

The Old Train Station News

Newsletter #77

July 2015

More and more people are researching their family roots in an attempt to uncover fragments of their past but in a place like Antigonish genealogical work can prove to be a tad daunting, especially when investigating such names as MacDonald, MacGillivray or Chisholm. Even with the advantage of a nickname or a particular location, some families are difficult to trace.

A couple of years ago, I came across an interesting post in an old edition of *The Casket*. A returning soldier, a Captain Ronald Macgillivray of Antigonish Harbour, reported that he had come across a man in Amsterdam who had assured him that they were both members of the same Highland clan. Now, this could have been plausible – except for the fact that the man was *Dutch*. Readers back in 1945 would have been skeptical of this kinship but a little research proves that there was indeed (and still is) a clan of Dutch MacGillavrys, as they came to spell the name. (It should be noted that this branch settled in Zwolle, not Zwellen as noted in the clipping.)

Ellen MacGillavry, present-day commissioner for the Netherlands' branch of Clan MacGillivray, reveals that theirs is "a small active group" that meets once every year or two. Efforts are made to foster clan spirit but, unfortunately, this group is not what it used to be. "The elderly family members are the most enthusiastic," she writes in reply to my queries. Younger people are less interested. Unlike our local Scottish clans, the Dutch branch never had the Gaelic language, the highland games or any other Scottish customs to celebrate. "A lot of our MacGillavrys have parents who are from Indonesian descent and therefore have more interest in Indonesia than in Scotland." She recalls that family reunions often end with an Indonesian meal.

Dutch Highlanders

A recent arrival here from overseas was Capt. Ronald Macgillivray, a native of Saskatoon, and a son of Mr. and Mrs. A. M. Macgillivray, Antigonish Harbor. Capt. Macgillivray was a staff officer in the First Canadian Division. One day in Holland an Amsterdam man called on him, and introduced himself as a member of the same clan. The visitor, who called himself "Mac Gillavry", was descended from William MacGillivray, from Elgin, Scotland, a soldier who located in Zwolle, Holland, about 1780. William's son, Henrik, went to the Netherlands East Indies in the civil service, attained to prominence through the years, and eventually became governor of one of the Dutch colonies. His descendants are there to this day. Some of them, no doubt, since the pioneer's day have been very run-of-mine, but others are on the records as having won distinction in the army and the colonial government.

So, who was this Captain Ronald Macgillivray who appeared so interested in Highland kinship?

Here in Antigonish, the name MacGillivray poses difficulties due to the fact that there are “Bridge” MacGillivrays, “Vamy” MacGillivrays and “Dunmaglass” MacGillivrays – not to mention the distinct families from Williams Point, Morristown, Pleasant Valley, Highfield and Maryvale. Offshoots from some of these lines introduce further snags.

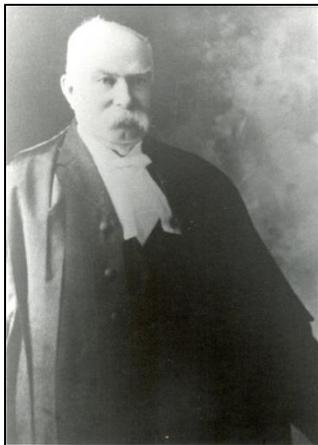
A little digging and delving (as renowned genealogist Terry Punch calls it) identifies the above-mentioned Captain Ronald Macgillivray as one of the “Cribbin” Macgillivrays from Antigonish Harbour. Greg Macgillivray of Mahoney’s Beach, nephew of Captain Macgillivray, informs that his uncle was born in Winnipeg in 1916 and that he was one of eight sons of Alexander MacIntosh and Rose (MacLean) Macgillivray of Antigonish and Western Canada. A clipping from a Saskatoon paper dating to the early



months of 1943 (compliments of Greg Macgillivray) reveals that Ronald went overseas in January of 1941 and that he was adjutant of the 1st Battalion Saskatoon Light Infantry in England prior to his return to Kingston, Ontario, for a staff course. (While there, he made a quick visit home to Saskatoon.) Also noted was the fact that Ronald had three brothers in the forces: Lt. Charles, aide-de-camp with Major General Potts; Cpt. Alex with a unit of engineers on Canada’s west coast; and Sgt. John with an R.C.A.F. bomber squadron in England. (Photo: compliments of Greg Macgillivray)

While the Dutch branch of the MacGillivrays came into being about the time another branch of the clan came to Nova Scotia, they too are proud of their Highland origin, and know all about the clan and race from which they are descended. A brief history of the “Mac Gillavry” family, which Capt. Macgillivray brought home, shows a profusion of Dutch names, such as Wilhelmina, Henrik, Geertruida, Jacoba, Willem, Reinier, Theodore, Julius and Willy, but often enough one comes across a Donald, Kitty, Robert, Charles, Henry, Jenny, or Joan. There are even several members of the clan whose first name is given as “Dunmaglass.” Surely loyalty to the Highlands could go no further than that!

