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page 5, title: Academy Founder Landed Here 150 Years Ago by Arthur Godfrey

I believe that without knowledge people cannot be good: neither good Christians nor good citizens; neither good servants to God, not good neighbors to men; and I believe that this institution is well calculated to maintain, to increase, and to diffuse knowledge. - Rev. James. MacGregor, D.D. Address to the students of the Pictou Academy, January 2nd, 1826.

The Old College

On the wall of the main entrance vestibule of Pictou Academy is a tablet which was placed on the previous building in 1916. The tablet bears the following inscription:

1816 - 1916

This tablet is erected to commemorate
the foundation of Pictou Academy
and to mark the passage of a century
of valuable service in the cause
of education.

Born in the dawn of the great peace
won at Waterloo and nursed at
the breast of freedom, this
child of the Scottish heart
and mind grew in the
favor of men and
highly blessed
of God.

In the simple dignity of love, and ser-
vice, hopeful, confident, serene,
she awaits the verdict of
the coming age.

The tablet was unveiled by Dr. John Forrest at the Centenary Celebration in the late summer of 1916, marking the 100th anniversary of the founding of Pictou Academy by Dr. Thomas McCulloch, its first principal and later the first president of Dalhousie University. Dr. McCulloch came to Pictou in the fall of 1803, and last month the Academy and University commemorated with suitable ceremonies the 150th anniversary of an event which had a profound influence on the educational history of the province.

This tablet, with the severe brevity of a classical inscription, tells in epitome the story of the first century of Pictou Academy. It was composed by Canon the Rev. A.E. Andrew, at that time Rector of St. James' Church of England, Pictou, and now residing in retirement in Windsor, N. S. It is worthy of its composer, noted for his graceful command of his mother tongue.

The inscription ends: "(Pictou Academy) awaits the verdict of the coming age." Practically two generations have come on the scene since these words were written. We do not think the verdict today would be an adverse one. But there are many newcomers to Pictou in recent years who have not been reared in the traditions of the Academy and realize only in part what Pictou owes to McCulloch and those who came after him. Let us hope they will come to take as much pride in its story as does the native Pictonian. The times have changed, Pictou Academy does not now have the commanding position it once held in the educational affairs of the province, yet the old school goes on and has an honored part, if a lesser one, to play.

When the hundreds of celebrated men from all walks of professional and public life, drawn from the farthest corners of the Northern American continent to honor their beloved old school, gathered up on the hill on those summer days of 1916, the Golden Age of Pictou Academy was ending. In three years more Dr. Robert Maclellan, the last of the great triumvirate of McCulloch, MacKay, and Maclellan, to whom, more than to any others of the many great teachers of the school, Pictou Academy owes its fame, was to close thirty laborious and fruitful years as principal. His retirement marked the end of an era in the educational history of Pictou County, and, indeed, of Nova Scotia.

It was not the fault of those who came after him that Pictou Academy did not retain the unique position it had held for the greater part of the previous century. The times had changed. Already, in 1916, it was becoming apparent that the Academy, while relatively holding its position among the leading high

p. 3

schools of the province, had to compete with a growing number which could provide education up to Grade XII. The time when students were to come from all parts of the Maritime Provinces, and from far beyond, to take advantage of the incomparable scholastic opportunities available here, were over; they were soon to be over, even insofar as all of Pictou County itself was concerned.

Founded in 1816 by Dr. McCulloch after long years of aspiration and struggle since his arrival in Pictou from Scotland in 1803, Pictou Academy's primary purpose was to provide the education and culture in theological, literary and scientific learning needed by candidates for the Presbyterian ministry. Too few ministers were coming from Scotland for the rapidly increasing population, and Dr. McCulloch's plan was the only solution. It was to meet opposition from without and within the Presbyterian faith, and Dr. McCulloch's struggles were to end in a final Pyrrhic victory which left him heartbroken at the end of his dream to build up a great college and theological seminary in Nova Scotia.

It was from this era in the history of Pictou Academy that the name of "The Old College" for the original building at the corner of Church and Willow streets is derived. The opposition of government circles in Halifax, and of others throughout the province, prevented the acknowledgment of its status of a college, and it had to be content with the lesser name of 'Academy', which a Royal Charter granted in 1818.

Latin, Greek, Moral and Natural Philosophy, Theology and Mathematics comprised its curriculum, and as a proof of the thoroughness of its teaching, three members of the first class of twenty-three students won on examination the degree of A.M. from the Scottish University of Glasgow. One member of the first class was Jotham Blanchard, valiant fighter for the rights of Pictou Academy and for responsible government for Nova Scotia, who burned out his bright spirit and bodily health in a few brief years of severe intellectual toil. He died at the age of 42, and has rested from his labors for more than a century in Pictou's Laurel Hill cemetery, where a modest stone marks his

grave and records his achievements.

History also records the burning desire for higher learning implanted by the zeal of Dr. McCulloch in his students, who, in their scarlet college gowns, worn in imitation of the students of Scottish universities, haunted the bookstore of James Dawson on Water Street, situated on the site of the present Pictou Arena. Dawson was the father of Sir John William Dawson, Canada's greatest geologist, who studied at Pictou Academy and later won distinction at Glasgow University. James Dawson imported regularly from Great Britain, direct by ship to Pictou, the latest books on science, theology, and general literature, and the students grew in stature of mind in spite of the disadvantages of their isolation from the outer world.

