



# The Washstand's Journey

Judy Piercey



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Judy Piercey

Cover Photography: Ian Stewart

Typography: Susan Davis Sullivan

For my mother-in-law,

*Sheila Stewart,*

whose pride in her heritage and

affection for her family

inspired the quest

which led to this story.

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WORLD'S  
COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION  
CHICAGO DAY  
October 9<sup>th</sup> 1893.  
NOT GOOD  
IF  
DETACHED.  
B 2355

World's Columbian Exposition  
Expressly For  
CHICAGO DAY  
OCT 9<sup>TH</sup>  
1893.  
R. McKinley  
President.  
B 2355

## I'm back in Edmonton.

Two days of travelling from the west coast and through the mountains.

The drivers were a couple of Newfoundlanders. I heard them fretting about the travel conditions. True, there was a bit of snow. It seemed pretty inconsequential to me. And not to be unexpected. A bit of snow in November.

But then, I am more adventurous than most. I am also certainly more well-travelled than many.

I do not wish to sound boastful, for it is the truth. I have been on this earth a long time and I have witnessed much of both time and place.

If I tell you about my beginning, I think you will understand my reluctance to sound like a braggart. Modesty, in every sense of the word, was a virtue back when I began.

That was the time. 1893.

The place was the Windy City. So called because its promoters were shameless in their pursuit to host the World's Fair. Chicago, where the stench of the slaughterhouses overwhelmed visitors and residents alike, had the audacity to demand the right to invite the world. Imagine: Daring to ask people from around the world to come to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Columbus' arrival in America.

What brass!

People in New York and Washington laughed at Chicago and pursued their bids with confidence that one of their cities would win the prize. Likewise St. Louis. But the brass



*Electricity at the  
Chicago Worlds Fair*

won out. The shameless self-promoters who earned the title of Windy City also earned the right to host the World's Columbian Exposition.

And then, they had to live up to the promise.

I'm proud to tell you that they did. And, I'm proud, too, that I was part of it. Part of their success.

I hope you will forgive my pride in my beginnings. I hear people boast of their humble beginnings. Well, please allow me to boast of beginnings which are far from humble.

Who can blame me for being proud that I was part of such an exciting time for America? The World's Columbian Exposition meant so much to so many different people for so many different reasons.

To Chicago, it was a chance to show how quickly its people had rebuilt their city after the Great Chicago Fire of 1871.

Rebuilt. And how!

When people paid their 50 cents and walked through the gates, they entered a breathtaking oasis. Inside the White City with its gorgeous gardens, they could choose

to forget that the world outside was depressed, dirty and uncertain.

For the first time in their lives, they could stroll out of doors at night, enjoying the freedom of walking in safety after dark around the beautiful fair grounds. This was a time before electric street lights. Two competing electrical companies, had fought fiercely to demonstrate their ability to deliver electric lights. Mr. Edison lost out to Mr. Westinghouse and we all experienced a whole new world in which alternating current illuminated our streets and homes.

For the first time, sports fans could enjoy a game at night. The first football game at night took place right there at the Chicago World's fair.

Oh, what fun it was!

Even the food invented for the fair was fun. Crackerjacks. Hershey chocolate. Juicy Fruit gum. And that's just the snacks. For the first time, Americans ate hamburgers!

The Ferris wheel. It was invented for the Chicago World's Fair. Now that's a good example, right there of why they called my first home "The Windy City."

You have to understand that there was a lot at stake for Chicago in hosting the World's Fair. Back then, the World's Expositions were the only way a country really had to show off its best and brightest. Let's take France as an example. Do you know what the French came up with to show the rest of the world just how well they had recovered from the Napoleonic Wars?





EIFFEL, TOWER, PARIS EXPOSITION, 1889.



Tour Eiffel & Exposition Universelle, Paris, 1889



George Ferris' Ferris Wheel

The Eiffel Tower.

French engineers used the Exposition Universelle in 1889 to just show how well Paris had managed the 100 years since the storming of the Bastille.