For the genealogist, Ronald’s family is somewhat easier to trace than other MacGillivray families as some stories were recorded by Rev. Ronald MacGillivray (Sagart Arisaig) and Ray MacLean in *History of Antigonish*. **Great-great grandfather Angus “Ban” Macgillivray** came out from Scotland in 1802. Five years later, he settled at Cribbon’s Point – hence the name “Cribbin” Macgillivray. **Great grandfather John** was born at Morristown where he taught for a few years before moving to Glen Road to farm. His obituary notes that he was “the father of Hon. A. McGillivray, Speaker of the House of Assembly.”



Born at Bailey’s Brook, **Grandfather Angus Macgillivray** attended St. F. X. College, taught school for several years, and then went on to study law. Admitted to the bar in 1874, he practiced law in Antigonish where he was said to have “enjoyed a very extensive practice.” In 1878, he was elected by acclamation to the Nova Scotia House of Assembly where he represented Antigonish as a Liberal. From then until 1902, according to Ray MacLean in *Piety & Politics*, Angus served in various capacities – as MLA, Speaker of the House, as a member of the Executive Council and as a member of the Legislative Council. In both 1887 and 1891, he ran federally against the Honorable John S. D. Thompson. While he was unsuccessful on both occasions, those elections attracted much attention as Angus fearlessly challenged Bishop John Cameron’s role in politics. In 1902, he was appointed Judge of the County Court, a position he held until his death

in 1917. Judge Macgillivray was married twice: first to Margaret MacIntosh and then to Mary Doherty. He resided at 143 Main Street, the old Joe Dunn house that was torn down in the fall of 2014. (It should be noted that Angus was included in *The Canadian Biographical Dictionary and Portrait Gallery of Eminent and Self-made Men* published in 1881 and in *A Cyclopaedia of Canadian Biography: Being Chiefly Men of the Time*, published in 1888.)

A proud Scot, Judge Angus Macgillivray worked diligently to uphold the Gaelic language and the traditions and culture of his forefathers in Scotland; he belonged to the Highland Society of Antigonish, Clan MacDonnell and the Society of Scottish Clans. Recorded in the Highland Society Minutes for November 30, 1875, are notes indicating that “A. McGillivray, Esq. Barrister” was appointed Vice President at that meeting. Subsequent minutes reveal that on St. Andrew’s Day, 1876, Angus was elected President of the Highland Society and that on St. Andrew’s Day, 1877, he was elected Chief. In November of 1878, when His Excellency, the Marquis of Lorne, Governor-General of Canada, and Her Royal Highness the Princess Louise arrived in Halifax en route to Ottawa to take up their official duties, Angus participated in the welcoming ceremonies. As Chief of the Highland Society of Antigonish, Angus McGillivray (“M. P. P. for Antigonish”) had the honor of presenting an address jointly with the Caledonia Club of Prince Edward Island. A copy of that address appeared in *The Halifax Evening Reporter* the next day. According to *The Canadian Biographical Dictionary and Portrait Gallery of Eminent and Self-made Men*, the address was “highly creditable to our subject.” It also reported that Macgillivray “[spoke] the Gaelic with great fluency.”

It’s evident that Angus worked diligently to preserve his Highland Scottish heritage. In December of 1915, *The Casket* reprinted a column from the *Sydney Post* reporting that Judge Macgillivray had given a presentation on Scotland at the Lyceum in Sydney, Cape Breton, an event that was well attended and greatly enjoyed by all in attendance. “The judge is an excellent and forceful speaker and his knowledge of the subject shows careful study of the conditions past and present of Scotland.” Upon Angus’ death in 1917, a resolution of condolence was passed at a special meeting of Clan MacDonnell in Port Hood, extolling their fellow member as “a great, good man . . . whose frequent visits . . . were so many occasions of pleasure, instruction and encouragement;” and thus, the Clan placed on record its appreciation of the character, the ability and the work of Judge Angus Macgillivray.

