



THE WRECK OF THE BRIG *Earl of Dalhousie*

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FAREWELL TO SCOTLAND

Home of our hearts! --- our father's home ---
Land of the brave and free!
The sail's flapping on the foam
That bears us far from thee!

We seek a wild and distant shore,
Beyond the Atlantic main;
We leave thee, to return no more,
Nor view thy cliffs again!

Thomas Pringle of Edinburgh, January 19, 1820
Reprinted in the *Quebec Gazette*, September 19, 1821

The Revelation

In the late 1950s my great aunt, Mrs Thomas Young *nee* Catherine McPhee (1888-1973) of Avoca, Quebec, told me the most amazing story. I was taking advantage of her visit to my family in Dauphin, Manitoba, to quiz her about our early McPhee ancestors. She didn't seem to know much about them, except that "they came from Fort William." In fact, whenever I asked her a question about the McPhees, she ended up talking about her great grandparents, the Murrays. "Oh," she said, very matter-of-factly, as if to belie the obvious drama of the event, "they were shipwrecked off the coast of Anticosti when they came out to Canada." I was astounded. Did she know the name of the ship? No. When did they come out? She really didn't know. She went on to say, however, that "they lost everything", except the "mugs" that had been given to their two little daughters as souvenirs just before they left Scotland. What happened to the mugs? That, she didn't know, either. Since I couldn't think of any other probing questions, young and inexperienced as I was¹, we went on to talk of other things.

The Mugs

The years went by. I returned to family history in earnest in the early 1970s. I remembered Aunt Kate's story about the Murrays being shipwrecked. Strangely enough, I never thought to ask her cousin, Alexander Murray McPhee (1881-1975), about the shipwreck on a visit to his home in Grenville, Quebec, when he was over 90 years of age. While we were chatting in his living room, he pointed out three ceramic objects that had belonged to the Murrays. Two were ordinary late 19th century transferware pieces, but the third one was clearly much earlier and obviously made in Great Britain, judging from the entwined rose, thistle and shamrock decorative motifs (see photographs below). The significance of the Masonic insignia on the bottom remains unclear in this context.²



Side 1

Side 2

Bottom

Height of jug: 5.25 inches

Diameter of base: 3.5 inches

As I examined what could be described as a large cream jug, it gradually dawned on me that this might be one of the “mugs” that Mary (1817-1868) and Catherine Murray (1818-1906) had saved from the shipwreck. I remember seeing a similar jug in a ceramics museum somewhere along the Royal Mile in Edinburgh in the mid 1980s but I didn't have time to pursue the matter then. Some day I hope to have a Scottish ceramics expert authenticate the jug, which is now in my possession, as being from that period.

The Quest

I tried many times to find more about the shipwreck, but without the name of the ship or a date, it was impossible to trace. When the Internet appeared, I surfed for hours searching for a nameless, dateless shipwreck off the coast of Anticosti. Not a trace. Then early one Sunday morning in late January 2006, I decided to while away some time by doing a Google search for "McPhee 1821". The search dredged up pages. I plodded through them all until about 1 P.M. when I was half way through the passenger lists for ships bound for Quebec City in that year. I debated giving up, since I was starting to get hungry, but I decided to finish 1821 before having lunch.

The Discovery

Then, lo and behold, the following notice appeared in the passenger lists under September 21.

Intelligence. --- The Brig³ Rob Roy has brought Capt. Scott, and part of the crew and passengers of the Brig Earl of Dalhousie, of Greenock, from Fort William --- Says he lost the Brig on September 6th instant, between the east end and south point of Anticosti --- All saved, but 140 remain on the Island that could not be got off.⁴

I sat there for the longest time, knowing but not believing. I finally accepted that I had just discovered what I had not been able to find in 30 years. This was the mysterious shipwreck!

The Paper Trail

The wreck of the Brig *Earl of Dalhousie* was widely reported in the Quebec press of the day --- *Quebec Mercury*, *Quebec Gazette*, *Quebec Chronicle*, *Montreal Gazette*. After the initial report the story unfolds in stages. The *Quebec Mercury* reported the following arrival under "Port of Quebec" on September 25, 1821.

24 Sept. Bark⁵ John Howard, (Captain) Smith, sailed 15th August from London, to Campbell & Sheppard, ballast --- 100 settlers from Anticosti, being part of the wreck of the Brig Earl of Dalhousie, 40 remain on the Island.⁶

Some of the crew arrived in Quebec City from Father Point⁷ on the same day.

Sept. 24, Brig Elizabeth, (Captain) John Thompson, 19th Aug from Liverpool, to R. Hamilton & Co. salt, brought 4 of the crew of the Earl of Dalhousie, from Father Point.⁸

The rest of the passengers arrived much later on a schooner that appears to have been sent purposely to fetch them.

Oct 12, Schooner⁵ Dolphin, (no captain shown), 13 days from Anticosti, with 20 passengers, being the remainder⁹ of the people wrecked in the Earl of Dalhousie.¹⁰

The News in Scotland

The shipwreck was even reported in the *Glasgow Herald*.

The ship Earl of Dalhousie, with emigrants from the Highlands to Canada, was lost in the mouth of the river St. Lawrence, early in September. All the lives on board were saved; but the unfortunate passengers have most probably lost the greater part of their effects. -- See Ship News.¹¹

On the same page, under the title Ship News, appeared an expanded version of this story.

