

The Old Train Station News

Newsletter # 112

May 2019

Dear Friends,

As I sat staring at my computer screen, I wondered what I might write about – about Mother’s Day? As a mother I, at least, expect a call from my daughters on that special day. For me it is a sign of respect for the many hours of my life devoted to their upbringing, hours devoted to listening to their troubles and hours spent in worry and hopes for them. When they were young I, like many other moms, had to endure the “special breakfast” that was generally more work than other breakfasts. But it was done out of love and wanting to make me feel special.

My own mother died in 1989 which seems like a long time ago. She was a complicated woman and her life was not an easy one. She was born May 24, 1916 in New Glasgow where her parents had gone for work. She was a middle child (Says a lot!) with an older sister and younger brother. In 1919 the family moved to Lowell, MA where a few years later, my grandmother decided she “had enough” and left. After attempting to care for the children, my grandfather deposited them in the Home for Destitute Catholic Children in Boston, run by the Sisters of Charity. Her brother and sister found good homes in foster care, but my mother had both health and behavioral issues. She was placed in several foster homes but was always returned to the Home until, threatened with “reformatory”, her Aunt, who was single, brought her back to Antigonish County to live with her. She married young to a man as ill-suited to marriage as she was and after seven children, he left. The result, as you can imagine, was the loss of all but her youngest infant – me. A life filled with abandonment from which she never fully recovered.

We all have mothers; we all have our own stories about their lives. Even within the same family, different members experience their mother differently. I went to my paternal aunt’s funeral a few years ago – family of fourteen. The minister had used “Who do you say I am?” as the reading. She had interviewed all the children asking that question of their mother. It was enlightening! The same mother who was experienced fourteen different ways.

So, what does Mother’s Day mean when we get past all the hype? It all started as a way to honour mothers who sacrificed their children during wars and how they cared for those who survived. It was a way to say thank-you for your love and devotion, for the little things you did every day to make life better. It is for all the times you picked me up, kissed the tears away, bandaged the cut and hugged the bruised ego, healed my broken heart, laughed at my stupid jokes, clapped in the audience, walked me down the aisle, held my hand when I gave birth, greeted my child with love and so much more. Even if you can’t find your mother in this list, what did she teach you by her absence?



Mothers can never be all things to all their children. I still think of my mother – with a combination of love and compassion. She was not everything I needed but some things I needed to learn for myself.

The Epistolarian

“Gloir Dhe Agus Math Ar Cinnidh”

The Glory of God and the Good of our Race.

The Scottish Catholic Society of Canada (1919-1946) was an organization brought into being through the efforts of Father Donald M. MacAdam of Sydney. The aim was to extend its efforts to all Catholics of Scottish extraction within Canada but as of 1927, the society remained within the confines of the Antigonish Diocese.

At a meeting on July 1st, 1919, a large number of priests and laymen assembled at Iona in answer to an appeal sent out by Father MacAdam. Their work began by setting out the aims of the society and choosing the above motto which would express the aims of the society.

- a) The preservation of the Catholic faith amongst Catholic Scots, and the dissemination of a more accurate knowledge of the teachings of the Catholic Church.
- b) The propagation of a more accurate knowledge of the History of Scotland.
- c) The advancement educationally, morally, socially and otherwise of all Catholics of the Scottish race.
- d) The preservation and study of the Gaelic language and literature, and of the traditions of the Scottish race.

By the end of 1920, eight councils had been established in Cape Breton and by the mid-1920s, Council **No. 12**, St. Margaret's of Arisaig and Council **No. 13** at St Andrew's had been established in Antigonish County.

The Casket reported in 1927, “an important part in the programme of every council meeting is the work of the *Seanachaidh* or storyteller. After the customary order of business is completed this officer directs the regular programme of entertainment, which includes readings and songs in Gaelic and in English, bagpipe and violin music, lectures and studies in Scottish history and traditions, *Highland Fling*, *Sword Dance*, *Sean Triubhas* and social dancing.” In the year 1922 the Rev. S.P. MacDonald began the publication of “*Mosgladh*” (The Awakening), a magazine devoted to the interests of the society which was adopted as its official publication.

Through the efforts of several priests, laity and parish communities, the councils thrived for many years. Each council made different priorities in their work including teaching Gaelic in school, recitals, dance, plays, music, reading and speaking Gaelic for adults, having picnics and concerts, doing relief work, improvements to farming methods, and the establishment of a scholarship fund. Many benefits have accrued to the Scottish people of the diocese through the activities of the society over the 27 years of its existence. They can certainly be credited with keeping the Scottish culture alive, especially and most abundantly, in Cape Breton.



