Kildonan, he was also the Public Works Foreman, Relief (Welfare) Investigator, Sanitary Inspector, Noxious Weed Inspector, drove the municipal tractor on occasion, looked after bicycle licenses, was the pound keeper, helped fight fires, and if no one else was available he repaired bridges, sidewalks, and roadways.

While the police as an institution are relatively new, the activity of policing or the enforcement of common standards within a community is not. As noted by Patrick Colquhoun in his "*Treatise on the Police of the Metropolis*," published in 1796, there were various laws in England tending to regulate the comfort and convenience of the inhabitants of civil society in the City of London. From paving, watching, lighting, cleansing, and removing nuisances in the streets; to furnishing water, building houses, extinguishing fires, and regulating hackney coaches, carts, and other carriages. Colquhoun later added to this list the maintenance of sewage systems, and signs and signposts, among others.



Stalker Bay in North Kildonan was named after William Stalker in 1960

Indeed, the word "police" comes from Old French *policie*, meaning civil administration or government. It is the Latinisation of the ancient Greek *polítia*, from *polítēs* (citizen) and *polis* (city). The word was adopted across Europe in the 15th Century – 'Police,' 'Policei,' 'Pollicei,' 'Policey,' 'Pollicey,' 'Pollizey,' 'Pollizey,' 'Poltizey,' 'Pollucey,' and 'Pullucey.' While the spelling varied, the meaning encompassed citizenship, administration, government, civil polity and public order. It defined the ordering and regulating of a city.

For his multifarious duties as a public servant in helping to maintain and regulate the health, safety and welfare of the residents of North Kildonan, William is memorialized today as the namesake of "Stalker Bay," just a short distance from his old family farm.

As William was hard to reach without a telephone when he was needed, the Municipal Council asked him to have a phone installed in his home in August 1927. William eventually asked that Council pay the entire cost of the phone in his home as he felt that it was for the benefit of the

municipality and not him personally. His wife, Annie, would also be paid an annual bonus for answering the phone until 1955 when she passed away. ¹

Notwithstanding his public safety duties, it wasn't until August 1929 that Council provided William with a revolver for his police duties. Although he had requested the proper equipment earlier, it wasn't until he had to arrest Brown Durnen of St. Andrews at 3 a.m. on July 28, 1929, for theft of gas that the municipality issued him with a revolver. ²

In September 1927, after a woman fell off the sidewalk on East Kildonan Road and broke her ankle, William was given the additional task of fixing the municipal sidewalks and bridges when necessary to ensure the public's safety. In September 1929, he received .75 cents per hour for acting as the Foreman on all special construction work in the municipality.

In 1933 Council appointed William as a Special Investigator for relief matters during the Depression, for which he was to receive \$1.00 for each investigation tip. In July 1935, he was asked to investigate a large number of hospital accounts that had accumulated to the municipality and to go after the individuals responsible.

In October 1936, William was given the job of looking after a resident's livestock while the owner was in jail in Transcona. In November 1937, he received permission from Council to establish a mink farm on his property in North Kildonan.

In December 1940, a hat and badge were purchased for William to create a more "*official atmosphere*" when carrying out his police duties. He was subsequently given a flat salary of \$60 per month for all his various duties. However, in December 1941, he was paid an extra \$180 because of the extra work that was required for the Cordite Drainage project. ³

In March 1942, William was given the additional responsibility of issuing bicycle licenses. In 1943, Council reappointed him to the positions of Police Constable, Works Superintendent and Inspector of Licenses, Health and Noxious Weeds at \$1,000 for the year. Around this time, William disposed of his farm and moved into a new house at 1394 Henderson Highway. ⁴ The Council bought all of William's tools for \$157 so the municipality would have their own tools. In addition, Council paid the annual insurance premium on William's car of \$26.73.

¹ In an interview with John Urchenko, who worked for the North Kildonan Police from 1954-1972 and was its Chief of Police from 1968-1972, the police phone was in the Stalker residence when he started. In the early years phones were in members' homes until they hired Telephone Answering Services to take calls and dispatch. There was a business phone for the R.M. of North Kildonan at their Municipal offices.