SHIP NEWS

Greenock, Oct. 21. -- Arrived this morning, the Caesar, from Quebec; sailed from thence on the 23^d, and got clear of the river on the 26th September. On the 6th September the brig Earl of Dalhousie of Greenock, Scott, master, from Fort William, with passengers, went ashore in thick weather¹² upon the Island of Anticosti, about 20 miles from the east end of it, and became a total wreck. Part of the passengers had been previously landed at Cape Breton, and the remainder (about 140) were on shore where the brig was wrecked; but as the Caesar passed Anticosti, coming down, Captain Scott had arrived at the island, with two schooners, from Quebec, to take up the passengers. -- No lives were lost.¹¹

The Site of the Wreck

Anticosti Island is an immense table rock that looms up out of the waters of the northern Gulf of the St Lawrence, crowned with dark impenetrable forests. One author describes Anticosti as follows: "(...) Flanked by steep cliffs and surrounded by dangerous reefs, the Island was once a sailor's nightmare,

cut off by powerful currents and often shrouded in fog. It was dubbed the "Graveyard of the Gulf". "Nowhere in the world have more shipwrecks occurred," Lieut. Henry Bayfield wrote in 1827 when he began to map the St. Lawrence for the Royal Navy."¹³



Anticosti Island

Although it is difficult, if not impossible, to pinpoint the exact location of the wreck, the reports of the day place the site "between the east end and the south point of Anticosti" and "about 20 miles from the east end of it". All things considered, this would put the approximate site at point X shown on the map below.



The Sale of the Wreck

It was common practice at this period to sell salvageable wrecks. The Quebec newspapers often carried notices of sale for recent wrecks and the *Earl of Dalhousie* was no exception. The following notice appeared in the *Quebec Mercury* on October 16, 1821.¹⁴

<p>IN VIRTUE of the ORDER of His Majesty's VICE ADMIRAL of the Province of Canada, made and published in this suit, on the 15th day of the</p>	<p>For Account and Benefit of the Underwriters or others concerned, On THURSDAY next, 18th instant, at ONE o'clock precisely, on Messrs. Irvine, M'Naught & Co.'s Wharf will be sold, THE BRIG EARL OF DALHOUSIE, of Greenock, Scotland, Master, burthen per register 220 Tons, as she now lies or did lie wrecked on Anticosti, about 20 miles South-east of the Post, with all her Rigging, &c. Immediately after which—On the Wharf—belonging to the above vessel: A Suit of sails, a Cable, and several other articles. WURTELE & FRASER, A. & B. N. B. About 60 new Water Casks and 2 Bower An- chors are on board. All the Rigging on the Strand. Farther particulars may be known on applying to Capt. Scott, at Mr. John Eason's Quebec, 15th Oct. 1821.</p>	<p>Quebec, 17th Oct. 1821</p> <p>C. RIVER London, CE SELECTI able GOODS, ing season." Quebec, Pa October 1st.</p> <p>C. RIVER de jour ment nouveau Goût et à la F</p>
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Notice of Sale for the wreck *Earl of Dalhousie*

Following the sale, ship master and part owner Peter Scott duly appeared before notary Archibald Campbell in Quebec City on October 19, 1821 to sign a deed¹⁵ transferring ownership of the wreck to local merchants John Saxton Campbell and William Sheppard for the sum of forty pounds.

Salvage Operation Turns Tragic

Unfortunately, the attempt to salvage the wreck, by the men who had been sent to Anticosti by the new owners, proved tragic, as reported on October 31.

Intelligence. The Schooner bound to the Wreck of the Earl of Dalhousie, at Anticosti, on Sunday night unfortunately lost her Mainmast --- two of her men were thrown overboard, and one of them, Lachance, drowned; the other, Filion, saved, though he remains so ill as not to be able to proceed on the voyage.¹⁶

The Struggle for Survival

The survivors of the *Earl of Dalhousie* were cast up on the shores of a desolate island far from any human habitation. Some one hundred of them spent approximately ten days marooned on the island, from the 6th of September until about the 16th, assuming four days to travel up the St Lawrence River and to arrive in Quebec City on the 20th. The remaining forty --- or twenty depending on how the "missing" twenty are accounted for --- spent about twenty-four days stranded on Anticosti, since it took 13 days, according to the newspaper report, to reach Quebec City by the 12th of October. Why it took so long to get everyone off the island is not clear.

One can only marvel at the resilience of the survivors. A snippet in the *Quebec Gazette* on October 11 gives an indication of the weather in Quebec City. Conditions on Anticosti could not have been any better, since it was farther north.

Yesterday morning a light powdering of snow, the first this season, was observed on the tops of the most distant mountains visible to the northward of this city. It disappeared however in the course of the day. The first frost sufficient to form ice on the standing pools of water along the roads, happened on Tuesday night. Hopes are entertained that the rainy season which has persisted since the 29th August, is now terminated.¹⁷

What untold agony and hardships must the survivors have suffered for so long in such a desolate place with the icy fingers of autumn upon them, following a long and difficult voyage across the North Atlantic only to be tossed up on shore with what remained of their meagre supplies spoiled in the wreck! Oral history remains silent on their plight.

Quebec City: The Return to Civilization

Port of Quebec (1821) ¹⁸		
Total Number of Vessels arrived this Season 420		
Settlers	<i>do</i>	9050

This is the view that would have greeted the passengers of the *Earl of Dalhousie* as they came in sight of Quebec City. The natives in the foreground remind us that European settlements in Canada in 1821 were small, and few and far between.



