

# MACDONALD - ANCESTORS and DESCENDANTS

## FIRST GENERATION

During the first three years of the nineteenth century, ten thousand people left the Highlands of Scotland bound for Nova Scotia and Upper Canada. The main reason for leaving was economic. They believed that life would be better in the New World where they would have a piece of land to call their own. In Scotland they were tenant farmers whose landlords were discovering that they could earn more money from sheep than they could from men. In the earlier years, people left on their own accord; later they were evicted, watching powerlessly while their homes were burned to the ground. In 1801, eleven ships sailed from Fort William, Scotland with 3,300 emigrants. The "Sarah", carrying 700, set sail on June 8th for Pictou, Nova Scotia. On board were Finlay McDonald, aged 48, his wife Annie and their five children ranging in age from 2 1/2 to 16 years. Finlay was a piper in the army and Annie was a spinster (one who spins). They came from Glenurquhart in Inverness-shire. The valley of Glenurquhart runs westward from the village of Drumnadrochait which is situated on Loch Ness. The county seat of Inverness is about twenty miles to the northeast.

The voyage across the Atlantic was described by the Rev. George Patterson D.D. in his "History of the County of Pictou" (1877) on page 146: "In the year 1801 came out two vessels, full of passengers, brought out by Hugh Dunoon, Esq. He made representations similar to those by which interested parties have often deluded people across the Atlantic, such as that the same tree would yield them soap, sugar and fuel, or that they might get sugar from the tree, and gather tea at its roots. One vessel, chartered by him, called the 'Sarah', brought out 700 souls, though two children being counted as one, and infants in arms going free, they were reckoned as 500 passengers. They were crowded together, and their rations were scanty in quantity, as well as inferior in quality. Smallpox and whooping-cough broke out among them, so that the ship might be said to have realized the horrors of the Middle Passage. They were thirteen weeks on the voyage, having sailed in June, and not having reached Pictou till September, and in that time forty-seven died. During the passage, they were boarded by a man-of-war which pressed twenty five able bodied passengers, but on Dunoon going on board, and representing himself as a government agent they were released. When the vessel arrived in Pictou, sickness still prevailed, so that she was kept in quarantine at the beaches for some time."

There is also an account in "The Highland Clearances" by John Prebble: "In the summer of 1801, George Dunoon advertised the sailing of the 'Sarah' and the 'Dove' from Fort William for Pictou. Had the laws then governing slave-ships applied to these emigrant vessels, they would not have been allowed to carry more than 489 passengers. Dunoon filled the tiny holds with 700, emigrants from Lord Reay's country, from the clan-lands of Seaforth, Fraser and Cameron. If they believed his promise that in Nova Scotia they would find a tree that supplied fuel, soap and sugar (he probably meant the maple) they may have found the nightmare voyage endurable, but it is unlikely. Forty-nine people died on the Sarah alone, and the suffering of all was so terrible that it was remembered in Nova Scotia for more than a century."

From Patterson's book, page 147: "Of these brought out by Dunoon, another body occupied McLennan's Mountain. Orders were now issued by the Government to William Fraser to survey the land on the mountain, and to divide it into lots for the newcomers. This being done, a band of twenty-three of them occupied the whole block, each selecting his lot. This would probably be the year after arrival. Most if not all of them were from Lord Lovat's country, near Inverness. A list of them is as follows: Don McDonald (tailor), Donald McDonald, James Fraser, \_\_\_\_\_ Grant, William McLean, Finlay McDonald (piper), Donald Fraser, Finlay McDonald (carpenter), James Cameron, Thomas Cameron, John Fraser (Buie), Alexander Cameron, Finlay McIntosh, Alexander Fraser (weaver), James Fraser (Bann), Hugh Cameron, Alexander McDonald, John Fraser, Peter Stewart, James Fraser, John McRae, Donald McPherson, Angus Fraser (Deacon). With them settled one person brought up in the county, viz: Simon Fraser, Deacon Thomas's son."

