

## **Remains Of Estate Of Glengarry Legend Go Under The Gavel**

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On Highland Games weekend, a prominent name from Glengarry's sporting past will once again be capturing some headlines.

However, this time, Roderick Rory McLennan, also a noted businessman, contractor, newspaper owner, politician, and militia officer during the latter part of the 19th and early 20th centuries, won't be garnering attention for his exploits on the fields of athletic competition, or the House of Commons.

Instead, the story of "Big Rory" will be discussed amid the sound of an auctioneer's gavel, when his estate, as well as items of three of his descending generations is put up for bids in Glen Walter on August 4.

South Lancaster resident Theresa Taylor, who will be overseeing the auction, says there's a plethora of noteworthy artefacts in the McLennan lot epitomizing the former Alexandria and Cornwall resident's diverse personal and professional lives.

"I have two tractor-trailer loads of items that belonged to "Big Rory" and his descendents, ranging from the late 1800s to the early 1960s", she explains.

"There's everything from his Stormont and Glengarry Highlanders uniform, to signed contracts with the Canadian Pacific Railroad from 1880s, to all kinds of photographs, maps, furniture, artwork, and antiques," added Ms. Taylor, who was commissioned by the estate's living heirs, Cornwall resident Barbara Joan Markham, a former Miss Canada in 1954, and her daughter local artist Deborah Kerr, who is Mr. McLennan's great-grand- niece, to sell the collection.

"They're not really doing anyone any good just sitting around, so I'd like to make sure these items end up in good hands," explained Ms. Kerr when asked why she had chosen to put the array of family heirlooms spanning four generations up for sale.

"I know that there are a lot of good people out there who care about these items," she added, stating that some things, including important historical papers, will end up with local organizations like the Glengarry Historical Society.

"I'm hoping that museums and collectors can keep these things in better shape than I can," added Ms. Kerr, who said there were some items that she would probably keep because of their sentimental value.

Roderick Rory McLennan was born in Glen Donald in Charlottenburgh Township in 1842, and by his early teens began to demonstrate the athletic prowess that would make his name known throughout the province.

While competing at various Caledonian games throughout North America including those held in Buffalo, NY, Cornwall, Montreal and Toronto in the early 1870s, he established world records in the 12-and 16-pound hammer throw events, and also gained notoriety for his proficiency in shot-put events.

A tragic even in Cornwall at the festivities marking Queen Victoria's birthday in 1877 in which he accidentally hit and killed a young Cornwall woman, Ellen Kavanagh, who had wandered into the pitch during a shot-put competition, caused Mr. McLennan to abandon athletics though, and he turned to other pursuits.

Over the next couple of decades, the imposing (6-foot4) "Big Rory" established himself as a contractor on various small railroads in the Georgian Bay and Toronto areas, as well as the CPR between 1880 and 1884.

Following his railroad ventures, he returned to his native Glengarry, where he unsuccessfully ran for a seat in the provincial legislature in 1883 and 1886, before finally defeating Liberal candidate Jacob Thomas Schell in the federal election of 1891 and becoming the Glengarry riding's representative in Parliament, a position he retained until 1900.

During this period, he also purchased several local newspapers, including the Glengarrian in 1885, and the Cornwall Reporter and the Cornwall News, which he merged into what became the Cornwall Standard in 1886.

Mr. McLennan was also a very successful businessman who made many highly profitable investments in coal and gold mines, insurance, railroads and real estate.

He also participated in the annual camps of the 59th Battalion of the Stormont and Glengarry Highlanders militia unit, and was named the regiment's commanding lieutenant-colonel in 1897, a commission he resigned three years later.

Roderick "Big Rory" McLennan never married, and died in Cornwall on March 8, 1907.