It is not known if the passengers of the *Earl of Dalhousie*, referred to as "settlers" in official ship records, received any assistance once they reached Quebec City. No mention is made of them in the *Report of the Quebec Emigrants' Society for 1821*.¹⁹

The other obvious source of assistance may have been the Presbyterian Church in Quebec City, but it was not possible to consult the Sessions Clerk's records before publication.

Passengers Lists

I now had solid evidence of the shipwreck, but I still didn't have a passenger list. Presumably it went down with the *Earl of Dalhousie* since passenger lists usually accompanied the ships. I knew, however, that the Murrays eventually settled in Grenville Township (about half way between Montreal and Ottawa on the north shore of the Ottawa River).²⁰ So they obviously had to get from Quebec City to Montreal. How would I have done that in 1821? I probably would have taken the relatively new steamship service. Back on the Internet to peruse the steamship passenger lists, I discovered the following information on two different steamships, *Lady Sherbrooke* and *Malsham*.²¹

Lady Sherbrooke - 21st trip up, Quebec to Montreal 25th September 1821

Full Heading Titles showing abbreviations in **bold**:
 Ticket Number No. | Passengers Names **N**ames | Cabin **C** | Steerage **St** | (*destinations*) Three Rivers **3R**
 | Sorel **S** | Montreal **M** | Amount (*of fare in £/s/d*) **F** | Amount Paid (*in £/s/d*) **P** | Remarks **R**emarks

note: this manifest sometimes lists two seemingly unrelated people on one line . . . to allow for ease of searching, I have put each on their own line, but have left the combined fare cost of £1/- for example, in place for the joint entries.

note: the Scottish passengers on this list, whose fares are payable by the firm Shuter & Wilkins . . . black ticket numbers 34 to 127 inclusive, comprising upwards of 90 persons, are some of the survivors of the wreck of the brig **Earl of Dalhousie**, of Greenock, from Fort William. The brig Earl of Dalhousie, was lost September 6th between the east and south point of Anticosti. All passengers were saved, however they were brought to Quebec on different ships on different dates. The group below arrived aboard the bark John Howard, September 24th. You will see below, many instances of just one adult travelling with several children, so consider, that those might be wives, with husbands (?) to follow on the schooner **Dolphin** which arrived at Quebec on October 12th.

No.	Names	C	St	3R	S	M	F	P	Remarks
34-38	A. Cameron & one child over 12 & 3 children under 12 years		x			x	1/15/-		payable by Shuter & Wilkins
39-41	J. McTyre & wife & one child under 12 years		x			x	1/5/-		"
42-45	W. McTvish [!] & wife & two children under 12 years		x			x	1/10/-		"
46-49	A. Murray & wife & two children under 12 years		x			x	1/10/-		"
50-53	A. McMillan & wife & two children under 12 years		x			x	1/10/-		"
54-55	D. McMillan & wife		x			x	1/-/-		"
56-60	D. Cameron & wife & three children under 12 years		x			x	1/15/-		"
61-67	H. McPhie & wife & five children under 12 years		x			x	2/5/-		"
68-71	C. Cameron & three children under 12 years		x			x	1/5/-		"
72-77	M. McPhie & five children under 12 years		x			x	1/15/-		"
78-80	D. McPherson & wife & one child under 12 years		x			x	1/5/-		"
81	J. McPherson		x			x	-/10/-		"
82-85	M. Bellie & three children under 12 years		x			x	1/5/-		"
86-91	D. Cameron & wife & four children under 12 years		x			x	2/-/-		payable by Shuter & Wilkins
92-95	A. Fraser & wife & two children under 12 years		x			x	1/10/-		"
96-99	M. Kennedy & one child over 12 & two children under 12 years		x			x	1/10/-		"
100-103	M. McKenzie & three children above 12 years		x			x	2/-/-		"
104	H. Cameron		x			x	-/10/-		"
105	P. Grant		x			x	-/10/-		"
106-109	M. Crawford & three children under 12 years		x			x	1/5/-		"
110-112	M. McCallum & two children under 12 years		x			x	1/-/-		"
113-116	M. McDonald & three children under 12 years		x			x	1/5/-		"
117	D. Rankin		x			x	-/10/-		"
118-121	M. McVicar & one child above 12 & two children under 12 years		x			x	1/10/-		"
122-126	M. Cameron & four children under 12 years		x			x	1/10/-		"
127	D. McCrum		x			x	-/10/-		"

The second party arrived more than a month later on the steamship *Malsham*.