When Finlay and Annie arrived in Pictou, they were, in all likelihood, taken in by friends or relatives who had come out from Scotland at an earlier time. The first Highland settlers arrived on the Hector in 1773. As Patterson suggests, they probably took possession of the land on McLennan's Mountain the year after arrival; however, it was fifteen years before they received a deed to the property. The deed, issued on January 29th, 1816, granted Finlay three hundred acres on the north facing side of MacLennan's Mountain where, on a clear day, the waters of the Northumberland Strait are visible. No doubt, Finlay spent many long hours cutting tall timbers before this view was discovered.

Another child was born to Finlay and Annie three years after their arrival in Nova Scotia. They now had six children: John, Nancy, Donald, Christean, Duncan, and Janet. It appears that Finlay also fathered a child

named Jessie the same year his son Duncan was born in 1798. It is rumored that her mother was a widow (Monroe?) and Jessie was brought up by a Fraser (Bann) family - possibly her mother's sister. Jessie became Don "Tailor" McDonald's second wife. She is mentioned with the other family members in a quitclaim deed written in August 1827. This deed listed the inventory of movable property belonging to Finlay when he died on May 10, 1823. At the time of his death, Finlay's movable property consisted of one horse, seven cattle, and eighteen sheep and was divided according to his wishes among his children and his wife, Annie. Finlay was seventy years old at the time of his death; Annie died some time later at the age of seventy-two. They are buried in McLennan's Mountain Cemetery.

## SECOND GENERATION

Finlay's son, Donald, was nine years old when his family emigrated from Scotland. He earned the name "Governor" because he was clever and good at helping people solve their problems regarding land, etc. On November 6, 1817, at the age of twenty-five, Donald married Barbara "Weaver" Fraser. It is believed that Barbara's family also came out from Scotland on the "Sarah" and resided on McLennan's Mountain. Donald and Barbara inherited the family homestead where they raised eight daughters and four sons. Their headstone in McLennan's Mountain Cemetery also lists the names of five others who died in childhood. During his lifetime, Donald acquired a good deal of land in the county especially in the area later owned by the Vale Coal Company at Vale Colliery (now Thorburn). Donald died on the 15th day of January, 1858 at the age of 66. His wife, Barbara, lived to be ninety years old.

When Donald died his estate was signed over to his son John (Wade's maternal great-grandfather) on condition that he would always provide for his mother, Barbara, during her lifetime in a comfortable and decent manner according to her degree in life and, also, provide for his three sisters: Nancy, Catherine, and Isabella as long as they remained in the house. On their leaving, they were to be set out in the same manner and with like dower as their late father did any of their married sisters. Furthermore, he was to provide a fair English education for his two younger brothers Alexander and Duncan and set one or both of them to a trade if required. (A document listing these conditions and signed by the other family members was written on January 21, 1858 and registered in

Pictou on February 2, 1858.) It is interesting to note that Donald, who was so skilled at legal matters, died without a will.

### THIRD GENERATION

Donald and Barbara's eldest son, Finlay, was born in 1818. His descendants were many and they became known as the "Finlays". Because so many Highlanders bore the same name, they were given nicknames to distinguish one family from another. This name often came from a person's occupation (Tailor, Weaver), or their place of residence (Lockhart - by the loch, or lake), or from an identifying characteristic (Governor, Urichan - good or holy man). Individuals were often identified by their given name first, followed by their father's name, such as, Clifford "Danny Angus". In the case of two women having the same first name and surname, their husband's name would be used for identification e.g. Myrtle "Herman" and Myrtle "Snooky", both MacDonalds.

