

Edith Florence (née McTavish) Rogers. (1876-1947)

Edith Florence McTavish was the first woman of Métis ancestry elected to the Manitoba Legislature. In fact she was the first woman, after women got the vote in Manitoba in 1917, to be elected to the Manitoba government. She is not usually identified as being Métis. Similarly her grandfather William Christie although he identified as a Métis, is usually identified as Scottish rather than Métis.¹

Edith Florence McTavish was born at Norway House, Manitoba on 26 April 1876, the daughter of Lydia Catherine Christie (Métis) and Donald C. McTavish (Métis), Chief Factor of the Hudson's Bay Company.² Edith's mother Lydia Christie was the daughter of William Christie (Métis) and Mary Sinclair (Métis).³

She married Robert Arthur Rogers and they had four children: Margaret McTavish Rogers⁴ who married Gordon Konantz, Jean Rogers (b 1901, who married Arthur Lawson), Enid Rogers (b 1903), and John A. Rogers who married Mauriel Bremner.

Edith Rogers was the first woman to be elected to the Manitoba legislature (1920), representing Winnipeg. She served in the Legislature until 1932. In 1921, she introduced the legislation that incorporated the Winnipeg Foundation and was an active advocate of the *Child Welfare Act*.

¹ As shown in the Métis scrip application for his son:
Scrip affidavit for Christie, John George; born: 27 June, 1857; father: Hon. William Joseph Christie, Scot; mother: Mary Sinclair (English Halfbreed).

² Donald was the son of Maria Simpson, born 1826, who was the Métis daughter of Betsy Sinclair and George Simpson. She married first to Donald Campbell then to Donald McTavish the son of Simon McTavish.

³ William Joseph Christie, born 1824, was the Métis son of Alexander Christie Sr. and Ann Thomas the Métis daughter of HBC officer Thomas Thomas (Sr.). William Joseph was educated at Marischal College, University of Aberdeen, Scotland and graduated in 1838. On his return to Rupert's Land, he entered the service of the HBC. Christie was a Métis who spoke French and English and Cree. In 1862, Father Émile Petitot met Christie at Portage la Loche. He quotes William Joseph Christie then the Chief Factor at Fort Edmonton as saying in perfect French "I am myself a Métis. By George! We are almost all Métis in the Company. Among the chief factors there is not a single Englishman, and maybe not ten Scots with pure blood" (Translation).

He was first posted to Lake Superior, then Rocky Mountain House, York Factory, and in 1848 he was placed in charge of Fort Churchill. He married Mary Sinclair, the Métis daughter of William Sinclair II and Mary McKay Sinclair in 1849 at York Factory.

⁴ Margaret McTavish Konantz was the Liberal Member of Parliament for Winnipeg South from 1963 to 1965. In 1965, she was elected national chairman of UNICEF.

She ran as a Liberal, she was re-elected in 1922 and 1927. During the First World War, she was very involved in volunteer work, and was particularly active in social-welfare work. She served as the only woman on the Winnipeg General Hospital Board, and was secretary of the Central Council of the Battalion Auxiliaries. She moved to Ontario in 1942 and died at Colborne on 19 April 1947.

Edith's maternal great-grandfather, Alexander Christie, served as the Governor of Assiniboia on two occasions, and supervised the construction of Fort Garry. His son, William Joseph Christie, also worked for the HBC in Manitoba from 1843 to 1873, and was named Inspecting Chief Factor in 1868. Edith Rogers herself was born at Norway House, but at the age of two moved with her family to Rupert house on James Bay.

She was educated in Montreal after which she moved to Winnipeg. In 1898, she married businessman Robert Arthur Rogers. She was prominent as a philanthropist in the 1910s, and particularly after the outbreak of World War I when she worked for the Patriotic Fund, which distributed money to the families of soldiers fighting overseas, and became known for devoting several hours to personal consultations with family members. She also worked with the Salvation Army, the Canadian Red Cross, the Land Settlement Board and other groups.

Her husband died in 1929, and she did not seek re-election in 1932. She resumed her philanthropic career in World War II, serving as chair of the Provincial War Council of the Red Cross. She retired in 1942, and died in Colborne, Ontario five years later.



Edited and Compiled by Lawrence Barkwell
Coordinator of Métis Heritage and History Research
Louis Riel Institute