

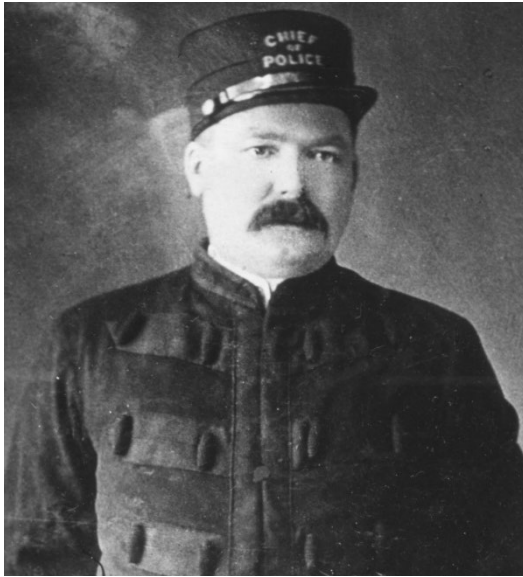
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# JOHN S. INGRAM

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## Winnipeg's First Chief of Police

Written by John Burchill, President  
February 23, 2024. Winnipeg Police Museum



One hundred and fifty years ago today, on February 23, 1874, the newly incorporated City of Winnipeg appointed its first Chief of Police – John (Jack) S. Ingram.

In his book “Ten Years in Winnipeg, 1870-1879”, Alexander Begg observed that “[Winnipeg's] first chief of police was one Ingram, who was perhaps the greatest rowdy in Winnipeg at the time, and who under cloak of his authority, engaged in all kinds of dissipation”.

Ingram, was born in St. Thomas, Ontario (then Canada West) on April 3, 1853. John was one of ten children (nine boys and one girl). His grandfather was a soldier during the Napoleonic Wars and his father was born in Quebec during one of his grandfather's many postings. Two of his uncles emigrated to Australia “to seek their fortune” in gold, another Uncle emigrated to Pennsylvania and his aunt emigrated to California. Wanderlust and adventure were in the families genes

John was no different. He struck out for the new Canadian frontier, arriving in Winnipeg in 1871 -- a wild town of saloons, brothels and gambling dens. On May 16, 1871, the population of Winnipeg had grown substantially and it was reported by Judge Johnston in his address to the 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. The Grand Jury agreed, recommending that “in the public interest it would be wise to increase rather than diminish the number of men [on the provincial police force].”

John Ingram was up to the task. His father had been a bailiff, county constable and hotelier back in Puslinch Township, Ontario. He understood both sides of the business and applied for a position with the Provincial Police.

His career was uneventful until December 12, 1871, when Captain Louis de Plainval, Commanding Officer (pro tem) of the Provincial Police, wrote to the Honourable Henry Clarke, Attorney General of Manitoba, regarding the escape and recapture of a prisoner named Jones. Recognizing the exceptional work of Ingram, de Plainval reported “about an hour after the

escape he [Jones] was brought back by Trooper John Ingram, one of the youngest of the constables. I must say that under the circumstances Trooper Ingram has performed his duty very energetically and I commend him in the General Orders today". Ingram was subsequently promoted to Corporal, while he was still just 18 years old.

Ingram's career took a dip in the fall of 1872 when in a drunken stupor, he delivered a serious beating on Joseph Dubuc, causing him to lose sight in one eye. Dubuc was then a lawyer, newspaper owner, member of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly (1870-1878) and future Queen's Bench and Chief Justice of Manitoba (1879-1909). The assault occurred after Dubuc delivered a list of the participants in the City's September 1872 federal election riots to the Grand Jury – including Francis Cornish – a rival lawyer and future Mayor of Winnipeg (1874) and also a member of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly (1874-1878).

**Court of Queen's Bench.**  
SATURDAY.

Court opened at 2:30 p.m., their Lordships Judges McKeagney and Betourney on the Bench.

The business of the court was confined to the passing of sentences on those prisoners convicted during the week.

*John Ingram*, who had pleaded guilty of common assault, but owing to the conduct of the prisoner in giving himself up to justice, and the withdrawal of prosecution, the accused was discharged from Court after an admonition delivered in an affecting manner by Judge McKeagney.