Malsham - 26th trip up, Quebec to Montreal 28th October 1821

Full Heading Titles showing abbreviations in bold:
 Ticket Number No. | Passengers Names **N**ames | Cabin **C** | Steerage **St** | (destinations) Three Rivers **3R**
 | Sorel **S** | Montreal **M** | Amount (of fare in £/s/d) **F** | Amount Paid (in £/s/d) **P** | Remarks **R**emarks

No.	Names	C	St	3R	S	M	F	P	Remarks
53-58	A. McPhie & family six over 12 years (total)		x		x		3/- /-		payable by Shuter & Wilkins
59-62	& four children under 12 years		x		x		1/- /-		All their Baggage sent down to the Brewery
63-68	Neal McColl & family six over 12 years (total)		x			x	3/-/-		All their Baggage sent down to the Brewery
69-71	& three children under 12 years		x			x	-/15/-		
72-76	Dugald McColl & family five over 12 years (total)		x			x	2/10/-		
77-79	& three children under 12 years		x			x	-/15/-		
80-81	Angus Colquohoun & family two over 12 years (total)		x			x	1/-/-		
82-88	& seven children under 12 years		x			x	1/15/-		
89	Catherine McDonald		x			x	-/10/-		
90-91	& two children under 12 years		x			x	-/10/-		
92	Catherine McDonald		x			x	-/10/-		
93	Ronald McPheal		x			x	-/10/-		
94	Ronald McDonald		x			x	-/10/-		

National Archives of Canada MG 28, III, 57 - Reel M-8272 vol 6

As I started down these lists for the first time, I had several genealogy moments! There were the Murrays (No 46-49) on the first list, for the *Lady Sherbrooke*. You had to know what you were looking at, but the information was clear. Then, as I continued down the lists, I had one surprise after the other! There were three big McPhee families, and a large number of Camerons. A statistical compilation by family name shows the following breakdown: Camerons 26; McPhies 24; McColls 19; Colquohouns 10; McDonalds 9; McMillans 6; McTavishes, Murrays, McPhersons, Bellies, Frasers, Kennedys, McKenzies, Crawfords, and McVicars, 4 each; McIntyres and McCallums, 3 each; Grants, Rankins, McCrums and McPheals, 1 each; for a total of 140. In terms of percentage, the Camerons constituted 19%, the McPhies 17%, and the McColls 14%, for a total of 50%, of all the passengers on board at the time of the shipwreck.

Who were these People?

Now that I had a tentative passenger list, the next task was to identify the passengers. The Murrays could be identified beyond any doubt. Also, Aunt Kate's insistence that our McPhees were closely related to the Camerons seemed to suggest that my great-great-grandfather Donald McPhee (c.1810-1869) and his sister, Janet (1815-1897), could have been amongst the children in the three McPhie families. But which one? More research is necessary to answer that question.

And what of the other passengers? By a strange twist of fate, Nancy Owston from Kingsport, Tennessee, USA, contacted me through the website for the Scotch Road Cemetery Association²², and we discovered in an exchange of e-mails that one of her Cameron ancestors also spoke of a shipwreck on her way out to Canada. By comparing notes we came to the conclusion that she, too, was on the *Earl of Dalhousie*. Nancy said:

They never knew the name of the ship or where it crashed. I asked Helen (i.e. Helen Elizabeth (Betty) Andrews, *nee* Rilling, a great-great-great granddaughter of Alexander Cameron 1754-1834 and Catherine Boyd 1767-1842) this and she said Emily (Cameron, youngest child of Alexander Cameron and Catherine Boyd) didn't know. Emily said they crashed off the coast far away from where they eventually came to live in Quebec. (...) She only knew it was a long distance from where they were supposed to land in Quebec. (...) They were blown away off course. They went ashore way off the coast and it took several days to get to Quebec.²³ (...) They came to Quebec (City) on different ships from where they crashed.²⁴ (...) She was 7 years old and the youngest in the family.²⁵

A family history in Nancy's possession describes the voyage as follows:

Aunt Emily Cameron was a child of seven years. One or two of the party died of ship's cholera²⁶, either on the voyage or soon after arriving in Canada. The voyage was a rough one, they (...) were six or seven weeks in crossing. Arriving in Quebec, they were greeted by the Asiatic cholera²⁶ of which two children died.²⁷

Although more research is necessary, this family of Camerons with only the four youngest children may be the first one (No 34-38) to appear on the passenger list for the steamship *Lady Sherbrooke*.

Montreal

Montreal Census, June 1821²⁸

Total Population: 18,767 English: 6,877 Houses: 2,274

Montreal was a much smaller community in 1821. On their approach into the harbour, they would have seen the city nestled at the foot of Mount Royal.



A view of Montreal from St Helen's Island in the St Lawrence River with the Catholic Parish Church to the left and Mount Royal in the background c.1810 ²⁹

A chance remark on the *Malsham* passenger list states that "all their baggage went down to the Brewery." This probably refers to Molson's Brewery east of Montreal below St Mary's Current since John Molson owned and operated both steamships. The passenger lists also show that the fares for the group were paid by Shuter & Wilkins who were important merchants in Montreal. Surprisingly, this is where the trail grows cold. We do not pick it up again until 1825 in Grenville Township on the Ottawa River.

Sifting Through the Evidence

This, then, is the sum total of what we know, at the time of publication, about the wreck of the *Earl of Dalhousie*. But like any story, it has a beginning and an end, no matter how obscure they may be. We shall now attempt to interpret what little information is available in an effort to reconstruct the circumstances prior to the departure of the emigrants from Scotland and to piece together evidence of their arrival at their final destination.