Finlay married Margaret Fraser and settled on land at the Marsh, MacLennan's Mountain (this land is now considered to be in Thorburn). The property was previously owned by Finlay's father, Donald "Governor". Here they built a log house and raised their children, five sons and four daughters. Finlay was a farmer and a sawyer operating a sawmill not far from their home. In the early 1870's a wood frame house was built on the property to replace the log home. Finlay and Margaret were active in the church and were members of St. John's Presbyterian Church in McLennan's Mountain. Margaret later attended Union Presbyterian Church in Thorburn where she became the first president of the Women's Missionary Society. This was in the summer of 1886 when Margaret was sixty five years old. According to her great-grandson, Earle MacDonald, Margaret was a staunch supporter of the Tory government of the time and was quick to burn any Liberal material that found its way into the house - before the boys had a chance to read it!

Finlay died on August 4, 1872 at the age of fifty-four. At this time, three or four of the children were married but the others were still at home, the younger ones aged six and ten. When their son, John, married, he remained on the farm with his mother. Margaret died on January 3, 1899 at the age of seventy-eight. She was buried with Finlay in the church cemetery on McLennan's Mountain.

## FOURTH GENERATION

Alexander (Sandy) Finlay, the second eldest son of Finlay and Margaret, was born on September 15, 1845. He married Catherine Fraser on April 19, 1870; Sandy was twenty-four years old, Catherine was twenty-one. Catherine was a local girl, daughter of John and Ellen Fraser of McPherson's Mills (known then as Sutherland's River). They built a house next door to Sandy's mother on the fifty-five acres willed to him by his father. Here, they farmed and raised their children, Finlay Duncan, John Sandy, Dan Angus, Margaret (Maggie), Helen Belle (Nell), and William (Willie).

Catherine died on December 21, 1903. She would have been fifty-five years old on Christmas Day. Five months later, May 17 or 19, 1904, their youngest child, Willie, died from a ruptured appendix. He was sixteen. Finlay Duncan and John Sandy were both married at this time and living in Thorburn. Finlay Duncan was the Postmaster at Thorburn for many years; John Sandy operated gas pumps for automobiles on the New Row. Maggie and Nell married and lived a short distance away in Greenwood, Pictou County. It is presumed that their father, Sandy Finlay, remained on the farm with Danny Angus and his family. Sandy Finlay died in December, 1926 at the age of eighty-one. He is buried with Catherine and their son, Willie, in McPherson's Mills Cemetery.



### THIRD GENERATION

FINLAY MCDONALD (1818 - 1872)

married

MARGARET FRASER (1821 - 1899)

#### THEIR CHILDREN:

1 - DANIEL (DONALD)

2 - ALEXANDER (SANDY FINLAY) (1845 - 1926) m. Catherine Fraser

3 - BARBARA m. Angus Robertson (Sutherland's River)

4 - KATIE m. Alex Robertson (Sutherland's River)

5 - JOHN (1851 - 1938) m. 1. Annie Bannerman

2. Lydia MacMillan 3. Tena Fraser

6 - SIMON

7 - CHRISTY ANN m. (Little) Dannie McDonald

8 - FINLAY m. Jennie MacDonald (Greenvale) lived U.S.A.

9 - LYDIA MARION (1866 - )

### FOURTH GENERATION

ALEXANDER (SANDY FINLAY) MCDONALD (1845 - 1926)

married April 19, 1870, New Glasgow (Church of Scotland)

CATHERINE FRASER (1848 - 1903)

#### THEIR CHILDREN:

1 - FINLAY DUNCAN (1870 - 1955) m. Margaret Isabel Plumb

2 - JOHN SANDY (1873 - 1962) m. Cassie Ellen MacDonald

3 - DANIEL ANGUS (1879 - 1964) m. Jessie May MacLeod

4 - MARGARET (MAGGIE) (1881 - 1957) m. Robert (Bob) Smith

5 - HELEN BELLE (NELL) (1885 - 1966) m. John Duncan (Simon)

MacDonald

6 - WILLIAM (WILLIE) (1887 - 1904)

### FIFTH GENERATION

DANIEL ANGUS MACDONALD (Feb. 6, 1879 - May 16, 1964)

married October 12, 1903, New Glasgow, N.S. (Presbyterian)

JESSIE MAY MACLEOD (April 20, 1888 - Oct. 20, 1925)