



Letter of Appointment to Postmastership.

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT, CANADA.

Ottawa, 27th September 1907

Sir,

I have the honour to inform you that the
Postmaster General has been pleased to appoint you to be Postmaster of
Stratheona in the Electoral County
of Stratheona in the
Province of Alberta and
Dominion of Canada.

You are, therefore, hereby authorized to exercise all the functions
and discharge all the duties appertaining to the said office, according
to law.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

E. H. Aschmune
Deputy Postmaster General.

Mrs. George Thomson
Stratheona

Leis. Stratheona

Alta

JOHN JOSEPH AND FLORA ANNE McRAE

John Joseph McRae was born 17 March, 1835 in Glengarry, Ontario, the son of John McRae and Anne MacDonald. Anne was a relation of MacDonald of the Glen, a priest of considerable recognition in Glengarry, Ontario, born in Scotland of the famous Glen family. John Joseph's father was John, known as "Curly, the Banker." There were so many McRaes and MacDonalds that they had to have nicknames and no doubt John was named both for his hair and his occupation. He was the son of Farquhar who migrated from Kopydart, Scotland to Glengarry, Ontario and Catherine McDonald who came over on the same boat as Farquhar. Catherine was the daughter of Angus Dan MacDonald and Helen McDonell who was the daughter of Catherine Cameron and Archibald McDonell. Farquhar was the son of Christopher Roy of Scotland.

John Joseph McRae married Flore Anne MacDonell 15 July, 1862. Flora Anne was born 31 May, 1840 in Glengarry, Ontario, the daughter of Alex MacDonell of Glengarry, Ontario and Anne MacDonell. Anne was the daughter of "Big Duncan" MacDonell. Flora Anne's father was Alex, son of Alex Roy and Belle McLellan, both born in Scotland. The latter died in Glengarry in 1884 at the age of 95. John Joseph was a railroad contractor and occasionally he would move his family to the American side of the border while building American railroads which accounts for some of the children being born in the United States. Flora Anne had sixteen children of which five died as infants. When John Joseph became ill with tuberculosis it was decided to move the family West as it was said that the air in the far west was most healthful; so in 1892 when he was 56 years of age, John

Joseph moved his family west, settling in the Rabbit Creek area south of Edmonton, Alberta. He died the following year and was buried in the Catholic section of the Edmonton Cemetery. The grave marker was somehow removed and not replaced but Mrs. Chisholm remembered her father's grave as being the first in that cemetery and that it was in the far northwest corner. The family had been moved to a comfortable home on 84th Ave. between 104 and 105 Street in Strathcona after selling the Rabbit Hill property. This home was one block off Whyte Avenue, the main street in Strathcona and became a focal point for Flora Anne's children and grandchildren who were settled in the surrounding aread. We are indebted to Cecilia Adam for the following account or recollections of her grandmother, Flora Anne:

"Grandma was a wonderfully kind and loving person. In our young days she was tall and spare of figure and always dressed in widow's weeds. We called on her nearly every Saturday - my brother Roderick, my young sister Marguerite and myself. Sometimes we wlked over the 5th Street bridge detouring around the swimming pool in Victoria Park, sometimes we took a streetcar over the High Level Bridge. The latter trip was not a success unless we managed to scare Marguerite with tales that the street car might tip over into the Saskatchewan River or might meet a train. She would be waiting for us with candy and apples or other goodies. Her living room and guest bedroom on the ground floor had double beds with several feather ticks covered with Martha Washington bedspreads. It was as much as our life was worth to lean agains them and dent them. Grandma would march us down to the