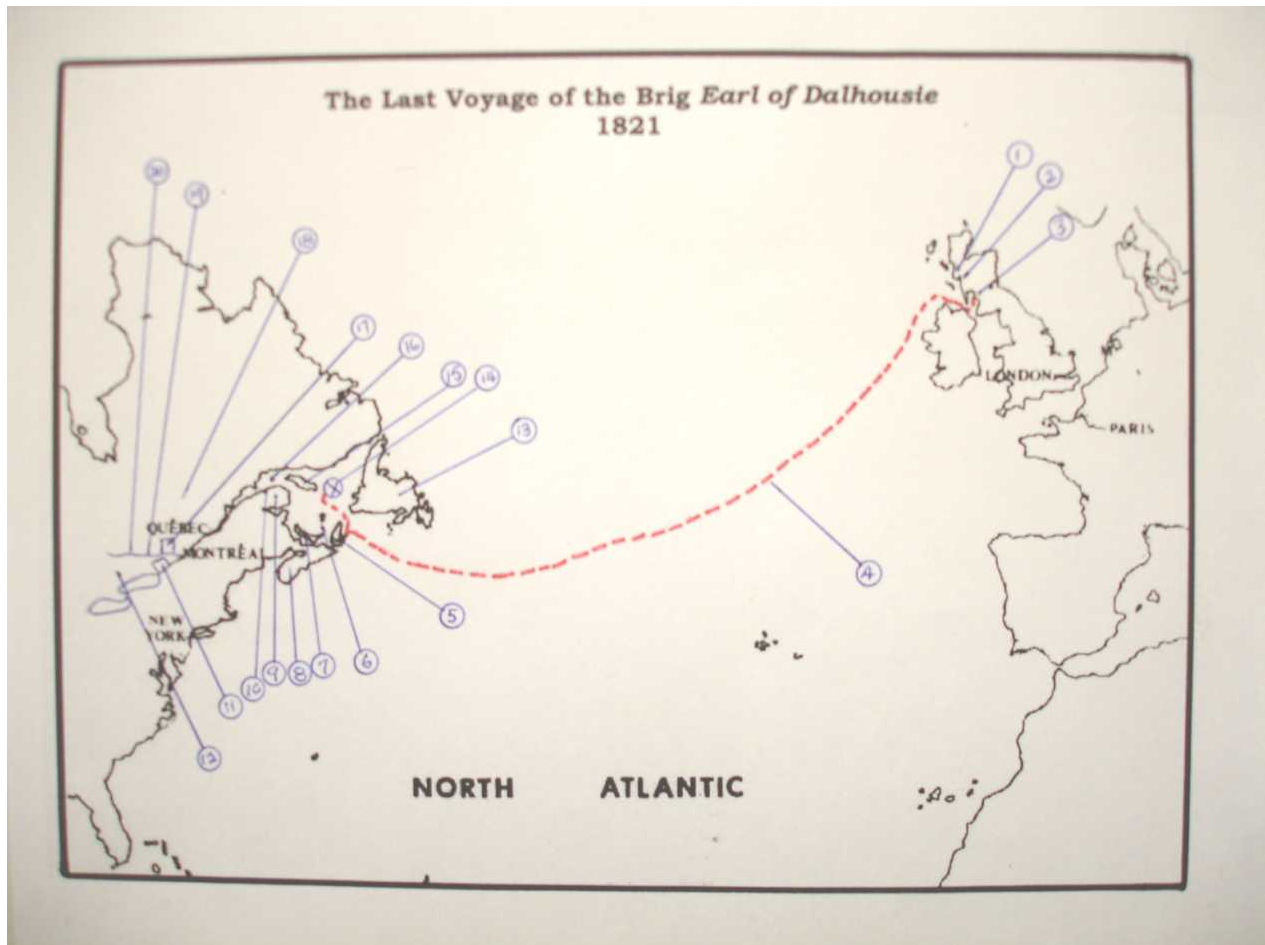
In the Highlands

The passenger list itself suggests links with the Lochaber area. The intermarriage of Camerons and McPhees at this period is well documented in the old parish registers for Kilmalie Parish with its church at Corpach. Family tradition, too, links them very closely. There were at least subsequent connections between the Camerons, McPhees and Colquhouns³⁰ in the Fort William area. Alexander Murray's wife was Janet Cameron and his mother, Mary Cameron, both probably with connections to Inverness-shire. It is indeed likely that virtually all the passengers were related to one another, perhaps in various ways. This is consistent with emigration patterns for the early period of emigration 1760-1820: Highlanders emigrated in extended family groups which often included friends and neighbours.

Secondly, where did they come from? The evidence at hand shows that they were probably living in the immediate area of Fort William, Corpach and Banavie³¹, just before they emigrated. Indeed, there is a reference in the records to the people who were cleared from Glendessary in about 1804 and who, having nowhere else to go, made their way down to Corpach Moss, and were subsequently employed on the Caledonian Canal.³² Before the clearance, Glendessary was full of Camerons and McPhees. Some of the passengers on the brig may very well have come originally from Glendessary or Loch Arkaig. If this theory is correct, it would explain how the group came together --- family connections forged in Glendessary and tempered in adversity and common labour --- , how they paid for their passage --- through wages earned on construction rather than the sale of Highland cattle and other assets --- , and why they left in 1821 --- the completion of the Canal and the worsening economic depression after the Napoleonic wars --- rather than earlier, as had other groups from Glendessary and Loch Arkaig.³³

Outward Bound

The stage was then set for the departure. The *Earl of Dalhousie* was hired to take the group across the Atlantic. Someone, either one or more individuals, in the group must have acted as leaders to charter the brig, collect fares and pay the ship master.³⁴ She sailed from Fort William probably in the second or third week of July 1821 and took six or seven weeks to cross the ocean (four to eight weeks was the average). There were reports that sickness broke out on board, although it is not clear if any passengers actually died during the voyage. The brig stopped at Cape Breton Island to let off an unknown number of passengers before heading into the Gulf of St Lawrence where it was blown off course in stormy, foggy weather. She went down on September 6.



