

ROSE, GEORGE MACLEAN, printer, publisher, temperance advocate, journalist, author, and politician; b. 14 March 1829 in Wick, Scotland, son of Donald Rose and Christian Maclean; m. 23 Sept. 1856 Margaret Catherine Johan Levack Manson in East Oxford Township, Oxford County, Upper Canada, and they had six sons and three daughters who survived infancy; d. 10 Feb. 1898 in Toronto.

George Maclean Rose, like two of his brothers, Henry and Daniel, was trained as a printer, serving a seven-year apprenticeship in the office of the *John o' Groat Journal* in Wick. According to George's son Malcolm Cameron, he had little formal schooling, but continued to educate himself throughout his life. In 1850, at the age of 21, he joined the *Northern Ensign*, a Reform paper founded that year by John Mackie, formerly editor of the *John o' Groat Journal*. Mackie, a temperance advocate and political writer, was to have a lifelong influence on Rose, who as early as the age of 12 had joined the temperance cause. It was with reluctance that Rose left his employ the following year, when his father decided to immigrate with his family to Lower Canada.

In Montreal they joined Henry Rose, who had come to Lower Canada in 1848, and George found work in the office of John C. **Becket***, printer of the *Montreal Witness* and publisher of the *Canada Temperance Advocate*. Except for a few months spent with the engraver George Matthews, Rose worked for Becket until his father's death in January 1853 created a need to support his mother and dependent brothers and sisters. In March, Henry and George announced a new printing establishment, H. and G. M. Rose. Here young Daniel Rose completed his apprenticeship.

The Roses had been brought up as Congregationalists, but in Montreal, under the influence of the Reverend John **CORDER**, they joined the Unitarian Church, and George was to remain a staunch Unitarian throughout his life. The *Liberal Christian*, a monthly journal edited by Corder, was published by H. and G. M. Rose in 1854 and 1855, and the brothers sold books of interest to its readers at their printing-office on Great St James Street (Rue Saint-Jacques Ouest). Henry and George were also active in the temperance movement in Montreal: in 1855 they were among the incorporating members of the Lower Canada division of the Sons of Temperance [see Letitia **CREIGHTON**; Robert **Dick***].

Early in 1856 the partnership with Henry was dissolved, and George's ambitions took him to Upper Canada. After a brief stay in Merrickville, he moved to London, where he was hired to manage the job-printing office of Henry A. Newcombe, publisher of the *Evangelical Witness*. In September he married Margaret Manson, of nearby Oxford County, whose family he may have known when they lived in Vaudreuil, Lower Canada. Like the Roses, the Mansons were from Caithness: Margaret was a cousin of Oliver **Mowat***, who would later become Liberal premier of Ontario. For a short time in 1857 Rose was in partnership with Hamilton Hunter, a Unitarian minister turned journalist and publisher of the *London Weekly Atlas*. But by November of that year the *Atlas* had been sold to Marcus Talbot, who also published the *London Prototype*. Rose worked for Talbot as city editor and reporter until the

summer of 1858, when he moved once again, this time to Toronto.

There, he was hired as the foreman of Samuel [Thompson*](#)'s printing-office, a position that was to determine his future career. In 1859 Thompson won a five-year contract as printer to the Province of Canada, the first time the contract had been awarded for more than one year at a time, and in the fall of 1859 Rose moved to Quebec, the provincial capital, to set up the new printing-office. At its September meeting the Toronto Typographical Society passed a resolution commending Rose for "his conduct as a printer and foreman" while a member of the society. It praised him for upholding "the principles of our Constitution" and for his "kind and gentlemanly demeanor" toward members of the society under his charge.

In 1860, soon after Thompson took up his appointment in Quebec, he found himself in financial difficulties, a situation he blamed on a general reduction in the number of documents being printed and on the animosity of some legislative officials. At a bailiff's sale several employees, including Rose, bought enough of Thompson's assets to keep the printing-office going, and by April 1861 Robert Hunter, his accountant, was the "principal owner of the Printing Office and materials." On 10 April Hunter wrote to the legislature that he had entered into a subcontract with Thompson to carry out its printing "under the name and designation of *Thompson, Hunter & Co.*" When later the same year Thompson withdrew completely from the business, Hunter, Rose, and François Lemieux formed a new partnership as Hunter, Rose and Company. They carried out the balance of Thompson's contract and in 1864 successfully bid on a new five-year contract in their own name. Following the transfer of the government to Ottawa in 1865, the company moved its printing-office to the new capital late that year or early in 1866.

