

James Henry May: Chestermere Ditchrider (1938)

James H. May was born 22 March 1886 in Butte, Montana.¹ His parents were natives of Cornwall, England and had immigrated to the United States in 1885 shortly after their marriage.² The May family returned to Cornwall and three more sons were born there between late 1887 and mid-1894.³ By June 1900 they had returned to Butte where James was employed as an office boy and his father was working as a copper miner.⁴ Later that year they moved again, this time to Rossland, BC where the 1901 census listed James as a teamster and his father as a gold miner.⁵ The May's only daughter was born there in 1902.⁶ The family came to Alberta about 1904, settled west of Didsbury and took up farming.⁷

In June 1905, James obtained entry to a homestead located on the SE ¼ 30-30-4 W5M in the Big Prairie district about 4½ miles northwest of Cremona.⁸ He lived with his parents until he built a 12' x 18' log house and took up residence on the homestead in September 1907. James received title to the property in January 1909.^{9 10}

James married Beatrice Hogg on 16 July 1910 in Calgary.¹¹ Beatrice was born 9 July 1893 in Lancaster, England and came to Calgary with her family in July 1909.^{12 13} Her father had been a career military man before emigrating and he returned to service in World War I.¹⁴ James and Beatrice settled on the farm and their first child, James Ernest "Jim", was born in May 1911.¹⁵ Daughters Beatrice Ivy "Dolly" and Gertrude Alice followed in 1913 and November 1916, respectively.^{16 17} Active in local affairs, James was secretary of the local school board for a number of years and a member of the Didsbury Masonic Lodge.^{18 19 20}

In 1922, the Mays moved to Calgary where James secured a job as foreman of a C.P.R. irrigation crew. This led to him becoming a ditchrider and the family relocated to the Irricana headquarters about five miles northwest of town.²¹ The published local history for the area mentions that James patrolled the ditches with a horse and cart, circa 1925.²² He involved himself in community organizations, again serving as school board secretary.²³ He was a member of the Irricana Masonic Lodge and served as Master in 1930.²⁴ The Mays were apparently transferred to the Hervey Headquarters northwest of Strathmore in 1934 to fill the vacancy left when John S. McKay was moved to Chestermere.²⁵ While in the area, James was a member of the Strathmore A.F. & A.M. Lodge.²⁶ After a four-year tenure at Hervey, James again followed in McKay's footsteps as he was sent to Chestermere in the spring of 1938.²⁷

Son Jim had married in 1935 and daughter Dolly in 1937. Younger daughter Alice was married in the summer of 1938. The wedding ceremony took place on July 16th in Strathmore but the reception for 50 guests was held at the May residence at Chestermere Headquarters.^{28 29} As the house was quite small it is likely that the lovely garden would have been utilized for the celebration as well.

A little more than three months after this joyful occasion, James May died in Calgary on 27 October 1938. He had experienced poor health periodically over the previous several months and was taken to hospital less than a week before his death. The funeral was held on October 29th followed by burial in Burnsland Cemetery.^{30 31} In early 1940, his widow Beatrice started keeping house for Harry Miner of Strathmore. While living there she was active in Eastern Star and the United Church. Several years after Mr. Miner's death, Beatrice moved to Vancouver Island to live with her daughter Dolly.³² She died in Victoria on 19 June 1973.³³

MAY—MAY

Strathmore United Church was the scene of a pretty wedding on Saturday, July 16, when Gertrude Alice, younger daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J. H. May of Chestermere Lake, was united in marriage to Mr. Theodore May, only son of Mr. and Mrs. De Lisle May of Calgary. Rev. V. M. Gilbert officiated before an altar banked with larkspur and peonies.

The wedding music was played by Mr. De Lisle May, father of the bridegroom.

Given in marriage by her father, the bride looked charming in a gown of white silk net and satin, made in redingote style, which flared from the hips into a long train. She wore her mother's veil, which was held in place by a coronet of orange blossom and pearls. She carried cala lilies.

Mrs. T. Reilly, sister of the bride, and Miss Shirley May, sister of the bridegroom, were the attendants. They wore similarly fashioned gowns, the former in pale mauve georgette over taffeta, the latter in pale pink lace over taffeta. They wore white Juliet caps of net and pearls and carried yellow and pink bouquets of gladioli respectively.

Mr. T. Kirkby was the groomsman and the ushers were Mr. T. Reilly and Mr. R. Flummerfelt.

Following the ceremony, a reception was held at the home of the bride's parents at which 50 guests were present.

