

Fraser's of New Glasgow

By Susan Parker

Throughout most of the nineteenth and twentieth century, New Glasgow's Fraser family weaved their way into the landscape of the town and the county. Their roots in Pictou County started in 1782, when James Fraser led a group of Loyalists to the East River, having heard that a sizeable Gaelic-speaking population lived in the area.

James' grandson, Duncan Cameron (D.C.) Fraser, started his career as a school teacher in Marsh, before graduating from Dalhousie and becoming a lawyer. Returning to New Glasgow, D.C. became heavily involved with politics. He served as town clerk, councillor for Ward 3, and as New Glasgow Mayor.

Following his success in municipal politics, he became a member of the Legislative Council of Nova Scotia as a minister without portfolio in the late 1880s, before moving into federal politics. As the Member of Parliament (M.P.) for Guysborough County, he quickly gained a reputation as a talkative, charismatic politician. Wilfrid Laurier brought D.C. along for his tours in Western Canada, using his charm to please voters. Following D.C.'s time as a M.P., he was appointed to the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia before becoming the Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia in 1906.

D.C. married Bessie Grant Graham in 1878. They had seven children, including Margaret Marjory and Alistair. When WWI broke out, the siblings enlisted immediately. Margaret Marjory worked at the King's Red Cross Convalescent Hospital before serving as a Matron at the No. 2 Canadian Stationary Hospital. Although Alistair enlisted at the same time, he did not join the troops in France until 1916. During the Battle of Vimy Ridge, he suffered two injuries while advancing his company. Reportedly, while he recovered in England, he snuck over the hospital in France to visit Margaret Marjory.

Near the end of the war, Alistair became an aide-de-camp to Sir Arthur Currie while Margaret Marjory moved to the *Llandovery Castle*, a hospital ship. On a return trip to England, a German U-boat torpedoed the ship off the coast of Ireland. While she managed to escape, her lifeboat caught in whirlpool caused by the sinking ship.

After the war, Alistair joined the Canadian National Railway as a general solicitor. Upon his retirement, he was appointed Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia, marking the first time honour was bestowed to both a father and a son. He served in this position for six years, during which he also sued the government for expropriating his land on Cape Porcupine. The case ended up at the Supreme Court of Canada in which they decided that the government was to pay Alistair a large sum. Although he died the next year, his family worked to establish scholarships in his name at Dalhousie University.