Ingram left for St. Paul, Minnesota, but subsequently returned to Winnipeg once passions had cooled. He appeared before Judge McKeagney on Thursday, June 12, 1873, to answer to the charge of assaulting Dubuc. Ingram was represented by Francis Cornish who entered a guilty plea to common assault and "*a most humble apology for the offense committed against [Mr. Dubuc], 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. 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 who said that he did not, upon personal grounds, intend to press the charge, and that the action now taken was with his consent. It was reported in the Free Press that "*The Attorney General, on part of the Crown, said that it was not the intention of the Crown to press for any heavy sentence, as Ingram had returned from a foreign country and gave himself up; and that the accused had been in the police force in Manitoba, during which time had been a sober and intelligence constable, and although a very young man, had so distinguished himself on one occasion that he was promoted for it at once*".

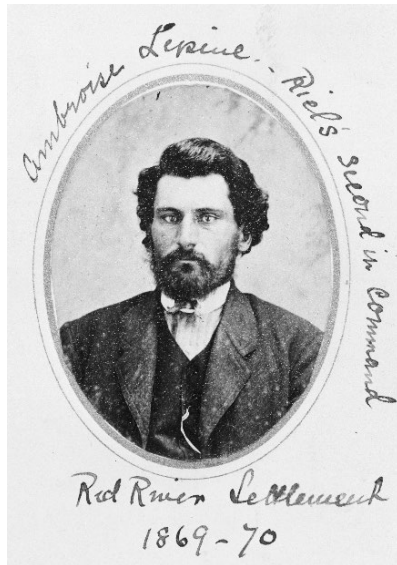
Sentencing was set over until Saturday June 14, 1873, where Justice McKeagney discharged the matter after giving Ingram a stiff admonishment.

It appears the event was but a momentary setback to Ingram who was entrusted with a warrant to arrest Louis Riel and Ambroise Lépine on September 15, 1873, for their involvement in the murder of Thomas Scott. Rumor was that neither man would be taken without bloodshed.

While Ingram and his crew could not locate Riel, they did locate Lépine at his home in St. Norbert on September 17, 1873. 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.”

John Kerr, who was with Ingram and Leon Dupont that day to make the arrest, gave a different version of events in his biography.



A team and a democrat [a horse drawn buggy or carriage] had been hired from Sinclair Bros. Livery on Fort Street, one of the brothers driving. Johnny Ingraham (sic), who had been with me in the Manitoba Constabulary, was acting as deputy for Sheriff Edward Armstrong, and had taken Edwin Doidge and me to be sworn in for the undertaking. Leon Dupont was a French-Canadian, qualified as a guide and interpreter.

...

To our knock Ambroise called out “Entrez!” Ingraham, Dupont and I walked in and found Riel’s adjutant-general sitting with his child on his knee, while Madame Lepine was preparing breakfast. Ingraham exhibited the warrant, and Leon Dupont, acting as spokesman, according to Ingraham’s order tried to camouflage the charge as for a debt owing. This was a useless subterfuge, for Lepine was not deceived. He knew, and said, the charge was murder.

When our prisoner had eaten, he left the large front room – kitchen and living-room combined – entering a bedroom at the rear, and shortly emerged with a revolver in his hand. “I could kill every one of you!” he announced firmly, sweeping all of us with the fire of his black eyes.

I was standing near a large box-stove – not the one used for cooking – my hand resting along the top, my own little bulldog [a short barrelled double-action revolver] trained on him. “You’d better not try it,” I advised him. He muttered something, as he cast a glance in my direction, turned, and re-entered the bedroom, and soon appeared in his suit of store clothes. ... Ambroise accompanied us without show of violence, after taking leave of his weeping wife and child. He was even cheerful and companionable on the drive towards the ferry, and, finding that I could speak French fairly well, he addressed his conversation to me as well as to Dupont.

Lepine was lodged in the south-west bastion of Fort Garry with Kerr and Doidge in charge. The three of them stayed together in the bastion, eating, sleeping, playing cards and occasionally squaring off in a round of boxing to pass the time. This continued until December 22, 1873 when Lepine was released on \$8000 bail pending his trial.

After much argument about the jurisdiction of the Manitoba courts to hear a murder case prior to its entering Confederation, Lépine’s trial got underway on October 13 and lasted until October 26, 1874, after which the jury, consisting of six French- and six English-speaking members, returned a verdict of guilty. Although they jury recommended mercy Justice Wood, comparing the execution of Scott to a “savage atrocity,” sentenced Lépine to death by hanging.

The conviction and sentencing of Lépine elicited much excitement and indignation especially in French Canada and on January 15, 1875, by Order in Council, Lépine’s sentence was commuted to 2 years in prison along with the forfeiture of his civil rights. A few months later, in April 1875, both Riel and Lépine were offered an amnesty on the condition that they accept a five-year banishment from Canada. Unlike Riel, Lépine refused the offer, choosing to serve out the balance of his sentence.

