

# The Women of Government House Project



The Women of Government House series of Christmas ornaments was started in 1999 as part of the Regina Stitchery Guild's project for the new millennium. This project honors the women who have played a prominent role in the history of Government House since it welcomed its first occupants in 1891.

At the beginning of this project, my inspiration came from the history of the House itself, and the first ornaments honored Agnes Royal and Gertrude Macintosh, the wives of the first two Lieutenant Governors to take up residence in Government House after its completion in 1891. The designs for these miniature stockings, each approximately 4 ½" long, were festive and merry creations celebrating the season in the traditional colors of red, green and sparkling gold.

But as festive as these stockings were, the designs seemed to be lacking a key element and that element was character. What did each of these designs really say about these women?



Agnes Royal Stocking honors the wife of the Hon. Joseph Royal who served from 1888-1983 as Lieutenant Governor of the North-West Territories. A rich gold cuff worked in Laid Filling stitches adorn the body of the stocking worked in red and green silk in a Joined Circle pattern.



The Gertrude Mackintosh stocking honors the wife of Hon. Sir Charles Herbert Mackintosh who served from 1893-1998 as Lieutenant Governor of the North-West Territories. Gold metallic ribbon and beads worked a Laid Filling pattern cuff a silk body stitched in a traditional Florentine pattern.



In an attempt to capture this missing element and make each design more personal, history took an abrupt turn for the third stocking, moving forward in time to the year 2002 and honoring Dr. Lynda Haverstock, the first woman holding the office of Lieutenant Governor, serving from 2000-2006. Her Honour was kind enough to share some of her thoughts about the Christmas season, choosing snowflakes as her theme. No longer generic in nature, the Lynda Haverstock Stocking depicts softly falling snowflakes set against a shimmering Prairie sky. To create the effect, a shimmering blue organza was bonded to the canvas before the snowflake was stitched in sparkling metallic threads.



Angels was the theme selected by Ann Wiebe in 2003 for the fourth stocking in the series. Mrs. Wiebe's husband, John E. N. Wiebe, served from 1994–2000. Her angel heralds the Christmas season with Victorian red hair and sparkling golden wings. worked in a combination of counted thread techniques and beaded embellishment.



Silent Night was the theme of the 2004 stocking honoring Joyce Johnson, whose husband Frederick William Johnson served from 1983 - 1988. A bough of traditional Christmas holly bursting with beaded berries is set against a background of sheet music. As a special touch, a gold treble clef adorns the reverse side Mrs. Johnson's ornament. To create this effect, the background image was transferred to the canvas using transfer paper before the image was overstitched using surface embroidery and beading techniques.



Coquette is the sixth stocking in the series, created in 2005 to honor Madame Forget, wife of the Hon. Amedee E. Forget, who served as Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan from 1898–1910. This stocking features Coquette, the parrot who spoke only French and who entertained Mme. Forget's guests at her informal teas. Worked on a photo transferred background, traditional outlining stitches and French knots highlight the Poinsettia and frame a parrot worked in shaded Continental stitches.

In 1978, work began to restore Government House to the turn-of-the-century appearance during the occupancy of Lieutenant Governor and Mme. Forget. The restoration project was completed in 1980, the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Province of Saskatchewan. This stocking honours both the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Saskatchewan and the completion of the Government House Centennial Project, which includes the opening of a gift shop, “Coquette”.

The series will continue with the addition of the Ann Brown stocking, wife of George William Brown who served as Lieutenant Governor from 1910 – 1915.