theatre a block away and we would sit through several performances of "The Perils of Pauline or the "Hidden Hand", etc. We would not leave until Grandma came down the aisle to gather us up. I remember when she got her gramophone. She called my mother and didn't say a word but put the machine near the phone and played several records such as, "When You and I Were Young Maggie" and "I'll Take You Home Again Kathleen". Grandma used to take me shopping with her and I remember the sawdust on the floor of the butcher shop and the tubes in the department store that were sent to the offices on wires to make change instead of the cash registers we have today. We often passed the memorial fountain to my Uncle Malcolm McIntyre's brother who was a member of Parliament and died very young. I remember Grandma using snuff and my journeys to the store to replenish her Copenhagen. I remember the day she took out her teeth and my brother said, "Gee, Grandma, can you take your tongue out too?" One of our problems was to get used to the strong tea and cheese Grandma served us for lunch. I remember most of all spending the night with Grandma so we could meet the troop train in the morning bringing her son, Angus home from World War I. We were the first ones at the station at 4 a.m. and the train did not arrive until mid-morning. I remember Miss Roth, a schoolteacher, occupying an upstairs bedroom. Grandma had no formal schooling and Miss Roth was happy to write her letters for her. I remember my brother and I playing truant to visit Grandma and Aunt Mildred, Angus' wife. They were both glad to see us and not a cross word about missing school. When Florence, our youngest sister was ill and dying with complications of the flu' in 1919 Grandma came every day by street

car from Strathcona as the South Side of Edmonton was then called, to our home on the north side to visit with Florence. Grandma spent her last days in the home of her daughter Nana (Mrs. George Thomson) who also lived in Strathcona. When Grandma passed on at the age of 85 a funeral mass was celebrated by Archbishop O'Leary and Bishop Melligan in the old St. Anthony's Church around the corner from her home where she had daily attended mass for so many years."

The sixteen children and fifty-seven grandchildren of John Joseph and Flora Anne are as follows:

1. Alexander born in 1863, died the same year.
2. Annie born 9 November 1864 in Sagineau, Michigan. Annie married Kenneth Charles McGillis, 19 August 1889. Kenneth's father was Angus and his mother Elizabeth McDonell. Kenneth was in the lumbering business in their early married days but after living in Wisconsin, Michigan, and Minnesota, U.S.A., eventually took up farming near Riviere Que Barre, Alberta. They had 10 children as follows: Rachel Ann born 8 June, 1890 in Alexandria, Minnesota; twins John and Angus born 9 March 1892 in au Claire, Wisconsin, died in infancy; Joanne, born 3 April 1894, in Alexandria, Minnesota; Elizabeth Catherine, born 20 March 1896 in Alexandria; Angus Lawrence, born 25 January 1898 in Alexandria; Helen Flora Teresa, born 6 November 1900 in Alexandria; Mary C. Isabell, born 14 February 1902 in Alexandria, died 24 March 1904; Wilfred Joseph, born 31 May 1904 in Riviere Que Barre, Alberta, died 22 December 1950 and John Alexander, born 9 January 1907 in Riviere Que Barre, died 31 August 1907.

Annie and Kenneth had a busy and happy time raising their family in the early part of the century when farming meant a wholesome but not a particularly prosperous way of life. On August 19, 1939 Annie and Kenneth celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary with well-deserved recognition from numerous relatives and friends from the surrounding areas with 29 grandchildren in attendance. Devout Catholics, they are buried in the cemetery at Rivier Que Barre.

3. Jeanette Ann born 11 January 1867 in Glengarry, Ontario. Jeanette (Jenny) married Angus Lachlan McLaughlin 4 November, 1889. Angus' father was Lachlan and his mother Flora McDougal. For the first ten years of their married life they resided with his parents which naturally meant that Mrs. McLaughlin, Sr. was first lady of the house. It is understandable that this would be a delicate situation.

Jenny and Angus had eight children as follows: John Kenneth born 9 September 1891 in Glengarry, Ontario, died 10 July 1896; George Alexander born 11 November, 1892 in Glengarry, Ontario, died 24 October 1965 in Great Falls, Cascade County, Montana; John Lawrence born 7 February, 1895 in North Lancaster, Ontario, Canada; James Alexander born 12 May 1896, Glengarry, Ontario, died in France, 12 April 1918 while a soldier in World War I; Lachlan McLaughlin born 12 May, 1898 in Glengarry, Ontario; Ernest William born 12, August 1905 in Livingston, Park County, Montana; Angus Joseph born 22 July, 1906, Livingston, Montana, died in infancy; Mary Amelia Ann McLaughlin born 12 April 1909, died same day.