As the Ontario government had posted a \$5000 reward for anyone bringing the murderers of Thomas Scott to trial, on September 15, 1875, there was a general call to attend and supply proofs by those seeking to collect on the reward. Claims put in by a number of individuals including William Farmer who laid the Information to set the arrest warrant in motion for the apprehension of Lépine, along with lawyer C. B. Thibaudeau and Francis Cornish (who along with Thomas Hughes and H.W. Smith encouraged Farmer), as well as Leon Dupont, John Kerr and John Ingram, who arrested Lépine under the guidance of Edward Armstrong. The only other person to apply was George M. Young, who was only involved in the arrest of Andre Nault.

After hearing the evidence and reviewing the proofs, Oliver Mowat, Premier of Ontario, stated “Dupont, Ingram, Sheriff Armstrong and Kerr were officers of the law, and, doing what they did in the arrest in the murderers of Scott, were simply executing process placed in their hands as any other process, for which, of course, for which they were paid the ordinary fees and charges. ... I think they may each be paid \$330.00.” By Order in Council dated January 15, 1876, the full amount of the reward for bringing Lépine and Andre Nault to trial was allocated as follows:

William A. Farmer .....	\$2,000
F. E. Cornish .....	400
C. B. Thibaudeau .....	400
Leon Dupont .....	330
John S. Ingram .....	330
E. Armstrong (sheriff) .....	330
J. A. Kerr .....	330
George M. Young .....	300
Thomas Hughes .....	290
H. W. Smith .....	290
	\$5,000

Along with his relationship with Mayor Francis Cornish, the arrest of Lépine brought Ingram to prominence within the small province, at least within the English community, and was no doubt a factor in his later appointment as the first Chief of Police for the City of Winnipeg on February 23, 1874.

Indeed, at least three other applicants for Chief of Police had similar or better qualifications to Ingram. According to their applications, Alex McPherson had worked for six years as a police officer in Scotland; Cornelius O'Callaghan had two years with the Halifax Police before joining the Expeditionary Force to Red River; and Thomas E. Rawson had worked in Barrie as a constable and sheriff’s bailiff.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> City of Winnipeg Council Records, City of Winnipeg Archives.

To the Hon. JOSEPH ROYAL,  
Provincial Secretary,

Office of the Crown and Peace,  
Winnipeg, Oct. 22, 1873.

J. H. O'Donnell, Esq., M.D.,  
Coroner, Provencher.

SIR,—Information has reached this office that a man named Benjamin Marchand, jun., has died at Ste. Agathe, near the Custom House, on the frontier, from wounds received at the hands of one Michel Godon, at Fawcett's, in Dufferin, on the 10th instant. The man died yesterday; he has been attended in his illness by the military surgeon of the post on the American side of the line. Will you please hold the necessary inquest into his death.—Yours truly,

DANIEL CAREY,  
Clerk of Crown and Peace.

P.S.—Sub-Chief Powers and officer Ingram will be there on duty, to make any arrests necessary. D. C.

On March 24, 1874 Ingram received a cheque for \$180.00 from the Office of the Attorney General. There is no indication of what it was for, but would be the equivalent of about 5 months' salary as a provincial police officer. The last case of note that Ingram was involved while still a member of the Provincial Police was the murder of Benjamin Marchand at Fawcett's saloon in Dufferin (located just north of the United States border near the current town of Emerson).

Gilbert Godin was a powerful Metis working and living in the Red Lake area, which broadly covered the Red River Valley around the Southern Manitoba, Minnesota and Dakota Territory borders. He made a living as a freighter, moving goods between trading centres and posts, and spent his spare time drinking and fighting. A good match for Ingram!

On the night of October 10, 1873, Gilbert and his brother David were drinking at Fawcett's as were the Marchand family. Benjamin Marchand, a fighter of almost equal stature to Gilbert, squared off. Ultimately Gilbert won the battle and settled back to drinking after running the Marchand's from the bar. However Benjamin returned.

Finding Benjamin skulking in the yard, Godon set upon him in a rage, dragging him back into the saloon. Godon picked up an adze (a cutting tool shaped somewhat like a small axe or hatchet) and struck Benjamin on the head, knocking him to the ground. As he lay prone out, Godon again struck him on the head, inflicting serious injuries that were to prove fatal.

