

William Ross Sr. (1825-1856)

William Ross was the second son of Alexander and Sarah Ross. He was born in the Columbia River area. When his father retired from the fur trade and he brought his wife and their children from British Columbia to Red River just after the amalgamation of the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company. William married Jemima McKenzie the daughter of the well-known fur trader, Roderick McKenzie.

William was appointed Sheriff of Assiniboia in 1851 (after his father resigned from the post) and was appointed Post Master for Red River in 1855 by the Council of Assiniboia. He operated the postal service from his house near the Red River at the foot of Market Avenue. This house was built in 1851-52 by his sister Margaret's husband, Hugh Matteson. It was located near the river on the eastern part of the original Ross estate. Upon arrival at Red River, Alexander Ross was granted 100 acres by the HBC in recognition of his service and success in the Snake country. This grant was located on the bank of the Red River with a frontage between William Avenue on the south and Logan Avenue on the north. It then ran back for two miles from the Red River to the vicinity of the present day Sherbrook Street. William died on 6 May 1856. His wife was left with four children and another baby on the way. In 1860, Jemima married William Coldwell, an Irish immigrant. Coldwell had apprenticed in Dublin as a copy setter and proofreader for a newspaper and came to work for the *Globe* in Toronto. In Red River, he joined with William Buckingham to publish Red River's first paper *The Nor'Wester*.

In 1949, the Manitoba Historical Society along with the City of Winnipeg took possession of the historic Ross House building and moved it to Higgins Avenue, across from the CPR Station. In 1984, it was moved to Joe Zuken Heritage Park on Meade Street.

William Jr. donated the land in Winnipeg for city's hall during the 1870s. The donation was conditional upon city hall not being moved. Other portions of the Ross estate were expropriated for Market Square and the Winnipeg Transfer Railway. (Written with contributions from the late Glenn Lawrence, a Ross descendant.).



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