Besides being a theologian of great dialectical skill and originality, as his published sermons and other writings testify, Dr. McCulloch had a mind whose catholicity ranged through all the circle of learning. He was truly a great man, and would have been more quickly recognized as such, and we might add, would have had a greater reputation, if he had lived in an environment where his talents would have had greater scope. He established a museum of natural curiosities at the Academy which included collections of the fauna of the province. Such was his fame in this respect that John James Audubon, the celebrated American artist and ornithologist, had his ship anchored off the harbor mouth while on a tour of the Atlantic Coast and Labrador, and visited Dr. McCulloch at his home on the Old Road, now occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Murdock MacQuish. He inspected Dr. McCulloch's collections at the Academy and gave them high praise, and was glad to accept from Dr. McCulloch some of his specimens of stuffed birds.

Under such influences grew up John Geddie - "Little Johnny" Geddie, as he was somewhat tolerantly called by his early contemporaries - the first foreign missionary to go from a British colony, and the forerunner of that great army of missionaries from Pictou Academy which have since carried the Gospel to the darkest and most savage corners of the earth. Clergymen,

teachers, lawyers and doctors, scientists, statesmen and leaders in business, they poured forth year after year until there was not a section of the present Dominion of Canada nor a state of the American Union but had felt their impress.

Not less impressive was the role the Academy played in the growth of Pictou as a great seaport during the 19th century. For many years Navigation was one of the courses on the curriculum, and many a future master and ship's officer in the days when no less than 400 vessels were registered at the port of Pictou made his first celestial observations from the roof of Pictou Academy. The lessons were well learned, and Pictou seamen in Pictou ships carried the name and fame of their home town to all the ports of the world; they made the sea their home, and many found their graves there.

And so they went forth, these former students of Pictou Academy, to labor and suffer martyrdom in foreign mission fields, to rise to influence at the bar, in medicine, in legislatures, as the heads of universities, and as leaders in great business enterprises; they lie buried on many battlefields of the past century and their bones whiten on the floor of all the world's oceans.

In 1838, Dr. McCulloch became first principal of Dalhousie College. Since 1831, when Blanchard had gone to England as the representative of the trustees and had won from the British government virtually all for which they had vainly fought for years, the Academy had been paralyzed by the dissensions of the Burgher and Anti-Burgher controversy, and from McCulloch's departure the Academy lingered on, shorn of its prestige, until it was remodelled in 1865 as a County Academy under the Nova Scotia School Act.

The limited space of this article does not permit more than the mention of the names of Michael McCulloch, Basil Bell, William Jack, John Costley and others during the era between 1838 and 1865 when the Academy functioned as a grammar school. With the appointment in 1865 of Herbert A. Bayne as principal, and especially of Dr. A.H. MacKay, later Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia, the Academy made rapid strides, students flocked from far and near and larger quarters became necessary. In 1890, a new building of brick and stone was

erected on the present site which was rebuilt more than twice as large after the fire of 1895.

Many great teachers flourished in this period, and many were the brilliant students graduated who were later to make names for themselves in Canada and the United States. It was a time of great intellectual vigor; new ideas were abroad and science was remaking the world. Men were inspired with the vision of an endless reign of peace and progress under the benevolent aegis of the Pax Britannica. But the plowman was overtaking the reaper.

Dr. Robert Maclellan, who had been classical master from 1876 to 1883, succeeded Dr. MacKay as principal, and for thirty years, with such great teachers as W. R. Fraser, Hector McInnes, Humphrey Mellish, Isaac Gammell, C. B. Robinson, C. L. Moore, Henry P. Duchemin, Henry F. Munro, W. P. Fraser, to mention a few, the Academy burgeoned into greater fame and prestige. To those interested enough, MacPhie's "Pictonians at Home and Abroad" is recommended for the full story of these men and others here passed by. It devotes one chapter to Pictou Academy, but the whole book, with its hundreds of names of famous Pictonians, is really the saga of Pictou Academy.

Our story has now come to the period within the memory of the living. The writer attended Pictou Academy in the time of Dr. Maclellan, Professor W. P. Fraser, Dr. Munro, and Dr. R. H. MacLeod. Where at any time was there such a quartette of teachers? Wowering over them all was Dr. Robert Maclellan, modest and unassuming despite his wide learning and wisdom. During Dr. Maclellan's retirement the writer had the privilege of his personal friendship and spent some hours with him weekly for several years until his death in 1922. He hopes that the personal reference may be pardoned, for he could not forbear to pay a tribute, as from one who knew Dr. Maclellan not only as a teacher but also as a personal friend, to a cultured scholar and a very great gentleman, and

one of the most lovable of men.

Professor C. L. Moore came back to Pictou Academy as principal succeeding Dr. Maclellan, and for almost twenty years carried on the great tradition. Hundreds of students remember him with respect and affection. He was succeeded by Dr. James Dingay, a noted educationist, who retired shortly after the fire of June 1938, which destroyed the Academy. With the new building came a new principal, George W. MacKenzie, who worthily upheld the reputation of the old school. He resigned in 1948 to become Inspector of High Schools for Nova Scotia, but continues, with Mrs. MacKenzie and family, to reside in Pictou.

We referred at the beginning of this article to the founding of Pictou Academy by Dr. McCulloch in the dawn of the great peace won at Waterloo, and it seems fitting that in the dawn of a greater and more lasting peace - let us still hope through the clouds of the present day - another Scot should come to preside over the destinies of Pictou Academy. Robert Kennedy, M. A., F.R.Met.S., of Edinburgh became principal in 1948, and has proved to be a worthy successor to those who came before him. Pictou Academy, under his direction has gone forward, increasing in efficiency and the number of students from year to year. Pictou Academy is in good hands, and faces the future with modest confidence.