

**Margaret McTavish (née Rogers) Konantz.** (April 30, 1899-May 11, 1967)

Margaret was a politician, who represented the electoral district of Winnipeg South in the House of Commons from 1963 to 1965. She was the first woman of elected to the House of Commons from Manitoba. Margaret was of Métis ancestry, the granddaughter of Lydia Catherine Christie (Métis) and Donald C. McTavish (Métis) Chief Factor of the Hudson's Bay Company at Norway House, and the great-granddaughter of Sir George Simpson, Governor-in-Chief of the Hudson's Bay Company and his wife Betsy Sinclair (Métis).

Margaret was born in Winnipeg on April 30, 1899, the daughter of Robert Arthur Rogers<sup>1</sup>, a businessman, and Edith McTavish Rogers, the first woman ever elected to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba<sup>2</sup>. She was educated at the Winnipeg Model School, Bishop Strachan School (Toronto) and Miss Spence's School (New York). She married American businessman Gordon Konantz in 1922.

During World War II, Margaret Konantz was an active volunteer for the Patriotic Salvage Corps, Bundles for Britain and the Women's Volunteer Services. In 1944, she was one of four women sent to Great Britain by the Canadian government to work with the Women's Voluntary Service. She was awarded the Order of the British Empire posthumously for her volunteer work in the war effort. Following the death of her husband in 1954, she volunteered for UNICEF and travelled extensively around the world on behalf of the organization.

She originally stood as the Liberal candidate for Winnipeg South in the 1962, but was defeated by Progressive Conservative incumbent Gordon Chown. When the minority government of John Diefenbaker fell the following year, Konantz defeated Chown in the 1963. In 1964, she was the only woman on a committee of 15 MPs selected by Prime Minister Lester Pearson to choose the new Canadian flag. She served as an MP until the 1965 election, when she was defeated by Progressive Conservative candidate Bud Sherman.

In 1963, she was a delegate to the United Nations Third Committee on Social, Economic and Humanitarian Problems. Following her electoral defeat in 1965, she became national chair for UNICEF Canada. She undertook several further international tours until her death in 1967.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Rogers was managing head of the Crescent Creamery Company, which he organized in 1915. R.W. Rogers was prominently identified with the development of Western Canada. Born in Franklin Centre, QC in 1862, he entered the Exchange Bank of Canada at Parkhill ON at the age of 16, and in 1882, formed a partnership with his brother, T.L. Rogers, under the firm name of the Parkhill Banking Company. Coming to Winnipeg in 1890, Mr. Rogers first started business as a wholesale dealer in fruits and provisions, later organizing the Crescent Creamery Company.

<sup>2</sup> Edith Rogers was an ardent and successful advocate of the passage of the *Child Welfare Act*, and its concomitant Mothers' Allowance Schedule, intended to alleviate child poverty and passed in 1922. A supporter of bills on issues of particular interest to women such as public health nursing, she also supported legislation to give widows increased power over their late husbands' estates (dower rights), and to incorporate the Winnipeg Foundation, a charitable funding organization.

References:

Obituary: *The Globe and Mail*, Friday, May 12, 1967.

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