At a later date they turned the much wanted Scottie over to the English at Winnipeg, Manitoba.

An English army report made in Manitoba in 1852 stated that a Justin Benedict McConnell died of pneumonia during the winter of 1851, in an army hospital while waiting trial on several counts of illegal possession of army stores. His age was listed as fifty-five.

The late Judge William Watts of Crookston, Minnesota had papers taken from Honest Scottie's Trading Post, on which were recorded the birth date of a Justin Benedict McConnell as being October 11, 1796. It appears that the McConnell who died in Canada and is our "hero," were one and the same.

The fate of Scottie's wife is not known. It is believed she lived at the Post for several months, but later she returned to Red Lake with a band of her own people. Some of the early settlers claimed that she returned to her family living near Bläckduck Lake.

The Post was abandoned, and was occupied by various tenants over a period of years that followed.

In the 1920's the property was occupied by the Moses Giller Hide and Metal Company and the old Post building was still standing at the back of the property. Giller used the old shack as a storage building for hides and metal.

During the 1940's this property was obtained by the city for the extension of Central Park. It was during this period that the old Post building was torn down and the land cleared for a road to connect Central Park to Riverside Avenue.

Just as Honest Scottie returned to the dust from which he came, so did one of Crookston's early establishments, and gone into dust of time is THE MC CASTLE TRADING POST, operated by HONEST SCOTTIE, whose real name appeared to be Justin Benedict McConnell**!

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**STAGE COACHES IN THE RED RIVER VALLEY**

by Albany Capistran

The first stage coach arrived at Fort Abercrombie in 1859 and carried the mail and passengers from St. Paul to the Fort.

The stage coach lines in Minnesota and North Dakota Territory were very well organized. They had a network of main lines that the company stages traveled and then a number of smaller and sometimes individual lines that connected up with almost all the small towns and settlements.

The stage coach and pony express had the government contracts for the United States Mail. Stamps and money orders could be purchased from almost any stage coach. The stage coaches would run out of stamps many times. One quotation from early Crookston history reads: "The stage coach came in but they are out of stamps."

The biggest lines in northwestern Minnesota and northeastern Dakota Territory were Burbank and Blakely and Company. Their lines and the lines that connected with them covered all of what we now call the Red River Valley and extended going north from Pembina to Fort Gary, now Winnipeg. The Burbank and Blakely Stage Coach Company had Concord coaches which were drawn by four horses. The stage coach weighed about 3,000 pounds and cost from $1,400 to $1,500. The coaches were made of seasoned oak and ash wood. Some of the coaches were made so that the wheels could be taken off and bobsled runners put on for use in winter. The coaches could carry from six to nine people inside and from five to nine could ride on top if there was no freight.

The stage coach main line went from St. Cloud to Breckenridge, to old Georgetown, and a trading post of the Hudson Bay Company at Frog Point (which is close to where Climax, Minnesota is today). Other main lines connected to go to the Grand Forks and points west to the fort and trading post where Walballa, North Dakota is today. Stage coaches ran out of Crookston going east and north for a number of years until trains, buses, and cars took over the business. There was a stage that ran out of Crookston seven days a week carrying mail and passengers going to Gentilly, via Louisville, to Red Lake Falls on the east side of the Red Lake River. This route was made every day, weather permitting.

There are many heroic tales about stage coach drivers and about some of the wonderful horses that were on the stages. One such account is of a stage coming south from Pembina to Grand Forks in the winter. That stage was about five miles out of Grand Forks when a terrible blizzard caught them. The wind was at their backs but visibility was zero. The driver could not see where to go so he let the horses go by themselves. The horses would stop and the driver would clear the frozen ice from the horses' eyes and nostrils. Then the horses would go on again. This was done four times and the horses, by natural instinct, took the stage to its destination and stopped right at the barn.

Stage stations and rest stops were about 15 miles apart. It would take about 15 minutes at a stop to change horses. Mosquitoes and gnats were usually bad on stage coach runs north from Grand Forks to Pembina. The horses had to have their eyes, ears, and noses greased so they would not stampede and run away because of the bugs. Many of the stations had to keep smudges of smoke going to keep mosquitoes out.

The price of a meal at a stage coach station was about 50¢ to $1 per person. The menu consisted of bacon or side pork, corn bread, beans, dried apples or peaches, coffee or black tea. Some stations served good meals and others not so good. The Turtle River Station was noted for beans — morning, noon, and night. Going north, stations served Rababoo which is lean buffalo pemmican or dried venison cut into strips and boiled with salt and flour in water. Other stations served boiled, dried catfish every meal. Indian women manned most of the stations going north and all of the stations from Pembina to Fort Gary. They served a lot of fresh dog meat and most people liked it until they found out what they were eating. Stage coach passengers slept on the floor and paid 50¢ per night. In other places they were jammed five to a room.

The stage's speed of travel was about six miles per hour on dry ground or good sledding. The fastest time recorded for any stage was ten miles in one hour with a selected driver and specially picked horses.

Stage fare was 10¢ per mile per person with 50 pounds of baggage free. It was a spectacular sight to see a stage driver on his throne seat speed into a town with his galloping horses and cracking his whip. Sometimes the stage had an armed guard who would ride alongside the driver and carry a double-barreled shot gun or rifle. There were usually no armed guards unless a sum of money or other valuables were being carried on the stage. There are very few accounts of stage coaches being robbed of their strong box or having a shoot-out with robbers in Minnesota or Dakota Territory.

In 1864 the stage coach lines had 1,300 miles of stage lines in Minnesota and North Dakota Territory. The stage lines also had 300 miles of Pony Mail Express in the same territory. Over 300 men and women were employed in the stage service and they used over 700 horses.