

Ronald A. Meadowcroft

- Ronald A. Meadowcroft was born in Sheffield, Yorkshire, England, in 1904.
- He came to Canada with his family in 1912 as a boy of 8.
- They settled in Montreal and later moved to Athabasca, Alberta.
- Ronald began his career with the Imperial Bank of Canada in Athabasca, and later went from Rocky Mountain House, Alberta, to Dafoe, Saskatchewan, to Winnipeg, Manitoba and Sioux Lookout, Ontario.
- He was on the school board in Sioux Lookout.
- Red Lake's first permanent bank was opened by Meadowcroft and two male staff members in the early to mid-1930s. There is a picture of him and a colleague standing outside the Imperial Bank in 1934 presumably around the time it opened.
- The building, however, was a jarring disappointment. The old log cabin was dilapidated, the roof leaked, and the renovations barely covered various deficiencies.
- The bank was located approximately between where the Ontario Provincial Police detachment and Treasure House Gifts stand today on Howey Street.
- Managing a bank in a remote gold mining community brought Ronald into contact with virtually everyone in the area.
- He was a font of amusing stories of banking on the frontier, and recalled his most memorable loan applicants:

A Hungarian couple came in one day all dressed up and carrying a very young baby. Language was a bit of a problem at first but we got to be able to understand each other.

It turned out he was working, but they needed \$100 for some particular reason. I soon ran into a snag when I asked for security.

The couple went into a corner and talked the matter over. After a while they came back and placed their baby on my desk. This was to be my surety.

After getting over my surprise and thinking how I would handle it, I told them that I would give them the loan on the understanding that, as I had no means of looking after the baby, they would have to look after the baby for me and bring it back every two weeks so that I could be sure they were taking good care of the baby for me. Needless to say, I had no trouble with that loan.

- Ronald supplemented his income as an Imperial Life Insurance agent, and set diamond drill bits for diamond drillers who obtained their diamonds through the bank.
- He was also a spare projectionist in the Cabin Theatre in Red Lake.
- In 1937, he married Helen Grace Marcelle, a Sioux Lookout registered nurse. They returned to live in Red Lake together and were active in the social life of the community.
- Mud factored into socializing, as Ronald noted, "I remember going to dances in the schoolhouse, especially after or during a rain storm, sloshing through the mud, losing your shoe or sometimes both of them and the mess when you slipped and landed on your prat in the muddy road."
- They were newlyweds when Ronald lost his job with the bank for extending loans to locals without sufficient collateral. He felt unfairly treated, but had to accept his fate.
- His accountancy skills were soon put back to use when he obtained work as accountant at South Paulore Gold Mines owned by the St. Paul brothers, Jack and Euchere. The mine property was located directly north of Madsen Red Lake Gold Mines' pump house on Russett Lake, and they were sinking a shaft and drifting at the time.
- The Meadowcrofts spent a few months living in a tent, and were thrilled to eventually share a cabin with others on the property.
- In his spare time, Ronald enjoyed the bountiful fishing in the Red Lake area, as well as watching the fiercely competitive local sports. He also competed himself as a member of the first Red Lake Bowling League.

- South Paulore ceased operations at the outbreak of the Second World War in the fall of 1939, once again leaving Meadowcroft without a job.
- Fortunately, by 1940 the McMarmac Red Lake Gold Mines began production, and he was hired to work in the office.
- The Meadowcrofts moved into a mine house and life became more settled.
- Their first child, Ruth Ann, was born in 1940 at the McKenzie Island Hospital. They believed she was the first child born in the hospital.
- Ruth became a nurse like her mother.
- They also had a son, Ross, born a few years later, who became a metallurgical engineer.
- McMarmac Red Lake Gold Mines closed periodically during the Second World War. The financial instability forced the Meadowcrofts to move to Dryden.
- Ronald worked as a security guard for the Dryden Paper Company. Subsequent work included clerking in the Cochrane-Dunlop's hardware store in Hudson and their large warehouse in Thunder Bay.
- Prior to retirement in 1971, Meadowcroft was a long-time Ontario district retail sales tax administrator in Sudbury.
- He and Helen retired to Kelowna, British Columbia, where they enjoyed 20 years together, travelling and indulging in their love of opera.
- Ronald was a long-time member of the Masonic Lodge, and was lodge secretary in Thunder Bay for many years.
- Helen remained avidly interested in the nursing profession and was grateful to have lived to attend the 50th anniversary of her nursing graduation in 1985 in Thunder Bay.
- Ronald met old friends daily at a Kelowna cafe to visit and discuss news of the day.
- He attended as usual on March 1st, 1991, but soon collapsed and died from heart failure as his friends could only stand by helpless.
- Ron was in his 87th year at the time of his death. He and Helen had been married for almost 53 years.
- Helen spoke often of their Red Lake days. "Our life in Red Lake was so happy – even with the down parts – that we always looked back at it with a great deal of nostalgia," she reminisced.
- A short time after Ronald's death, Helen moved to Deep River, Ontario, to be near her son Ross and his family. She settled well into an apartment, bought a new car and new furniture.
- In October 1991, Ross discovered that his mother had died in her sleep.
- Helen and Ronald Meadowcroft, together for over a half century, were separated in death by only a few months.