

## Mary Drever Macleod

It took so long for James Macleod to court the headstrong Mary Drever that her patience was surprising. She could have sent him packing.

They met at Lower Fort Garry (near present day Winnipeg, Manitoba) in the winter of 1870-71. Macleod was impressed by Mary's reputation. She had fearlessly negotiated with Louis Riel during the Red River Rebellion and prevented the rebels from injuring her family.

Although Macleod asked her to marry him, he was ordered back to Toronto, delaying the wedding. When he returned to Red River with the North-West Mounted Police, Mary became his confidante, a witness to historic moments.

Together they had five children. Thrifty and good with a needle, Mary still had to patch and scrimp. Required to meet the Governor General and his wife, she hid the holes in her dress by covering them with shoe blacking. After Macleod's sudden death, Mary supported her family by sewing.

Without a pension or a penny, Mary still managed to intimidate all who knew her, perhaps because she smoked cigarettes and kept a gun at her sewing table.

### **“My darling Mary”**

Between 1874 and his death in 1894, James Macleod wrote Mary more than 200 letters.

Their passionate relationship transcended distance and separation.



Mrs. James F. (Mary) Macleod  
Glenbow Archives NA-684-2

A letter written by Macleod on July 29, 1878, shows the depth of their affection even though they spent considerable time apart.

“How good you have been in writing to your poor old hub. When I arrived here I found a letter from you which I added to my other treasures. What was my delight to receive another one from you last Friday ten days after I had got here. It was put into the “M” person hole in the post office and overlooked till Norman found it accidentally. What a sweet, delicious letter it is. I carry it about with me everywhere and read it any way every night before I go to sleep.”

## **An Influence for Good**

Mary Macleod’s first home as a newlywed was the officers’ mess at the North-West Mounted Police (NWMP) barracks in Fort Macleod. Undaunted, Mary renovated the quarters and quickly assumed her role as wife of the NWMP Commissioner.

The Macleods became known as gracious and lavish hosts who defined social life for the small community. But Mary’s presence did more than add social graces. Her husband, James, believed it kept the men at the Fort in line. “Indeed I think that your presence at the Fort has an influence for good as it is.”

Full Name: Mary Isabella Drever Macleod  
Born: October 11, 1852 – Died: April 15, 1933

## **Additional Resources**

- **The Canadian Encyclopedia**  
<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/mary-isabella-macleod>

## **Our Collections**

### **Glenbow Museum**

<https://www.glenbow.org>

### **Glenbow Western Research Centre | Glenbow Library and Archives**

<https://libguides.ucalgary.ca/glenbowlibraryandarchives>

### **Glenbow Library and Archives | Digital Collection**

<https://digitalcollections.ucalgary.ca/asset-management/2R340826N9XM?WS=PackagePres&Flat=1>