As the North West Mounted Police did not arrive in Dufferin until June 1874, just prior to their March West on July 8, 1874, there were no doctors or police officers closer than Winnipeg. As a result the bar owner, A.J. Fawcett, rode to the British North America Boundary Commission camp for help. Sergeant James Armstrong of the Royal Engineers and 15 men came to the saloon for assistance. Armstrong took Godon in to custody and held him over night at the Boundary Commission camp. The next morning, Armstrong's commanding officer, Captain Albany Featherstonhaugh, doubting he had the authority to detain Godon, ordered him released. Godon promptly fled across the border

In the meantime Ingram and Deputy Chief Power headed for Dufferin with Dr. Curtis Bird. An Inquest was held on October 24 with Ingram and Power on hand should an arrest be necessary. Not surprisingly Godon was nowhere to be found. On November 12, 1873, a Grand Jury brought a true bill against Godon for the murder of Marchand and a warrant was issued for his arrest when he did not appear to answer to the charge.

On June 12, 1874, Godon was eventually arrested at Pembina, Dakota Territory by Sheriff Charles Brown (North Dakota did not become a State until 1889). Notified of his arrest, Chief Power rode to Pembina and brought Godon back to Winnipeg. Godon's trial for murder took place on June 22 before Justice Edmund Burke (E.B.) Wood sitting with a jury. After 30 minutes deliberation, the jury brought back a verdict of guilty with a recommendation of mercy. Justice

Wood, noting that Godon showed no mercy for Marchand, set August 26, 1874, for his date with the hangman.

On July 17, 1874 after strong lobbying from Godon's friends, his sentence was commuted by an Order in Council to 14 years in prison. His cellmate, Joseph Michad, was not so lucky and the government ordered his execution to proceed on the same date.

On September 25, 1876, Godon escaped from Stony Mountain while out on a work crew and headed for the Dakota border. Godon remained in the United States, and while an attempt was made to arrest him on August 18, 1877, when he slipped across the border to visit his father in Emerson, it was unsuccessful. Godon was arrested again in Pembina, Dakota Territory, by Sheriff Brown after assaulting Alexander Montreault, however he escaped from custody on June 25, 1880, and was never brought to trial in Manitoba.

With the official swearing-in of one hundred and fifty members of the North-West Mounted Police (N.W.M.P.) and the Incorporation of the City of Winnipeg on November 8, 1873, there was little need for a Provincial Police force. Although the N.W.M.P. were not the police of jurisdiction for Manitoba, being stationed at Fort Garry effectively resulted in the disbanding of the Provincial Police when Winnipeg formed its own small police force on February 23, 1874. On that day, with his friend and lawyer Francis Cornish sitting in the Mayor's chair, Ingram was appointed as Chief of the Winnipeg Police and Richard Power was re-appointed as the sole member of the Manitoba Provincial Police. While Ingram's jurisdiction did not extend beyond the borders of the City, the Municipal Act of Manitoba did give all counties or municipalities the power to appoint their own local constables.

As the new City did not yet have a City Hall (or a police station for that matter), a building was leased from Alexander McPherson on Main Street for \$240 a year and fitted up as a police station. It doesn't appear the building was particularly habitable as Ingram requested the building to be mudded on the outside, as the walls were in no condition to withstand the cold weather; a ceiling was need to be installed in the men's quarters; a heating stone was needed in the prisoner's cells; and blankets were required.<sup>2</sup>

It seems that even after Ingram's appointment as Chief of Police he still 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 'ladies of the night'. Rumors circulated that the young Chief, just 21-years old, was a nightly (unofficial) visitor at the local brothels. So much so that his two constables, David Murray and William Byers, handed in their resignations to City Hall on May 31, 1875, in protest over the Chief's conduct. Not only was Ingram frequenting the local brothels, he was charged with assaulting Constable Byers on May 19, 1875.

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<sup>2</sup> City of Winnipeg Council Records, April 4, 1874, and October 25, 1874. City of Winnipeg Archives.

When the mayor dismissed the charges involving Byers, the two officers tendered their resignations. However City Council refused to accept the officers resignations 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 City's west end. Ingram retaliated by filing a ten thousand-dollar libel suit against Villiers on June 3, 1875, but also continued his unofficial visits to the brothels.

Unfortunately for Ingram, on the night of June 7, 1875, Constables Murray and Byers descended 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 civic election in January) at 4:00 pm on June 8, pled guilty and was fined eight dollars plus costs.