Later in the afternoon, Mr. and Mrs. Theodore May left for the mountains. The bride chose for traveling a coral boucle suit with hat to match and white accessories.

On their return, Mr. and Mrs. T. May will reside in Strathmore and will be at home to their friends after August 1.

Calgary Daily Herald, July 19, 1938, p13

J. H. May, C.P.R. Official, Passes

James Henry May, aged 52, of Strathmore, died in a local hospital early this morning after a brief illness. A native of Butte, Montana, he had served for the past 15 years with the irrigation department, department of natural resources, C.P.R., at Irricana, Strathmore and latterly at Chestermere Lake. Previous to 1923, Mr. May was a farmer at Big Prairie, Alberta. He was a member of the A.F. & A.M., Strathmore lodge.

Surviving are his wife, Beatrice; two daughters, Mrs. T. Riley and Mrs. Theodore May, both of Strathmore; one son, James E. of Cluny, Alberta; one sister, Mrs. F. Robillard of Calgary; three brothers, Jack, of Medicine Hat; Matthew of Strathmore; Archie in California.

Rev. V. M. Gilbert will conduct services at Jacques' funeral home on Saturday at 2 p.m. Interment will be in Burnsland cemetery.

Calgary Daily Herald, October 27, 1938, p2

Death of James H. May

In the passing of James H. May Strathmore Community has lost one of its most respected citizens and the local lodge A.F. & A.M. one of its most enthusiastic members.

Mr May has not been in good health for sometime and during the summer and fall was confined to his bed on several occasions. About two weeks ago he became very ill, and last Friday was taken to the General Hospital where he passed away early on Thursday morning.

He was born on March 22, 1886 in Cornwall, England of English parents. Early in life he came to the United States where he became a citizen. Later he moved to Canada, first to B. C. then to Alberta. In 1910 he married Miss Beatrice Hogg.

After farming near Didsbury he entered the employ of the C. P. R. being employed as Ditchrider.

Mr May was a strong character man. He was made a Mason in Didsbury Lodge and was a Charter member of Irricana where he later became Master and had the honor of conferring the Degrees on his son James. He affiliated with the local lodge in which he took an active part.

He is survived by his wife, one sister, Mrs Robillard of Calgary, three brothers Matthew of Strathmore, John of Medicine Hat and Archibald of Los Angeles, one son James of Cluny, and two daughters, Mrs T. O. Riley and Mrs T. May, both of Strathmore.

The funeral services will be held in Jacques Little Chapel on the Corner, Saturday afternoon at 2 p.m. Rev V. M. Gilbert officiating.

Strathmore Standard, October 27, 1938, p1

¹ Border Crossings from Canada to U.S., 1895-1960 [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010. citing The National Archives at Washington, D.C.; Washington, D.C.; *Manifests of Alien Arrivals at Sweet Grass, Montana, August 1917-June 1954*; Record Group Title: Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1787 - 2004, RG 85, Series A3440, Roll 011.

² 1900 United States Census, [database with images], FamilySearch (<https://familysearch.org>), citing United States of America, Bureau of the Census. *Twelfth Census of the United States*, Butte Ward 7, Silver Bow, Montana, Enumeration District 0123, page 8, FHL microfilm 1240915, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HT-D5GQ-9LJ?cc=1325221&wc=9BQ2-PYZ%3A1031108501%2C1031967301%2C1032088901>

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ 1901 Census of Canada, Statistics Canada, RG31, T-6430, British Columbia, Yale and Cariboo, Rossland Riding, division 2, page 13, family 175, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, Ontario. <http://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.item/?app=Census1901&op=&img&id=z000013117>

⁶ 1911 Census of Canada, Statistics Canada, RG31, T-20330, Alberta, Red Deer, Subdistrict 119, page 1, family 7, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, Ontario. <https://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.item/?app=Census1911&op=&img&id=e001932171>

⁷ 1906 Census of the Northwest Provinces, Statistics Canada, RG31-C-1, T-18361, Alberta, Calgary, Subdistrict 14, page 18, family 226, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, Ontario. <http://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.item/?app=Census1906&op=&img&id=e001212164>

⁸ James Henry May entry, Alberta, Canada, Homestead Records, 1870-1930 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2016, citing *Alberta Homestead Records*, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ 1906 Census of the Northwest Provinces, Statistics Canada, RG31-C-1, T-18361, Alberta, Calgary, Subdistrict 14, page 18, family 226, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, Ontario. <http://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.item/?app=Census1906&op=&img&id=e001212164>