After a successful career, principally as a paving contractor,

Angus Lachlan McLaughlin passed away 4 November 1933 and lies buried in the Calvary Cemetery in Livingston, Montana. Jenny continued to reside in Livingstone and was often seen driving her car (none too well) around the city after having learned to drive late in life. Jenny passed away 29 May, 1954 and lies buried along side her husband.

4. Catherine Mary, born 3 October, 1869 in Glengarry, Ontario married Ranald Alexander Chisholm in 1895 in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Their 9 children are as follows: Janet Teresa born 29 January 1895 in Edmonton; Elizabeth (Lila) born 14 July 1898 in Sandon, British Columbia; John Raymond born 31 August 1902 in Edmonton, missing since his early twenties; twins John Alexander and Angus Joseph born 7 January 1905 in Edmonton, died three days apart in January 1911 of diphthria; Cecelia Mary born 27 December, 1907 in Edmonton; Roderick Colin born 19 May 1910 in Edmonton, died 7 February, 1948; Catherin Marguerite born 19 May 1913 in Edmonton; Florence Alberta born 14 June, 1914 in Edmonton, died 17 February 1919.

Ranald Alexander's father was Angus Roderick who owned and resided in the Chisholm Block, a familiar landmark in Edmonton in the early days, now rebuilt and called the Centennial Building. Ranald's mother was Janet McDonell (Lock) who died at his birth. Ranald was brought up in Cornwall, Ontario by his aunt, Miss Catherine McDonell (Lock) until he was twelve years old, when he was sent to St. Boniface School in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Not liking this restrictive life, Ranald ran away from school to join his father in Edmonton. However, Roderick had business in Winnipeg so left his son in the care of Bill Cust, the first established

farmer in the west where he remained for the next six years. Farming attracted Ranald briefly. Later he established himself in the hotel business in Lac St. Anne, a populous town in the early days, fifty miles north of Edmonton. Later he built several general stores and for the last fifteen years of his life, operated a general store and hotel in Greencourt, Alberta. With the passing of Mr. Chisholm on 2 November, 1930, the west lost one of her stury and adventurous pioneers. Throughout his long residence in the west Mr. Chisholm won the respect and admiration of all with whom he came in contact. This was particularly true of the Indians, by whom he was greatly respected, being able to converse freely with them in their native Cree and acting as friend and adviser to them at all times. After his death, his wife, Catherine Mary continued to reside in Greencourt until 1945 when she returned to the family residence in Edmonton. It was in Edmonton at the Norwood Auxiliary Hospital on 21 December, 1969, after a lengthy illness that Catherine Mary Chisholm passed away in her hundredth year. She was laid to rest alongside her husband in the family plot in the Edmonton Catholic Cemetery. It will be remembered that Catherine Mary was the oldest living McRae at the time of their reunion in July of 1968 and was honored on that occasion with many floral tributes from relatives and friends.

Mary Anne, born 27 December 1872, married Malcolm MacIntyre, 18 January 1893 in Edmonton, Alberta. Malcom's mother was Nancy Humphry and his father John. Their children were: Ethel, born in 1894, died July 1906; May, infant girl died at birth in 1895; twin boys, John and Malcolm, born in 1896, died at birth; Jessie Helen, born 20 January

1906; Mary Flora Jean, born 13 October 1907. All were born in Edmonton, Alberta except Jean who was born in Glasgow, Scotland while her father was an agent of the Canadian Government there.