On Monday June 14, 1875, Ingram tendered his resignation to City Council and it was accepted. Until a new Chief was appointed, Constable Murray acted as Chief of Police and on July 5, 1875, Andrew Hunter was appointed as constable to fill the position vacated by Ingram.

Ingram subsequently returned to his hometown of St. Thomas, Ontario. However it would not be the last Winnipeg heard of Ingram. 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 when he was hired in November 1884 by the newly incorporated Town of Calgary, North-West Territories, to run their police force.

Ingram, as he had in Winnipeg, ran Calgary with the same rugged approach. While this seemed to suit the town well enough for a few years, it did make him a number of enemies, including the local newspapers which began a campaign to rid him from the town. On February 28, 1888 Ingram bowed to the pressure and resigned. The Calgary Tribune, in a thinly veiled expose on Ingram's character, gave its advice to City Council for hiring the next Chief:

He should be a man of unquestioned character and habits, and who will not spend his time playing billiards, smoking cigars on the street while on duty or other matters which we might mention. He should certainly have experience and ability and be above suspicion of accepting bribes to hush affairs which should be ventilated in the courts.

Ingram remained in Calgary for a few years managing two hotels, The Palace and The Royal. While several sources suggest that Ingram became the Chief of Police in Great Falls, Montana, between 1890 and 1896, this is unlikely as he appeared in the 1891 Census working as a hotel keeper in Calgary. In addition he had married a young widow, Edith Oake, in Calgary in 1887 and they had two children both born in Alberta between 1890 and 1893 -- Beatrice in July 1890 and John in July 1893.

While Ingram had a strong tie to Montana -- his younger brother, Joseph N. Ingram, emigrated to the United States in 1887 settling in Great Falls where he was a conductor on the St. Paul, Minneapolis & Manitoba Railway, it was confirmed with the Montana Police Museum that John Ingram never was a Chief of Police in Great Falls. However "John Ingram" was a police officer

in the rough and tumble mining town of Butte, Montana, in 1895. He made headlines on June 12, 1895, after a running gun battle in the streets with a robber who had just fled the Silver Bow National Bank. As reported in the Butte Miner:

The chase by Ingram was a good one and demonstrates that he is possessed of considerable nerve of the fighting order. One of the bullets from the robber's gun cut away a part of his coat just over the right hip pocket and several more came very near hitting him ...

As Ingram's third child, Leslie, was born in his home town of St. Thomas, Ontario, on November 5, 1895, it is likely if it is our John Ingram that a near death gun battle did not sit well with his wife who would have been four months pregnant at the time (and a widow once before). However experience in a mining town and a return to St. Thomas may have been a blessing in disguise for Ingram in securing his next job as the first Chief of Police in the mining town of Rossland, British Columbia.

At the time Ingram's younger brother, Andrew B. Ingram, was a political figure in Ontario who represented the riding of Elgin West in the Ontario Legislature from 1886 to 1890 and in the Elgin East riding for the House of Commons from 1891 to 1906 as a Liberal-Conservative. At the time Thomas Mayne Daly was also a Liberal-Conservative member in the House of Commons for Selkirk, Manitoba. Besides being in the same political party as Andrew, Daly was also the same age as John Ingram, and had grown up in Stratford, Ontario, just 80 kilometers north of St. Thomas, and the two families may have known each other.



From 1877 to 1881 Thomas Daly practised law in Stratford. In July 1881, when Manitoba's boundaries were enlarged, Daly left for the West and was among the first people to settle in what would soon be the City of Brandon (incorporated in 1882). Daly was elected the City's first mayor and was elected for a second term in 1884. He was called to the Manitoba bar in 1884 and practised law in Brandon until 1892, when he moved to Winnipeg. In 1887, running as a Liberal-Conservative, Daly was elected to the House of Commons for the riding of Selkirk, a seat he would hold until the general election of 1896, when he chose not to run again.