Hunter, Rose thus already had several years' experience in government printing when in 1868 it was offered the Ontario government contract on the same terms. According to Henry Jervis Hartney, the provincial queen's printer, who negotiated with them on behalf of the premier, John Sandfield [Macdonald*](#), the partners "hesitated long over this offer." He was able to persuade them that, although in Ottawa they could not make "a dollar outside the Government," in Toronto they would be able to build up a good general business. On 11 July 1868 Hunter, Rose signed a ten-year contract with the province of Ontario to do all government printing and binding, including the distribution of the official *Ontario Gazette*. Hunter took charge of the new Toronto office while Rose remained in Ottawa; in 1871 he too moved to Toronto and the Ottawa office was closed.

In Quebec and Ottawa the company had done some non-governmental printing, but very little original publishing. A notable exception was Henry James [Morgan*](#)'s *Sketches of celebrated Canadians* (Quebec and London, 1862). In Toronto in the early 1870s it began to expand its activities by publishing Canadian editions of such popular British authors as Lord Lytton, William Wilkie Collins, Charles Reade, and Anthony Trollope. Unlike many Toronto publishers who at this time routinely pirated foreign authors, Hunter, Rose compensated its British writers fairly. A surviving letter from Trollope to the firm in 1874 thanks them for a remittance of £19 16s. 7d. and promises that

his British publishers will be in touch with them about his latest novel, *The way we live now*. Hunter, Rose printed the influential *Canadian Monthly and National Review* from its beginning in 1872 (it was later also published by Rose under the Rose-Belford imprint), and works in the fields of history and literature by Canadian authors, including Alexander Begg, Alexander [McLACHLAN](#), and Susanna Moodie [[Strickland*](#)], appeared in increasing numbers.

The printing contract with the province of Ontario had been based on what seemed fair rates in 1868, but in the early 1870s labour costs in Toronto rose so sharply that in 1873 and subsequently the firm had to petition for increases in the contract prices to be paid for composition, presswork, and binding. When the contract came up for renewal in 1878, the Hunter, Rose tender was one of the highest, reflecting the company's more realistic idea of the actual labour costs involved, and legislative printing went to Christopher Blackett Robinson and William Warwick. Despite the difficulties over fair compensation for this government work (not settled until an arbitrator was appointed in 1881), the company prospered: in 1875 it was able to build a "large & valuable building" on Wellington Street West that was to house the business during Rose's lifetime.

Soon after moving to Toronto in 1871, Rose had become the secretary of the First Unitarian Church, a position he was to hold for 20 years. He regularly taught a Bible class on Sunday afternoons and was one of the church's principal donors. His son Malcolm noted after his father's death that although he had made money in 40 years as a printer and publisher, he had also "made large losses helping others." The cause in which he was most active was temperance. In the debate among temperance advocates over the best way to bring an end to the consumption of alcoholic beverages, Rose supported the movement for legislation that would prohibit the liquor traffic entirely. Maria Simpson, in her temperance story "*Brother G. M. Rose*" (1879), claimed that he "gave more time and money to the Temperance Cause than any other man in Canada." The portrait of Rose presented by Simpson in this and two other books, *Ronald McFarlane* (1878) and *Sayings and doings of noted temperance advocates* (1879), is idealized, but these books reveal how he must have worked, going out almost nightly to give "fiery, impromptu addresses" at clubs and lodges, filling in good-naturedly for absent speakers, and even on one occasion submitting to a phrenological examination in public. Though generally of "a manner urbane and kindly," he was "capable, on occasion, of firing into vehement outbursts on behalf of his favorite topic – abstinence," and even of crying "like a baby." He continued to take a leading part in the Sons of Temperance, becoming grand worthy patriarch of the Ontario division in 1874, and for its gatherings he compiled several collections of songs and recitations. He was the principal promoter of the Temperance Colonization Society, the organization that founded Saskatoon as a temperance colony in 1882.

