

The Purse of Fortunatus

European mythology recounts the tale of Fortunatus, a young man favored by Fortune with an inexhaustible supply of money, and by the Sultan with a wishing cap which could transport him to any desired destination. In the end these proved his ruin.

It is possible that in September 1899, Reg. No. 41 ex-S/Sgt. John A. Martin felt that he too had been touched by the benevolent hand of Fortune. For then he was notified that an order in council had been passed awarding him, for his 25 years service in the NWMP, a pension for life from Nov. 3, 1898. Today, with various forms of social security, superannuation and pensions, such an event is not news. This is particularly so in the Force, for almost every issue of General Orders contains the name of some former associate who is retiring to pension.

But in the case of the late Staff Sergeant Martin, the occurrence was of more than passing significance. It was, and still is, of historical importance. He was the first man in the Force to be awarded a pension for long service. The solidity of the whole modern RCMP pension plan was, to a great extent perhaps, fostered on the successful submission of his application to Council.

For other reasons Mr. Martin deserves more than the casual interest of members of the Force, particularly old-timers. He was one of the originals. While officially his service dates from Nov. 3, 1873 to Nov. 2, 1898, he claimed to have engaged at Toronto, Oct. 7, 1873, and an early Seniority Roll lists him from October 9. Records show that he spent the winter of 1873-74 at Lower Fort Garry. Then too he was one of those who enlisted from the militia, being a former member of "A" Battery, Kingston, Ont.

But perhaps the most interesting fact of all is that it appears Martin actually served in the Force under an assumed name. An obituary notice in the *Charlottetown Patriot*, Oct. 17, 1933, records his death as Malcolm Martin MacIntosh, and that name was confirmed later by relatives.

In at least one respect, Staff Sergeant Martin (or MacIntosh) differed from the ill-fated Fortunatus. His good fortune did not prove his ruin. He lived to the ripe old age of 88, and enjoyed his pension for 35 years. ● ● ●

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