

RCMP DEPUTY COMMISSIONER

James Wilson Spalding (1878-1961)

James Wilson Spalding, born in Bathurst Township on February 27, 1878, the son of Francis Spalding (1831-1906) and Margaret Wier (1835-1929)¹, joined the North West Mounted Police (NWMP) at Regina, Northwest Territories (Saskatchewan) on April 23, 1900.



Sgt. Major James W. Spalding 1907

He first served with 'F' Division (Divisional HQ, Saskatchewan), and then, from 1905 to 1907, was assigned to the Peace-Yukon Trail Project. In 1897 and again in 1905-1907, small groups of Northwest Mounted Police (NWMP), guided by local First Nation people, undertook the task of finding and constructing a wagon trail, over 1,200 kilometers, through some of the most difficult terrain in Canada, from Fort St. John, in what is now the Peace River District of British Columbia, to Teslin Lake in the Yukon gold-fields. The objectives of the trail were two-fold; to connect the Yukon Territory with other parts of Canada, and thus secure an all-Canadian Route to the Yukon, and to open an unknown and only partially explored portion of Northern British Columbia.

During his service on the trail project Spalding was promoted Corporal on April 1, 1903, Sergeant on January 1, 1905, and Sergeant Major on May 1, 1907.

Spalding returned to 'F' Division in 1908 and was promoted to the commissioned ranks as an Inspector on April 1, 1912. In 1920 the NWMP was renamed the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). While continuing to serve with F-Division he was promoted to the rank of Superintendent on October 15, 1929 and then to Assistant Commissioner on June 15, 1931.

On November 15, 1932, he became Acting Deputy Commissioner of the force and, having been transferred to Ottawa, was confirmed as Deputy Commissioner on May 15, 1933.

James Spalding married Maude Marie Spurr (1873-1961) on August 8, 1908 at Petrolia, Lambton County, Ontario. They had one son, Frank Spurr Spalding (1910-1993), who also joined the RCMP, serving from 1936 to 1968 and achieving the rank of Assistant Commissioner. Their grandson Frank Spalding Jr. also served briefly with the RCMP before resigning to join the Vancouver Police Force where he became Chief of Detectives.

Spalding retired from the RCMP on April 23, 1937 and died at White Rock, British Columbia, on July 4, 1961, aged 83 years.

- Ron W. Shaw (2019)

¹ His siblings were: Elspeth Rutherford (1859-1937), Mary (b.1861), William Weir (1862-1928), John F. (1863-1936), Marion Jane (1865-1937) and David (1867-1944). His paternal uncle, James Spalding Sr. (1826-1906), and 1st cousin, James Spalding Jr. (1855-1935), were the proprietors of the Spalding Brewery and later Spalding & Stewart Distillery at Perth.