6. Anne (Nana), born 2 October 1875, married George Thomson in Edmonton 18 July, 1894. George's father was John and his mother Elizabeth McLean. Their seven children, all born in Edmonton were: Hannah Lorretta, born 18 January 1896, died 22 June, 1960 in Los Angeles, California, John Harold born 9 January 1898, died 27 October 1964; Donald Walter born 18 January 1906; George Wilbert, born 7 August 1909; Norma Lillian born 4 June, 1911; Osler McRae (Pat), born 17 October, 1913, died 29 August 1945 in Ottawa, Ontario; and Elizabeth Shirley, born 9 July, 1921.

Annie McRae Thomson records in her diary in 1951 that she came to Edmonton with her father and mother in April 1892. John Joseph had been sent west by a doctor in Glengarry as a cure for T.B. He died in October of the same year. There had been 16 children of the union but five had died in infancy. There was no house available for this large a family when they arrived and they were temporarily housed in the Strathcona Hotel until a place of more permanent accommodation could be found. A new schoolhouse was built during the summer and the vacated schoolhouse was then taken over by the McRae family.

While the family was at the hotel, Annie recalls that their father, a very strict man with his daughters, forbade them to leave their rooms without his considered consent. This situation soon became intolerable to them and they approached him and begged him to let them go into the

lobby for a short while each day. He finally agreed to let them sit there for one hour each day between one and two o'clock when the men were having lunch or dinner. They were, of course, all eyes at this time, and Annie records that one day she noticed two men in the lobby having a heated discussion and quarreling. She observed them very closely. The following day the town was astir over news of a murder down by the Low Level Bridge. The police inquired in the hotel to see if anyone had seen a man of the description of the murdered man. Annie piped up with the facts of the day before and the police wanted a full description of the other man involved and also wanted Annie to go to identify the murdered man. Her father was horrified at the thought and angrily refused to let one of his daughters become so involved. In all probability, he felt it might in some way reflect on her reputation. The police persuaded him to let her look at the remains which she immediately recognized as one of the two men of the altercation the day before. The description of the other man was then obtained and a search located him in a railway work crew between Edmonton and Calgary. When he resisted arrest, he was shot. This meant that another identification had to be made. This time it would mean Annie would have to go to Red Deer. Her father raged and refused but the police promised a chaperone and so he finally reluctantly agreed. At the inquest in Red Deer, Annie's husband-to-be, George Thomson served on the jury and took such a liking to the witness that a romance followed. They were married in 1894.

Annie also recalled that on their first trip to the north side they tried to find Jasper Avenue and unable to find anything that looked like

a main street inquired and were told that they had passed through it to get to the house where they were making the inquiry. What a contrast to the broad, thriving Jasper Avenue of today!

A fire destroyed George Thomson's drugstore in Strathcona when the family consisted of Harry and Reta and their parents. All their belongings were lost and although aid was forthcoming from many friends there was a definite shortage of clothing. Dr. Wilbert McIntyre who was well over six feet donated a suit of clothes to George who was five feet two. Annie often laughed at the attempts to arrange the suit to a respectable appearance. Wilbert Thomson recounts that he was born two weeks after Dr. Wilbert McIntyre's untimely death and was named in his honor. It was not until he required his birth certificate in early manhood that it was discovered his registered name was 'Wilbur'. However, he prefers and uses the name Wilbert because he always felt honored to be named after such an illustrious uncle and pioneer of the early days in Strathcona. George rebuilt his drugstore and continued as a pharmacist for many years. Later he was the postmaster for Strathcona and finally before retirement was night supervisor in the Edmonton Post Office. No doubt a change of political parties in the government accounted for his change of position. George died December 23, 1946 and Annie July 14, 1958. Annie became a protestant on her marriage to George and to this day the Thomsons remain one of the four non-catholic branches of the McRaw clan. Mr. & Mrs. George Thomson held an "At Home" in the afternoon and evening of July 18, 1944 to celebrate their Golden Wedding, an account of which is listed in the appendix.

MS-168

Thomson, McRae Family fonds

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