By the mid 1870s Rose's family had grown to nine, and after more than 20 years of living in rented houses he was able to build a large residence on St Joseph Street in the suburban Cloverhill area of Toronto. His affection for his family is evident in a surviving letter written to his wife from Toronto in 1868, when the family was still living in Ottawa. "I was so sorry, dear Mag, that I was from home when

the birthdays of two of our pets came off. When I get home we will celebrate them again, and then I will have a romp with them all round. . . . Kiss the pets for me and accept one for yourself.”

The death of Robert Hunter on 15 May 1877 at age 39 brought a number of changes. Rose was now sole owner of Hunter, Rose and Company (though he was to bring his brother Daniel in as a partner in 1878), and he seems to have had to mortgage the property on Wellington Street for several years. In April 1878, with Robert James Belford, of the publishing firm Belford Brothers, and several investors, he incorporated a new firm, the Rose-Belford Publishing Company. The association with the Belfords did not last long. On 7 Feb. 1879, in a letter to the prime minister, Sir John A. [MACDONALD](#), R. J. Belford reported that “yesterday we separated for good.” The reasons are hinted at in a letter of 28 January from Alexander Beaty Belford to an unidentified correspondent. They seem in part to have been political: the Belfords and their brother [Charles*](#), editor of the *Mail*, were staunch Conservatives and Rose was a Liberal. It is unlikely they were suited temperamentally either; the Belfords soon left Toronto for the richer fields of Chicago and New York. Rose, however, continued to publish in Toronto under the Rose-Belford name until 1882.

Under the Rose-Belford Publishing Company and its successor, the Rose Publishing Company, the publishing side of Rose’s business was greatly expanded. The Rose Library, a series of inexpensive editions, mostly reprints, of popular authors, was launched in 1879 and by 1886 had reached 56 titles. Other series directed at the mass market included the Red Line Edition of Standard Poets and the Premier Library of popular fiction. In the mid 1880s the Rose Publishing Company entered the textbook field; although never as active in this field as the companies operated by William James [Gage*](#) and William Walter [COPP](#), it was producing a dozen titles annually by the 1890s. The company also published reference works such as *A cyclopædia of Canadian biography* (2v., 1886–88), edited by Rose himself, and important historical studies such as Joseph Edmund [COLLINS](#)’s biography of Sir John A. Macdonald (1883, revised 1891) and Graeme Mercer [Adam*](#)’s *The Canadian North-west: its history and its troubles* (1885). Some titles were extremely popular: in 1885 the trade journal *Books and Notions* reported that *The home cook book* had sold “not less than 100,000” copies, “the largest [sale], we believe, of any book ever published in Canada.”

Although Rose was the president of the Rose Publishing Company, it was managed from the early 1880s by his eldest son, Daniel Alexander, who was increasingly the family spokesman on the Canadian copyright question. Canada’s attempts to pass a new copyright act, repeatedly frustrated by the Colonial Office, preoccupied the country’s publishers in the late 1880s and 1890s [see Samuel Edward [Dawson*](#); John Ross [Robertson*](#)]. Two other sons, William Manson and George Maclean Jr, were also involved in the family’s business activities. In 1891 Rose served one term as an alderman for St John’s Ward, but this seems to have been his only venture into political life. He was long active in the city’s Board of Trade, as a member of council (from 1878), vice-president (1881), president (1882), and treasurer (1883–92).

Rose’s last years were darkened by several reversals. In 1892, in a dispute over the ministry of the

Reverend Thomas C. Jackson, he and several other members left the First Unitarian Church to form a new congregation. He and his family were to return to the church before his death. In January 1894 the Rose Publishing Company failed, and Hunter, Rose, its principal creditor, was badly hurt but survived. (The name remained associated with printing in Toronto into the 1980s.) The failure had been expected in the industry for some time, and the trade journals speculated on its causes. The *Canadian Printer and Publisher* blamed Canada's copyright dilemma: "The British own us, and throw us as a sweet bone to the publishing dogs of the United States."

