

James L. Ross

As Ross Memorial Hospital prepares to undergo construction to expand its facilities and services, it seems fitting that tribute be paid to its founder, James L. Ross.

James Ross was born in Cromarty, Scotland in 1848, to parents Captain John and Mary Ross. In 1868, Ross came to North America, and held a number of influential positions in the construction of a number of North American railways.

Ross settled in the United States and held the positions of Resident Engineer and Chief Engineer for the U.S.A. railways until 1873. When Ross came to Canada, he settled in Lindsay, Ontario with his wife, Annie and their son, John K.L. Ross. James Ross attained the titles of Chief Engineer and General Manager of the Victoria Railway, which later became known as the Haliburton branch of the Canadian National Railway.

In the late 1800s, Ross' parents also moved to Canada and settled in Lindsay.

The thriving railway enterprise led to many other opportunities for Ross, who was already well-respected within the industry. Ross directed the development of the Credit Valley Railway, and later became the General Manager. His career began to build and his work eventually drew him away from Lindsay, however, family ties were strong for Ross and he would later return to contribute to his community.

Ross later became the consulting engineer of the Ontario and Quebec railways and in 1883, directed the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway in Ontario and west of Winnipeg, Manitoba. In 1885, Ross assisted with the Canadian Pacific line over the Rocky Mountains, Selkirks and Gold Range. He can be seen in the famous photograph of "The Last Spike."

Aside from his business success, Ross' interests included yachting and collecting masterpieces. As such, he was the Commander of the St. Lawrence Yacht Club and later, helped to create the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

In the early 1900s, James Ross' attention was turned to his former hometown of Lindsay. At this time, legend has it that Judge G.H. Hopkins, who had a law practice in the small town, came upon a man lying ill on the sidewalk of William Street South one evening. Hopkins arranged for a room for the sick man in Mauder House Hotel and saw that the man received proper medical attention. Eventually, the news got around to Mrs. Grace, Ross' sister, who shared the story with her brother.

James Ross, in consultation with the town council, decided that he would fund the entire cost of establishing a community hospital, in memory of his parents. His condition: that the County maintain the facility as it would not only be a memorial to his parents, but also a gift to the community he had once called home.

On November 20, 1902, Ross Memorial Hospital officially opened. It was one of the finest and best-equipped hospitals in Canada. Leading medical personalities and hospital experts attended the opening ceremony. Some travelled great distances by train, on the tracks that were built by the very man who donated the \$80,000 hospital that they were en route to celebrate. The day was deemed "a red letter day in the history of the County of Victoria."

"The spirit which dedicated this building as a memorial of the past, and a blessing for the future, will outlive even its solid walls," County of Victoria Warden John Austin in an address at the 1902 opening of Ross Memorial Hospital.

Even upon his death in 1913, Ross remembered Ross Memorial in his will, leaving a legacy of \$25,000 to the Hospital.

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Page 1 of 1 - Print date: 6 September 2010

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