Key to Map

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 Lochaber | 13 Newfoundland |
| 2 Fort William | 14 Site of Shipwreck |
| 3 Glasgow | 15 Anticosti Island |
| 4 Approximate Trans-Atlantic Route | 16 St Lawrence River |
| 5 Cape Breton Island | 17 Grenville Township, Quebec |
| 6 Madgalen Islands | - Avoca |
| 7 Prince Edward Island | - Grenville |
| 8 Nova Scotia | - Scotch Road Cemetery |
| 9 Gaspé Peninsula | 18 Quebec (Lower Canada) |
| 10 Father Point | 19 Ottawa |
| 11 Glengarry County, Ontario | 20 Ottawa River |
| 12 Ontario (Upper Canada) | |

Final Destination

Although we lose track of the passengers shortly after they reach Montreal, we eventually find some of them in Grenville on the Ottawa River.

Alexander Murray appears on the first census return for Grenville Township in 1825, but does not appear to have applied for land until 1827²⁰. When it came time for the government to grant him title, Dugald McColl (No 72-76) vouched for him. Both Dugald and Neil McColl (No 63-68) with their children appear on the 1825 census, as does a Malcolm McPhee with wife and five children. Could this be the M. McPhie with five children under 12 years on the list for the steamship *Lady Sherbrooke* (No 72-77)? Donald McPhee, possibly a child in one of the three McPhie families, who later married Alexander Murray's daughter Mary bought his land in Grenville Township in 1834 from a Donald Cameron who may have been married to a Catherine McPhee. Donald McPhee was a short walk from his future father-in-law's lot. The McIntyre family from Kilmar, Quebec, claims to have come from Fort William, and there are McIntyres on the steamship lists (*Lady Sherbrooke*, No 39-41). Once again, more research is necessary to make definitive connections.

Why Grenville?

If these are the passengers from the *Earl of Dalhousie*, what would take them to Grenville? It wasn't for the promise of excellent farm land, for Grenville Township is nothing but rocky hills, and Highland emigrants of this period were not farmers. If they had in fact worked on the Caledonian Canal, as suggested previously, they would have had the skills to work on the Grenville Canal. Construction on the Grenville Canal had started in 1819 but work progressed slowly, partly because it was too cold to continue in the winter. Alexander Murray may have waited until 1827 to apply for land in Grenville Township, once the work on the canal was well advanced -- the canals along the Ottawa River were completed in 1834 -- before he decided to stay there. The massive stone foundation of Donald McPhee's two-storey log house, which still stands in Grenville Township, and the huge dry-wall fireplace in Alexander Murray's one-storey log house both took more than a passing knowledge of stonework to build.

Another reason why some of the passengers went to Grenville may have been to join relatives and friends who had emigrated earlier. This may explain why an Archibald McPhee (*Malsham*, No 53-58 ?) married to a Mary Cameron appears on the 1825 census for Chatham Township, next to Grenville, living on river front property owned by Angus McPhee who had emigrated in 1802.³³ Archibald McMillan, tacksman at Murlaggan at the headwaters of Loch Arkaig, who had brought some 400 Highlanders from Glendessary and Loch Arkaig to Canada in 1802³³, finally settled in Grenville Village after many adventures. He would certainly have known the passengers on the *Earl of Dalhousie* and was in a position to offer them land along the north shore of the Ottawa River, including Grenville Township.

Conclusion

Some of these hypotheses remain to be proved conclusively, but so far there is enough evidence to strongly suggest that the survivors of the last voyage of the Brig *Earl of Dalhousie* in 1821 originated in Lochaber, and quite possibly even Loch Arkaig and Glendessary, Scotland, and finally settled in Grenville Township, Province of Quebec, Canada.

Tribute

This story is a tribute to Aunt Kate. It would have been lost forever if she had never thought to mention it. I sometimes wonder what else she knew but didn't tell me, simply because I didn't find the right questions to ask her. I will never know.

Gone but not forgotten

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

I am convinced that more of the story remains to be told. I suspect that there are people in the Highlands today who may know of ancestors who emigrated to Canada at this time. I would be delighted to hear from anyone who may know anything about this ship or any of the passengers on board. If we pool our knowledge, we may be able to identify all the passengers, trace their kinship ties, discover who led the group, and determine how the trip was organized. Although this was not the earliest or largest group of Scottish settlers to emigrate to Canada, it can nevertheless offer a fascinating insight into events in Lochaber prior the departure in 1821 and establish a direct link between the Highlands and a largely unreported Scottish settlement in Canada.

Cecil J. McPhee

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*An expanded version of this story will be posted on the
 Scotch Road Cemetery Association website*

www.scotchroadcemetery.com



Notes

¹ Fifty years after this conversation, in view of the tentative passenger list that appears later in this article, it occurs to me that I assumed that the McPhees and the Murrays travelled to Canada on different ships, whereas Aunt Kate may have known that they were on the same one. This may explain some of the confusion.