¹¹ "Weddings: May - Hogg," *Daily Herald*, Calgary, July 19, 1910, 4. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/481346364/>

¹² England Births and Christenings, 1538-1975, database, FamilySearch (<https://familysearch.org>), citing Parish Registers for Christ Church, Lancaster, Baptisms 1857-1900, Lancashire Record Office, Bow Lane, Preston, England. <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HY-DHH5-L6?cat=647664>

¹³ Passenger Lists, 1865 -1922, RG 76, Roll T-4762, Department of Employment and Immigration fonds, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, Ontario. <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/immigration/immigration-records/passenger-lists/passenger-lists-1865-1922/Pages/image.aspx?Image=e003558416&URLjpg=http%3a%2f%2fcentral.bac-lac.gc.ca%2f.item%2f%3fid%3de003558416%26op%3dimg%26app%3dpassengerlist&Ecopy=e003558416>

¹⁴ "Geo. Hogg Dies in City Saturday," *Daily Herald*, Calgary, July 25, 1927, 9. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/479768583/>

¹⁵ 1911 Census of Canada, Statistics Canada, RG31, Roll T-20326, Alberta, Calgary, subdistrict 14, page 4, family 45, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, Ontario. <http://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.item/?app=Census1911&op=&img&id=e011070068>

¹⁶ 1916 Census of the Prairie Provinces, Statistics Canada, R233-47-9-E, Roll T-21949, Alberta, district 35, subdistrict 10, page 3, family 20, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, Ontario. http://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.item/?app=Census1916&op=&img&id=31228_4363978-00750

¹⁷ Gertrude Alice May death registration index entry, British Columbia Death Registrations, 1872-1986, 1992-1993", database, FamilySearch (<https://familysearch.org>), citing Division of Vital Statistics, Victoria, British Columbia. <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QK6P-J8Z>

¹⁸ "Teachers Wanted," *Daily Herald*, Calgary, July 30, 1915, 2. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/478964997/>

¹⁹ "Teachers Wanted," *Daily Herald*, Calgary, June 24, 1921, 3. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/478991439/>

²⁰ "Death of James H. May," *Strathmore Standard*, October 27, 1938, 1. <http://peel.library.ualberta.ca/newspapers/SMS/1938/10/27/1/>

²¹ Alice May, "The May Family, James & Beatrice," in *Strathmore, The Village That Moved*, The Strathmore History Book Committee, 1986, 454-455.

²² "Western Section of the Bow Valley Irrigation Block," in *K.I.K. Country*, K.I.K. Historical Committee, 1974, 11.

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- ²³ "School Districts in Irricana Area Hold Annual Gatherings," *Daily Herald*, Calgary, January 12, 1931, 15.
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/479161035/>
- ²⁴ "Irricana Masonic Lodge #137," in *K.I.K. Country*, K.I.K. Historical Committee, 1974, 621-622.
- ²⁵ Alice May, "The May Family, James & Beatrice," in *Strathmore, The Village That Moved*, The Strathmore History Book Committee, 1986, 454-455.
- ²⁶ "J.H. May, C.P.R. Official, Passes," *Daily Herald*, Calgary, October 27, 1938, 2.
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/481574137/>
- ²⁷ "Hervey Notes," *Strathmore Standard*, March 31, 1938, 2.
<http://peel.library.ualberta.ca/newspapers/SMS/1938/03/31/2/>
- ²⁸ "Weddings: May - May," *Strathmore Standard*, July 21, 1938, 1.
<http://peel.library.ualberta.ca/newspapers/SMS/1938/07/21/1/>
- ²⁹ "July Rivals June for Weddings: May - May," *Daily Herald*, Calgary, July 19, 1938, 13.
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/481375472/>
- ³⁰ "Death of James H. May," *Strathmore Standard*, October 27, 1938, 1.
<http://peel.library.ualberta.ca/newspapers/SMS/1938/10/27/1/>
- ³¹ "J.H. May, C.P.R. Official, Passes," *Daily Herald*, Calgary, October 27, 1938, 2.
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/481574137/>
- ³² Alice May, "The May Family, James & Beatrice," in *Strathmore, The Village That Moved*, The Strathmore History Book Committee, 1986, 454-455.
- ³³ Beatrice May death registration index entry, British Columbia Death Registrations, 1872-1986, 1992-1993", database, FamilySearch (<https://familysearch.org>), citing Division of Vital Statistics, Victoria, British Columbia.
<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:FLBJ-DR8>