Thanks go out to those who supported our book sale. People picked up some real gems and hard-to-find research books. The proceeds will go to some important needs here at the Museum.

Solve this mystery!

We recently received a poem about a logging crew in **Alder River** behind **Weaver's farm**, north of Doyle's Lake in the winter of 1936/7. The poem was found by Nick Williams. We would love to have your help to identify and learn more about the people and the lumber company mentioned in the poem. The camp and sawmill were set up on site

MacLean's logging crew:

Lauchie – trail crew head

Ben Elms – teamster from Truro

Herman Grant from North Grant - saw

John Doyle – canter

Herman – saw

Gerald from Barney's River – “tends off”

William Dewar – edger

West – “tends off”

MacPherson – trimmer

Alex – steam

Marshall – cook

Gene & Johnnie Tramble – haul ties to Heatherton

Williams Brothers – **Mi'kmaq** men and **Fred** – loading crew



Back: George, Roderick, Donald (father), Donald L,
Front: Annie J, Mary C, Mary Ann (mother), Kennedy, Marie T

A Family with a Religious Calling

Donald MacLean (1855-1936) of the West River, married Mary Anne Kennedy and moved to the Glen Road, purchasing the Charlie Thompson property. They raised a family that have held a local record for the number of their children who entered the religious life. There were three priests in the family; Rev. George MacLean (1900-1980), Rev. A. Kennedy MacLean (1889-1968), who wrote a family history, and Rt. Rev. Donald L. MacLean (1886-1963). Three of their daughters were members of the Sisters of St. Martha; Marie Theresa - Sister St. Clement (1895-1955), Mary Catherine - Sister St. DeChantal (1891-1963), and Annie Jane - Sister Redempta (1896-1951). The last of this family, Roderick Duncan (1904-1994) was married to Anne MacIntyre of Charlottetown. They lived in Moncton, NB and he was in the church supply business. He was an avid alumnus and great supporter of St. F X, which his four children also attended.

A beautiful stone sits in St. Andrew's R.C. Cemetery in Egerton as a memorial to a young mother and infant child. **Mary Fitzgerald**, wife of James, was 23 years old when she died on Feb 6, 1861.

*“She is gone forever to dwell
with God above. She left her tender
Lamb to sleep with but a mother's
love. Alas, her husband left to mourn
but still must think it fait that God
has taken her from him
to live among the blest.”*

The Importance of Letters

Malcolm MacMillan from Head of Lochaber writing to his son, Mack in Wilbur, Washington in November 1909 tells of a heavy fall rainstorm that October.

"We had a very big rain about a month ago. I think the biggest the oldest people here ever seen. The enterfields up to Fishers was all covered with watter you could not see a spot of ground. The bridge at the head and the one at the foot went and tore up the road bad. Hulbert is only commencing to grind now it tore up things bad round his mill. John K Inglis will do nothing this fall. In Antigonish the watter they say was four feet in the middle of the town and down at the station five feet deep."

Malcolm kept in touch with his sons, two of which were homesteading in Alberta, and three of his daughters were working in the "Boston States". There were few young people who chose to remain on the unproductive farms leaving parents feeling the loss of their children, grandchildren and worried about their health and whether they married well.

A Mother's Love

Her love is like an island in life's
ocean, vast and wide
A peaceful quiet shelter
From the wind, the rain, the tide.

'Tis bound on the North by Hope,
By patience on the West,
By tender council on the South
And on the East by Rest.

Above it like a beacon light
Shine Faith and Truth, and Prayer;
And thro' the changing scenes of life
I find a haven there.

Author Unknown

Renovations are slowly underway to the office area of the Museum. It is hoped it will be more functional and we have a better, faster and more efficient computer system once installed. The floor will be tiled and a long counter for computers and badly-needed office storage installed.

AT THE MUSEUM

From our Displays:

May: Alistair Hamilton has provided an interesting **Loyalist Era Military Costume** with accoutrements for display.

Come see the new display of **musical instruments** and related material. Can you identify the mystery instrument?

We have added **lights** to our display cabinets. What a difference!

FYI:

Drop by and buy tickets on our **quilted wall hanging** and support our efforts to buy display panels for the windows.

Have you become a **member of the Museum** or remembered to renew your membership? Your support is important to us and our work.

Work is afoot to have a **Museum Calendar** ready by summer for the 2020 year. Watch for a future announcement! Great Christmas gift!