² It would seem reasonable that giving a jug with the Masonic insignia on the bottom must have had some significance to both the giver(s) and the recipients' parents. Was the giver a Mason? Was the recipients' father, Alexander Murray? Freemasonry is reputed to have been popular amongst stonemasons. Alexander almost certainly worked on the Caledonian Canal in about 1818, and his father, John Murray, was described as a "workman Crinan Canal" in his son John's baptism in 1799. John Murray, Senior, later worked on the Glasgow, Paisley & Johnstone Canal according to his son Daniel's obituary. There is also a family story that an ancestor -- likely John Murray, Senior -- was a stonemason. The Freemasons were also associated with the Orange Lodge, and since Alexander Murray's grandson and foster child, Alexander McPhee, was an Orangeman, this, too, may partly explain the significance.

³ Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia, describes this type of vessel as follows:

"... a brig is a vessel with two square-rigged masts." It is "...generally built on a larger scale than the schooner, and often approaches in magnitude to the full-sized, three-masted ship." "Brigs vary in length between 75 and 165 ft (20-50 m) with tonnages up to 480." (...) "A brig made of pine in the nineteenth century was designed to last about twenty years (many lasted longer)."



A typical brig of the period

⁴ *Quebec Mercury*, Supplement, September 21, 1821, Vol XVII, No 38, under Port of Quebec/Arrived.

The arrival of the Brig *Rob Roy* --- "Sept. 20, Brig Rob Roy, Kenn, 29 days from Belfast, to order bricks and goods" --- also mentioned in the same issue of the *Quebec Mercury*, indicates that the passengers of the Brig *Earl of Dalhousie* arrived in Quebec City on the 20th September on a freight vessel.

⁵ In the 19th century, ships, barks, brigs and schooners were differentiated by their rigging. As a rule of thumb, the size of the vessel was determined by the number of masts, with ships being the biggest and schooners, the smallest.

⁶ *Quebec Mercury*, September 25, 1821, Vol XVII, No 39, p.311, under Port of Quebec/Arrived.

⁷ Father Point or Pointe-au-Père: small community on the south shore of the St Lawrence River, about 156 miles from Quebec City and about 251 miles from the east end of Anticosti Island. In *The Emigrant's Guide to the British Settlements in Upper Canada, and the United States of America* (London: 1820), Father Point is described as the "lowest settlement on the south shore (of the St Lawrence)", and, as such, would have been the closest settlement up the River from the site of the shipwreck.

⁸ *Quebec Mercury*, Supplement, Sept 28, 1821, Vol XVII, No 39, under Port of Quebec/Arrived.

⁹ According to the reports, this leaves 20 passengers unaccounted for. Perhaps some were taken up to Quebec City with Capt Scott on the Brig *Rob Roy*.

¹⁰ *Quebec Mercury*, October 16, 1821, Vol XVII, No 42, p.335, under Port of Quebec/Arrived.

¹¹ *Glasgow Herald*, October 22, 1821, No 1965.

¹² "Thick weather" probably refers to fog, although it may also imply rough water.

¹³ Patrice Halley, Sentinels of the St. Lawrence/Along Quebec's Lighthouse Trail (Translation of: Les Sentinelles du St-Laurent), Les Éditions de l'Homme 2002, p.198.

¹⁴ *Quebec Mercury*, October 16, 1821, Vol XVII, No 42, p.335.

¹⁵ Deed No 1998 dated October 19, 1821, M173/168, pages 972-975, Archibald Campbell. I am indebted to Gilbert Bossé for bringing this deed to my attention. For more information, see his excellent website: The Lower St Lawrence Maritime History Web-Site. He has also produced *Navigating the Lower St Lawrence in the 19th Century* (4,200 pages on CD).

¹⁶ *Quebec Mercury*, Supplement, October 26, 1821, Vol XVII, No 43, under Port of Quebec/Arrived.

¹⁷ *Quebec Gazette*, No 3158, October 11, 1821.

¹⁸ *Quebec Mercury*, November 23, 1821, Vol XVII, No 47.

¹⁹ *Quebec Mercury*, Supplement, November 16, 1821, Vol XVII, No 46, and *Quebec Mercury*, November 20, 1821, Vol XVII, No 47, p. 371.

²⁰ Location ticket No 26 issued 15th October 1827 at Grenville by J.R. King (?), Capt, (land) agent of Grenville. (pp. 72805 & 72806, RG1, L3L, Volume 148, Reel-2550, Public Archives of Canada).

²¹ This list was pieced together from two different Quebec City to Montreal steamship passenger lists which appear in TheShipsList: www.theshipslist.com/ships/passengerlists/1821/1ssep25.htm. Reproduced here by the kind permission of Sue Swiggum of TheShipsList. This information is taken from the National Archives of Canada MG 28, III, 57 - Reel M-8272 vol 6.

TheShipsList identifies the first group on the steamship *Lady Sherbrooke* as being survivors of the *Earl of Dalhousie*. It is not clear how the website arrived at that conclusion, but since their fares from Quebec City to Montreal were paid by the Montreal merchants Shuter & Wilkins, this seems like a logical conclusion. The second group on the steamship *Malsham* was also identified as survivors for the same reason.

The number of passengers on the tentative list totals 140, the same number mentioned in the newspaper articles. It should be noted, however, that the list shown here does not include any passengers who may have disembarked on Cape Breton Island, as reported in the *Glasgow Herald*.