² Durnen pled guilty to theft on August 19, 1929. Due to his lack of previous record, Durnen received a suspended sentence from Police Magistrate Herbert R. Welsford.

³ During the Second World War the Transcona Cordite Plant was built to produce acid, nitroglycerine, and guncotton (nitrocellulose) as ingredients in cordite for the war. Over the course of its operational life, the facility turned out 30,000 tons of guncotton, 14,500 tons of nitroglycerin, 75,000 tons of nitric acid, and 167,000 tons of sulphuric acid, and packed a total of 65,300 tons of cordite. Drainage from the plant ran into North Kildonan along what is now Cordite Road.

⁴ On March 13, 1945, Council passed By-Law 710 to accept the transfer of property from William Stalker and Annie Stalker. It is believed this is the land at 1394 Henderson Hwy, and not the farm.

In February 1944, John Stalker, William's son, was given the job as a highway patrol officer on Henderson Highway within the municipality of North Kildonan. Like his father, John had to use his own car and was paid \$1.50 per hour when he patrolled the highway.

In 1945 William's salary increased to \$1,200.00 per year, along with a \$25.00 per month car allowance. However, as William's duties increased with the growing population of North Kildonan – which almost tripled between 1925 and 1945 – his responsibilities were divided, and his son John was appointed Chief of Police effective April 23, 1946.



William Stalker's Police and Cap Badges and Jail Key, c 1940.

At that time William became the Superintendent of Public Works but also continued with his duties as Weed and License Inspector. In 1947 he was also appointed Fire Guardian for the municipality and, in 1955; he was assigned the additional responsibility of municipal Water Meter Installation and Services Inspector.

As William was now 70-years old, there was a general expectation he would retire. However, Council agreed to keep him on until November 1957, when Frank J. DeGraff was hired as the Superintendent of Public Works. William was given a retirement allowance of \$900 per year.

It is believed the municipality took possession of the land at 1394 Henderson Hwy from William in 1945 as municipal property in exchange for him living there. Council paid for a number of upgrades to the house including the addition of a basement, adding a furnace, and plumbing and septic field in 1952. In 1956/57, the municipality constructed a new municipal building next door at 1400 Henderson Hwy., which was opened to the public in February 1957.

With his retirement the municipality allowed William to lease back the house at 1394 Henderson Hwy for \$50 per month for the next five years until the land was required for further development. Council also retained William as the Public Work's Yardman for \$50 a month, basically off-setting the cost of his lease payments.

In 1960 the municipality named Stalker Bay after William (changing the name from Stalker Avenue as it had been originally laid out in the municipal zoning plans).

After five years, in November 1962, William's services as Yardman were no longer required by the municipality and his lease on the house was not renewed. However, he was allowed to stay in the house until the land was needed. In March 1965, William was given a \$500 severance payment and three months' notice to vacate the house at 1394 Henderson Hwy, which had been sold to Mr. Martin J. Goffard for a price of \$155 and was being removed for future development.

William subsequently moved into a house with his daughter at 160 Essar Avenue. He died on May 7, 1967, and was buried at Elmwood Cemetery alongside his wife.

In 1972, less than five years after William's death, the North Kildonan Police would merge with the East Kildonan Police as part of Unicity. The East Kildonan Police would in turn amalgamate with the City of Winnipeg Police in October 1974.

Over the years little attempt was made to record the histories of these old municipal police departments that today make up much of the City of Winnipeg. With the 50th Anniversary of the 1974 amalgamation fast approaching, along with the City of Winnipeg's own 150th Anniversary, we are looking for more stories and memorabilia to remember these forgotten public servants and the impact they had on the early days of Winnipeg's history.

I want to thank the family members of William Stalker from across Canada who, along with Winnipeg Police Sergeant Jeff Stalker, the great-grandson of William Stalker, shared pictures, police artifacts, and some interesting tidbits for this article.



Annie Stalker, pictured here with William c 1950, would answer the phone at their home for any police calls in North Kildonan until her death in 1955