Alexander MacIntosh Macgillivray, son of Judge Angus and Margaret (MacIntosh), went west in the early 1900s to work as a civil engineer with the Canadian National Railways. According to his obituary in January of 1962, Alexander “had the unique distinction of being the only engineer in Canada to hold four positions simultaneously, those of chairman of the Saskatchewan branch of the institute and councillor for the province, president of the Association of Professional Engineers of Saskatchewan and the representative of the association for the Dominion Council of Professional Engineers.” For most of his career, Alexander had his headquarters in Saskatoon.

It seems that Alexander Macgillivray was proficient in Gaelic too. Greg recalls a delightful piece of family lore. Apparently a Gaelic speaker had been invited to the University of Saskatoon and hundreds came to listen to him speak. “He counted to a hundred in Gaelic and then he counted backwards.” Folks were very impressed with the so-called Gaelic presenter but Alexander wasn’t quite as awestruck.

The family had a place at the Harbour where they would vacation in the summertime. “Train travel was free so their mother would pile all the kids on the train and head back to spend their

summers at Antigonish Harbour,” Greg relates. When Alexander retired in 1944, the family moved back to Antigonish.

Alexander and Rose’s children are noteworthy too. Alexander was an engineer with the C.N.R. in Montreal. Rev. Donald was a Roman Catholic priest who spent many years working in Brazil. Jack was a grain broker in Winnipeg. Allan worked for the Department of Highways in Victoria. Colin will long be remembered as an educator, principal and superintendent here in Antigonish.

Leo MacGillivray, lawyer turned newspaperman, was a well-known and respected journalist. Editor of *The Casket* from 1947 to 1951, he joined the editorial staff of the *Montreal Gazette* upon leaving Antigonish and worked with that paper for thirty years. Leo was a good writer. Evidence of his capable pen can be witnessed in a July 19, 1952 edition of *The Manitoba Ensign* found online at: <https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=958&dat=19520719&id=aCpQAAAAIBAJ&sjid=c1YDAAAIBA J&pg=2157,4357471&hl=en>. Even here, his love of Antigonish and its Highland Scottish traditions rings loud and clear.



Angus “the Beard” was a well-known local personality. A self-taught artist, he was talented in sculpture, painting, printmaking and photography. Some of his best known works are on display at the St. F. X. Chapel – the Stations of the Cross and the altar Crucifix. For some time, Angus was artist in residence at St. F. X. University.

This wood carving (depicting a bearded man with glasses working at his wood-working table), on display at the museum, is the work of wood carver Albert Livingston of Cape George. The subject for the piece was Angus “the Beard” Macgillivray.

Ronald, the subject of this newsletter article, went on to be a lawyer and to work with the federal government in Ottawa. “He was one of the authors of the “Law of the Sea,” nephew Greg Macgillivray reveals. Ronald died in 1990.

The “Cribbin” Macgillivrays spell their name with a lower case G. I asked Greg about this. “Well, Angus insisted that this was the Catholic spelling.” Still, Leo, the journalist, signed his name with a capital G. “Maybe it looked better in print.” Maybe, in a web of so many MacGillivrays, it was just a way for them to distinguish themselves.

Angus MacGillivray of Williams Point (yes, the same Angus who is Chair of our Heritage Association of Antigonish) is Chair of the Clan MacGillivray Association of Canada, having recently assumed that position. I asked Angus about his interest in Clan MacGillivray. “I’ve always had an interest in history and genealogy,” he told me of late. Why? He showed me a quote in an old Clan MacGillivray newsletter he was perusing: “Our past has shaped what we are today. The debt we owe to our ancestors cannot be repaid but only honored. We honor their memory and values by keeping alive their dreams and aspirations.” (Credit: Michael MacEachern as quoted by still another Angus MacGillivray, publisher for the *Clan MacGillivray Newsletter*, 2008) “The work we’re doing with the Clan MacGillivray Association of Canada and the work we’re doing here at the museum – it all ties in with this,” Angus declares. “All this work gives them honor.”