In July 1895 Hunter, Rose was reorganized as an incorporated company with Rose as president and D. A. Rose and Atwell Fleming as joint managers. Rose continued to chair directors' meetings until August 1897, but his health was failing. In 1896 he had suffered a severe attack of pneumonia from which he never fully recovered. In a letter to his daughter Christina Henrietta in October 1897, he reported, "Some days I am very bright, other days I am as weak as can be However, . . . as I am not one of those who give in easily, I have great hopes that I will be strong enough to visit you next winter." Less than four months later he was dead at the age of 68.

The *Globe*, in an obituary that ran over a column, described Rose as "one of the best known citizens of Toronto." He belonged to a generation of printer-publishers who, in the years after confederation, created a publishing industry that expressed the aspirations of the new nation. In his avocations too he was representative of his time. Although his preoccupation with prohibition is now out of fashion, the social concerns that lay behind it are not.

ELIZABETH HULSE

[George Maclean Rose compiled several collections of temperance material, including *The teetotaler's companion: a hand-book of dialogues, recitations and readings* . . . , comp. with S. T. Hammond (Ottawa and Toronto, 1868), and a two-part work, *Light for the temperance platform: a collection of readings, recitations, and dialogues* . . . , published in Toronto, 1874–76. He also compiled or contributed to several reference books, among them the business section of *The Canadian home, farm and business cyclopædia; a treasury of useful and entertaining knowledge* . . . (Toronto and Whitby, Ont., 1884), 627–816 (Rose's section was apparently also issued separately as *A business treasury of practical everyday information* (Toronto, [1883]), but the entry in *Canadiana, 1867–1900* lists no institutions possessing this item, and I have not seen a copy); *Rose's hand-book of things worth knowing, comprising interest and statistical tables, and other matter useful for mechanics* . . . (Toronto, [1884]); and the first two volumes, published in Toronto in 1886 and 1888, of *A cyclopædia of Canadian biography: being chiefly men of the time* (the third volume, edited by Hector Willoughby Charlesworth*, appeared in 1919).

A number of biographies of Rose were published during his lifetime or shortly after his death; all of those written after 1880 seem to derive to a greater or lesser degree from the one published that year in *The Canadian biographical dictionary and portrait gallery of eminent and self-made men* (2v., Toronto, 1880–81). Printed in Toronto by Hunter, Rose, and Company, it is the earliest and fullest account of Rose's life and, apart from minor

errors in spelling, stands up well when compared against primary sources. The anonymous author of the piece evidently knew Rose well, for he describes his appearance, speech, and temperament. That Rose used the account in his *Cyclopædia* suggests how highly he thought of it.

A small amount of Rose's family correspondence, including two letters to his wife, dated 31 Oct. and 17 Nov. 1868, and two to his daughter Christina Henrietta, dated 29 Sept. 1885 and 26 Oct. 1897, survive in the possession of a great-granddaughter, Mrs Betty Brewer Wilson, of Vernon Hills, Ill. E.H.]

AO, MS 423, A-2, 2. First Unitarian Congregation (Toronto), Albert Horton, "History of the First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto" (typescript, 1906). NA, MG 24, D16: 28341–68. UTFL, MS coll. 217, boxes 1–3, 7–9, 12–13. *Liberal Christian* (Montreal), 1 (1854)–2 (1855). Ont., Legislature, *Sessional papers*, 1877, no.29. Maria Simpson, "Brother G. M. Rose"; a temperance story (Toronto, 1879). Temperance Colonization Soc., *Charter and by-laws of the Temperance Colonization Society, (Limited)* (Toronto, [1882]). Samuel Thompson, *Reminiscences of a Canadian pioneer for the last fifty years: an autobiography* (Toronto, 1884; repub. Toronto and Montreal, 1968). Toronto, Board of Trade, *Annual report . . .* (Toronto), 1880–92. *Dict. of Toronto printers* (Hulse). J. E. Middleton, *The municipality of Toronto: a history* (3v., Toronto and New York, 1923), 2: 808. F. B. Steiner, *One hundred years of service, 1845–1945: First Unitarian Church, Toronto, Ontario* ([Toronto, 1945]).

General Bibliography

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