

History of the University Field Station (Delta Marsh): Donald H. Bain (1874-1962)

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Known as “Danny” to his friends, Donald Henderson Bain is best known as one of Manitoba’s most broadly talented amateur athletes. He is also remembered as an active Canadian business leader, a prominent figure in Winnipeg social circles, and an avid outdoorsman and sportsman.

Born in Belleville, Ontario on 14 February 1874 to Scottish immigrant parents, Bain moved with his family to Winnipeg, Manitoba in 1880. Early signs of his athletic prowess were evident in 1887 when, at the age of 13, he won the three-mile Manitoba provincial roller skating championship. His best-known athletic achievement came as the captain and center with the Winnipeg Victorias amateur hockey team, which captured the Stanley Cup (then awarded in recognition of amateur championship) in 1896 and 1901.

He was recognized as one of the first western Canadians, and the first amateur player, elected to the International Hockey Hall of Fame in 1949. He was elected posthumously to the Canadian Sports Hall of Fame in 1971 and to the Manitoba Sports Hall of Fame in 1981. An all-around athlete, Bain excelled at numerous other sports. At various times, he was the Manitoba champion in roller skating, gymnastics, cycling, and trapshooting. He captured the Canadian figure skating champion in the pairs competition in 1930. He was an active lacrosse player.

Bain was a prominent Winnipeg entrepreneur. As the president of Donald H. Bain Ltd, a grocery brokerage firm with offices in several Canadian cities, he amassed a substantial fortune with which he built a 4,500 square-foot, three-storey home at 69 Eastgate in Winnipeg. Among other things, it featured a spring-mounted dance floor. He constructed the Mallard Lodge in 1932 as a retreat for hunting and relaxation on his property on the Delta Marsh. He spent much time at Mallard Lodge, surrounded by his cherished curly-coated retrievers. The



Mallard Lodge was home to Bain’s collection of 13 antique automobiles. He also built a hunting lodge and farm at Grosse Isle, Manitoba.

Donald Bain was an active member of many community groups, including the Ancient Landmark Masonic Lodge, Prince Rupert Chapter of the Royal Arch Masons, King Edward Preceptory Knight Templars, the Khartum Temple of the Shrine (of which he was a member for 57 years), and the Independent Order of Oddfellows. He was the life governor of the Winnipeg General Hospital, president of the Niakwa Country Club and the Winnipeg Winter Club, and a member of the St. Charles Country Club, the Motor Country Club, and the Portage la Prairie Country Club. Recognizing his love of nature, he was a life member of the Manitoba Game and Fish Association, and the Winnipeg Humane Society. He was a long time member of the Westminster United Church.

Donald Bain died in his Winnipeg home at 7 a.m. on 15 August 1962 at the age of 88, leaving an estate valued at just over 1 million dollars. A lifelong bachelor, he left much of his fortune to charity and to former employees, with the balance distributed among his relatives and friends. (A partial list of his immediate relatives is given in Table 1.) The Mallard Lodge and its associated land became the property of the Province of Manitoba after his death, and most of its assets were sold at public auction. In 1965, Albert Hochbaum, Dr. Jennifer (Walker) Shay, Dr. Robin Connor (then, Dean of Science) and others negotiated with the Province to lease the facility to the University of Manitoba for use as a field station. The University Field Station (Delta Marsh) opened in 1966 under the Directorship of Dr. Shay.

Donald Bain is interred in St. John’s Anglican Cathedral Cemetery in Winnipeg.

Table 1. Bain family genealogy, compiled from notes by James H. Bain (son of B.M. Bain) in the Manitoba Sports Hall of Fame Archives, grave markers, cemetery records, and obituaries in the *Manitoba/Winnipeg Free Press*.

Bain, Donald Henderson - born Belleville, ON, 14 February 1874; arrived Winnipeg at age 6 to home at or near 230 Fort Street; moved with parents to 69 Eastgate about 1890; businessman and athlete; died at home (69 Eastgate), 7:00 a.m., 15 August 1962; interred Bain family plot, St. John's Cathedral Cemetery.

Bain, Benjamin Miller - brother to D.H. Bain; born Montreal, QC, 1870; farmer and railroad engineer; married to *Elizabeth Ann Griffiths* from North Wales (born 10 February 1883, died 1 August 1944); five children (*James Henderson Bain, Elizabeth Margaret Bain, Helen Harris, Gladys Nichol, Evelyn Smith*); died Winnipeg, 1960.

Bain, Donald - cousin to D.H. Bain; born Scotland, 1863; fisherman and farmer of 240 acres at Grosse Isle, MB (purchased from municipality about 1895) until time of death; never married; died 1930.

Bain, Ella - first cousin to D.H. Bain (daughter of *Farquar* and *Janet Bain*); born Scotland, 12 February 1874; died Winnipeg, 3 July 1910; interred Bain family plot, St. John's Cathedral Cemetery.

Bain, Farquar - uncle to D.H. Bain; born Scotland, 15 June 1839; wife *Janet Bain* (birth and death dates unknown); daughter (*Ella Bain*); died Winnipeg, 4 April 1886; interred Bain family plot, St. John's Cathedral Cemetery.

Bain, James Henderson - father to D.H. Bain; born in Caithness, Scotland, 14 May 1834; horse buyer for British government; immigrated to Montreal (date unknown); died Winnipeg, 27 May 1906; interred Bain family plot, St. John's Cathedral Cemetery.

Bain, Peter - cousin to D.H. Bain; born Scotland, 1861; carpenter and farmer; never married; died Winnipeg, 1938.

Bain, Peter - brother to D.H. Bain; born 10 July 1857, place of birth unknown; died Winnipeg, 2 February 1928; interred Bain family plot, St. John's Cathedral Cemetery.

Carter, Mina - sister to D.H. Bain; born about 1863, Montreal, QC; seamstress; married Andy Carter, a jeweler; they resided Winnipeg (230 Young Street); two children (*Charlie, Helen*); date and place of death unknown.

Ferguson, Teena - sister to D.H. Bain; born 1861, place of birth unknown; milliner; married Robert G. Ferguson; settled in Saulte Ste. Marie, MI; reported to be very wealthy; one daughter, *Helen Hackney*, of Marquette, MI; died about 1936, place unknown, and husband died shortly after.

Harris, Helen - niece to D.H. Bain; born about 1907; farmed at Grosse Isle, MB with sister Elizabeth Margaret Bain; now widowed and residing in Winnipeg.

Hart, Helen Mildred - sister to D.H. Bain; milliner; born 1880, location unknown; married to Frederick James Hart, M.D. from Barrie, Ontario (died 3 November 1947); lived in Winnipeg all her married life; died Winnipeg, 4 March 1956; interred with husband, St. John's Cathedral Cemetery.

Miller, Helen - mother to D.H. Bain; born in or around Caithness, Scotland, 27 September 1832; seamstress; died Winnipeg, 20 August 1907; interred Bain family plot, St. John's Cathedral Cemetery.

Smale, Albert James Bain - nephew and will executor for D.H. Bain; son of Elizabeth Smale; died Winnipeg 1969; interred with wife Bess, St. John's Cathedral Cemetery.

Smale, Elizabeth - sister to D.H. Bain; born 5 September 1859, place of birth unknown; husband died of tuberculosis, leaving three young children (*Albert, Erma, Vera*); resided with D.H. Bain in Winnipeg; died Winnipeg, 13 June 1944; interred Bain family plot, St. John's Cathedral Cemetery.