Angus has been collecting MacGillivray data for many years. When I ask him where he acquired his fascination with genealogy, he relates a neat little story. "Years ago, someone asked who my father's grandfather's people were – and no one seemed to know. I was determined to find out and so I went to the archives. I can still remember the pride I felt when I made that discovery." Angus has been gathering records ever since.

Now, as Chair of the Clan MacGillivray Association of Canada, Angus invites all interested parties and everyone with a MacGillivray connection to check out the new Clan MacGillivray website for their respective ancestors: <http://clanmacgillivraycanada.com/>. Kindly review the database to ensure accuracy and then help us fill in the missing blanks. Your assistance is greatly appreciated. Check out the membership form too. New members are welcome.

Catherine MacGillivray

Recent Acquisitions



Thank you to **Bernadette Howlett, Luston, UK**, for this dog tag which would have been worn by crew member Nippy Barrett of the HMCS Antigonish. Nothing is known of Nippy at this time.

Commissioned in 1944, the vessel HMCS Antigonish was based in Esquimault, B.C. Many of the crew members were from Western Canada.

Thank You

James C. MacIntosh
Barrister, Solicitor & Notary Public

33 Greening Drive
Antigonish, NS B2G 1R1

Tel. (902) 863-4805
Fax (902) 863-8086
jim@macandmac.ca

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Recent Visitors to the Museum

Visitors to the museum this month included (from left to right) **Joecille Murphy, Timothy McAllister, Daniel McAllister** (holding trophy), **Susan Murphy** and **Carol McAllister** from **Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and New York**. All are descendants of William Perley Cunningham, merchant and former Mayor of Antigonish. Cunningham died suddenly while curling on January 1, 1932.

The trophy was presented to the Antigonish Curling Club by Cunningham's widow, Jennie (nee Munro), in memory of her husband.



Mary Hierlihy-Oke and daughter **Kathryn Atkin**, both of **Newfoundland**, pose in front of a circa 1976 aerial photo of Town Point. Descendants of early Antigonish Hierlihys, they recently stopped by the Museum before heading down to Town Point.

Colonel Timothy Hierlihy and a shiplot of Irish Loyalists are credited for the establishment of the first European settlement in Antigonish in 1784 when they settled a large land grant around Antigonish Harbour. Initially called Dorchester, the settlement eventually came to be called Antigonish.

Heritage Association of Antigonish

Patrons Program: *We Appreciate Your Support!*

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Bonnie Musial, Monticello, Mississippi: Gold
Wynne and John Gillis, Bozeman, Montana: Platinum

Rosemary Overzet, Antigonish: Silver
Lyghtesome Gallery, Antigonish: Silver

Summer Ceilidhs

On Thursdays during July and August, The Antigonish Heritage Museum will host a series of ceilidhs. Please note: seating is limited. Admission: \$8.00. Time: 7:30pm.

Message from the Chair – Heritage Association of Antigonish (Working today to preserve yesterday for tomorrow.)

This year we decided to hold the Association's birthday Ceilidh during Highland Games week. The date selected was July 9, 2015. A huge crowd attended this outdoor event. Everyone enjoyed the show and we filled our donation jar with some funds to assist with new display units for the Museum. We would like to offer special thanks to MC Peter MacKenzie for introducing our ceilidh guests and keeping the program moving along. As well, a big thank to Matt Cameron and Shannon Aubrecht of **IMPACT SOUND** for providing the sound system. *(Pictured here is Mike Beach of British Columbia piping for the crowd. Mike was in the province showcasing his talent for the Nova Scotia Tattoo.)*

During the Games, students Liam, Casey and Konnel assisted with the *Tir nan Og* cultural events. We wish to say thanks to those instructors who guided the cultural component of *Tir nan Og*: Mairi Parr (Gaelic Language & Song), Terry Gottschall (Drumming), Brendan Hines (Oatcakes), and Maureen Fraser (Step-dancing). Your volunteer efforts are very much appreciated. *Moran Taing!*



The Heritage Association's summer employee continues to interview people of the community for the Memories Project.

We recently received notice that we were approved for a grant from the province of Nova Scotia in the amount of three thousand seven hundred and fifty dollars. This is a cost sharing grant to assist with the replacement and upgrading of some of the display units in the Museum. We plan to review our needs and have them built in the near future.

Until next, Take Care and God Bless.

Angus MacGillivray, BBA FCGA angus.macgillivray@ns.sympatico.ca