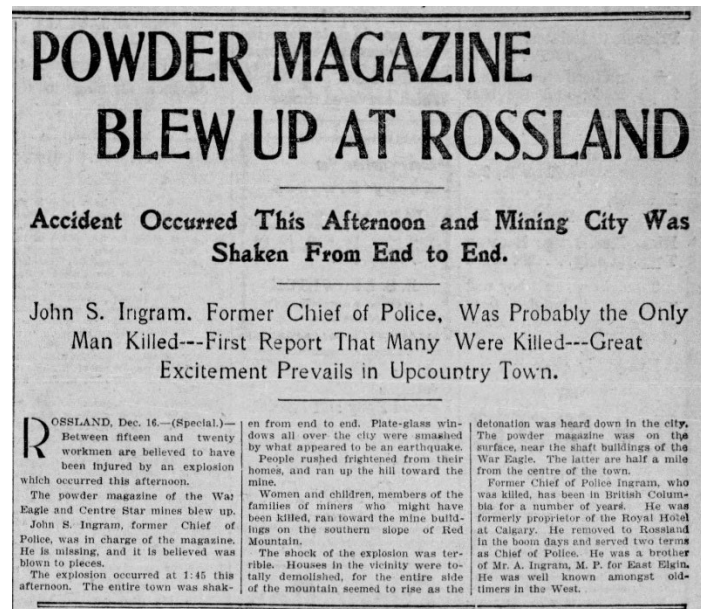
After a brief trip in England he moved to the booming mining town of Rossland, British Columbia where he practised law. However, when Rossland was incorporated as a City in July 1897, Daly was appointed as Chair of the Police Commission to find a Chief for the new police department. Perhaps a referral from Andrew Ingram, or his personal knowledge of John from back home in Ontario, Daly appointed Ingram as the new Chief of Police for Rossland on July 6, 1897.

Daly remained in Rossland for six years before again settling in Winnipeg in 1902. Over the next eight years he played a prominent role in Winnipeg. He was appointed a Police Magistrate in



1904 and was instrumental in persuading Attorney General Colin H. Campbell to establish in Winnipeg the first Juvenile Court in Canada. He became the Court's first judge on February 5, 1909. Daly died on June, 24 1911, and was buried in Stratford.

As for Ingram, he remained Chief in Rossland until 1901 when he resigned after running afoul with the new Mayor. However his 'special skills' came in handy when the Le Roi Mining Company hired him to find replacement workers during a protracted mining strike in 1901. Ingram traveled to Winnipeg between September 15 and October 1, 1901 and rounded up 23 replacement workers willing to travel to Rossland. These extra workers helped the mine operate until the union exhausted its funds and the strike was broken.



The timing was perfect. Ingram's wife was 8 months pregnant with their fourth child, and a new Mayor was elected in Rossland in January 1902. Being a supporter of Ingram, the Mayor dismissed the previous Chief and reappointed Ingram. However it didn't last long and Ingram was out after the 1903 elections amongst rumours of gambling and bribery.

Ingram was subsequently hired by the Silver Star mining company in Rossland as a "dynamite man". He was paid very well, however it came with risk. On December 17, 1905, while preparing fuses in the camp's main powder shack, Ingram was literally blown to pieces. He was the only fatality. On December, 20 1905, his remains were put aboard a train and returned to St. Thomas, Ontario, for interment in the family plot.

Always the centre of controversy, even after his death it was suspected that Ingram was the victim of a murder plot as revenge for his involvement in breaking the 1901 miners' strike. Although there was to be an investigation according to the Calgary Herald in March 1906, it appears it never got off the ground.

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By-Law, No. 4.

Of By-Law to confirm the appointment of John S. Ingram as Chief of Police of the City of Winnipeg.

City of Winnipeg } Whereas the Council of  
 the said City of Winnipeg }  
 at a meeting thereof held }  
 at the said City, on the twenty-third day of }  
 February in the year of our Lord one thousand }  
 and eight hundred and seventy-four, did }  
 appoint John S. Ingram, of the said City of }  
 Winnipeg, Chief of Police of the City of Winni- }  
 peg, aforesaid, and it is necessary by By-Law }  
 to confirm the said appointment. }  
 Therefore the Mayor and Council of the }  
 City of Winnipeg in Council assembled }  
 enact, as follows:— }  
 That the appointment of John S. }  
 Ingram, of the City of Winnipeg as Chief of }  
 Police of the City of Winnipeg be, and the }  
 same is hereby confirmed.

Done and passed in Council, at the }  
 said City of Winnipeg this twenty-sixth day }  
 of February in the year of our Lord one }  
 thousand and eight hundred and seventy-four.

(Sgd) F. Evans Lornish (Seal)  
 Mayor.

A. M. Brown  
 City Clerk.

City of Winnipeg By-law #4, appointing John S. Ingram Chief of Police.  
 February 23, 1874.

**NOTE:** In 2024 the Winnipeg Police celebrates its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary as well as the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the metro amalgamation. Anyone wishing to recognize a police member who made a substantial contribution to policing in Winnipeg or its surrounding municipalities during the past 150 years is asked to send me their name and (if known) a brief description of their accomplishments.