²² The Scotch Road Cemetery Association was established in 1975 to restore and preserve the Scotch Road Cemetery in Grenville Township, Quebec. It is here that Alexander Murrar, his wife Janet Cameron, daughters Mary and Catherine, and Mary's husband Donald McPhee are all buried. Several years ago the Association decided to create a website at www.scotchroadcemetery.com to share genealogical and historical information with researchers. As Nancy Owston's query shows, this objective is proving extremely successful.

²³ Emily Cameron's observation as a child of only seven years of age is quite accurate. Although sea weary passengers on early 19th century ships bound for Quebec City must have rejoiced to see land after four to eight weeks on the Atlantic, their journey was not yet over once they had reached the mouth of the St Lawrence. It was about 407 miles from the east end of Anticosti Island to Quebec City. This distance, combined with currents, channels and prevailing westerly winds, could take considerable time to cover. The ship that carried the news of the *Earl of Dalhousie* to Glasgow left Quebec City on Sept 23 and

cleared the River on the 26th. It took a good three days to go down the St Lawrence with the current and the wind in its back. The Schooner *Dolphin*, on the other hand, took 13 days to take 20 of the survivors from Anticosti Island up the St Lawrence River to Quebec City.

²⁴ Once again, Emily Cameron's memory is correct. The Brig *Rob Roy*, the Bark *John Howard*, and the Schooner *Dolphin*, all took passengers of the *Earl of Dalhousie* from Anticosti Island to Quebec City, and some of the crew were taken up by the Brig *Elizabeth*.

²⁵ Nancy Owston, e-mail dated October 18, 2007.

²⁶ It is not clear if "ship's cholera" is in fact cholera or "ship fever", which is typhus.

Typhus is caused by the bacterium *Rickettsia typhi* and is transmitted by the fleas, lice or ticks that infest rats. The incubation period in humans is one to two weeks. The symptoms, including severe headache, sustained high fever, cough, rash, nausea, vomiting, chills and delirium, set in quickly. Untreated, the mortality rate is 10-60%, especially amongst those who are young, old or in poor health.

(Asiatic) cholera, on the other hand, is an infectious gastroenteritis caused by the bacterium *Vibrio*. It is transmitted to humans and spread by ingesting contaminated food or water. It is one of the most rapidly fatal diseases known and those infected may die within three hours.

There may have been cases of ship fever during the passage, and cholera upon landing. The fact that the passengers went on to Montreal so soon after arriving in Quebec City suggests that they were not quarantined because of illness on board.

²⁷ Written by Nancy Owston's relative, Brad William Bradford (b. 1926).

²⁸ *Quebec Mercury*, September 4, 1821, Vol XVII, No 36, p 287

²⁹ George Heriot 1759-1839, watercolour, graphite on paper.

³⁰ There are three tombstones enclosed by a wrought iron fence in the old part of the cemetery at Corpach Church, which illustrate the transition from Duncan McPhee & Mary Cameron to daughter Ann MacPhee & Malcolm Colquhoun at Kinlochiel, west of Fort William.

³¹ According to my grandfather's first cousin, Alexander Murray McPhee, his father Donald (Daniel) McPhee (1843 -1921) talked about "climbing Ben Nevis". Since he was born in Canada and never went to Scotland, this story can only have come from his father, Donald McPhee (c. 1810-1869) who would have been a child of about ten if he were on the *Earl of Dalhousie*.

In his family history of the Camerons, Brad Bradford states: "According to stories Aunt Emily Cameron told her nieces and nephews, the Cameron home in Scotland was within sight of Ben Nevis, the highest mountain in Scotland.

When the Caledonian Canal was built in about 1803, their house had to be moved."

Nancy Owston adds that "Helen said they were forced to move from their home (Muirsherlich) to Banavie around 1800 because they lived on land where the Caledonian was being constructed."

³² Somerled MacMillan, *Bygone Lochaber*, Paisley, 1971, pp 183-4.

³³ Archibald MacMillan of Murlaggan chartered three ships --- the *Friends*, the *Helen*, and the *Jane* --- which sailed from Fort William to Montreal in 1802 with over 400 emigrants. This voyage is well documented, but see, for example, Somerled MacMillan, *Bygone Lochaber*, Paisley, 1971.

Another group of emigrants may have left Fort William in the same year. Cyrus Thomas in his *History of the Counties of Argenteuil, Quebec, and Prescott, Ontario*, first published in Montreal by Lovell & Son in 1896, states on page 95: "Angus McPhie came with his family from Fort William, Invernessshire, Scotland in 1802; two brothers, Ewen and Ronald, also making the journey with him." This Angus McPhie does not appear to be the one mentioned on MacMillan's passenger list. Oral tradition in my family holds that we are closely related --- "cousins" --- to Angus who settled on the Ottawa River in Chatham Township, right next to Grenville Township.

³⁴ Daniel Murray, in a letter written to his brother Alexander from No 15 Cairnton(?) St, Tillicoultry, Scotland, on 20th Nov 1849, said: "Your friend John Ellis from Mutkill(?) was here two days ago and he stated his mother was still in good health and able to do all the work about the house the rest of the family are all well." Who was this John Ellis or Ellice? Was he connected with Edward Ellice, the son of a wealthy London merchant, who was the largest landowner in Lower Canada and who bought Glengarry Castle later in the 19th century? Was the manager of the Locheil estates in 1821 a Mr Ellice? Could this be the same person? Did he help to organize or finance the voyage? Undoubtedly much remains to be discovered about the actual organizing of the voyage.



The End