Well, the promoters of my World's Fair did not want to be outdone. But Daniel Burnham, the architect in charge, despaired that no American engineers were stepping up to create anything that would distinguish Chicago.

Mr. Burnham feared the Windy City would indeed be laughed at and would live up to its name. "Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood," he implored to all.

To the engineers, he was most direct in his challenge that they outdo the Eiffel Tower.

"Something novel, original, daring and unique must be designed and built if American engineers are to retain their prestige and standing."

Thank goodness, George Ferris rose to the challenge. He invented the Ferris Wheel and when it became part of the Midway at the Chicago World's fair, both the invention and the Midway became synonymous with fun ever after.

I'm thrilled to say that the Ferris Wheel and I share the same exciting beginnings!

Surely you will agree that my pride is justified and that I am not a windbag from the Windy City!

There is so much more than I could say. I think it's fair to say that The Chicago's World Fair of 1893 had a profound effect on America's self-esteem.

I have always basked in that pride. And I believe I have brought a bit of that feeling with me wherever I have travelled, reflecting it to the people around me.

I have been on this earth almost 120 years and during that time some of the people in my sphere have needed a boost to their spirits. I would like to believe that they sometimes looked to me and found comfort in their history or simply appreciated my beauty.

## Chapter One



*Washstand, Photo by Ian Stewart*

## I am a Washstand.

And even though I have made much of my beginnings in Chicago at the World's Fair of 1893, my true roots are most likely somewhere in the Caribbean.

Genealogical research carried out on my behalf suggests that I am made of mahogany, a material that was imported from the Caribbean for furniture manufacturing. The beautiful dark wood that lends to my own beauty is of a style that itself became wildly popular at the Chicago World's Fair.

For now, I want to tell you about the significant events that took me to where I am today. I want to tell you about the people with whom I have shared this journey.

Some of my story is speculative. But I also have much factual information to impart. As I tell you my story, I promise to let you know the difference between the historical facts and my own musings. Please forgive me an occasional flight of fancy, as you have already forgiven my great pride.

I am not human. Yet I have borne witness to such a range of human emotion, creativity, adventure and experience, that I feel compelled to tell my story as humans might.

And so, for this reason, I will start by telling you about my own family. The other furnishings who shared my grouping, and my home, for most of my time on this earth.

I admit that as the Washstand, I am not the most prominent member of my family.

That honour would surely have to go to the **Bed**. A big thing, it was, with an impressive sleigh headboard and a three-part mattress. There was a double mattress and beside it,

a single mattress. Today, I suppose it would be considered a King Size. I can't help but think of Bed as the Big Daddy of our grouping.

Next, I guess would be **Dresser**. It was another huge piece with a mirror about six feet wide and enough drawers for the clothes of the couple who possessed me. It was absolutely lovely and unique, too. One of its features was a carved cornucopia, which in truth was a cleverly disguised hair saver. People today don't use hair savers and might puzzle over their purpose.

Let me enlighten you, if I may *Dear Reader*. The hair saver was often just a little bowl with a hole in the lid to allow a woman to save her hair clippings. No doubt you are wondering why a lady might wish to do so.

Well, let me tell you, she had her reasons and usually they were known to her alone. Most women wore their hair long and pulled back from the face. Even though vanity was not encouraged, women then, as now, wanted to look their best. So, each night after vigorously brushing her long hair, a lady might enter the contents of her brush and place it in her hair preserver. She might save it up and when a sufficient amount was acquired, braid it or create a small bun. This she could add underneath her own hairstyle to add volume. If anyone were to comment on how nicely her high hairstyle set off the features of her face, the lady could honestly reply this was her own hair.

Please don't misunderstand me. Not all ladies used their hair preservers as a tool of vanity. Many were practical. The hair collected from their combs or brushes was used to stuff pincushions. The long strands with their natural oils created the perfect nest for sewing needles and pins to glide in and out.

Oh, how I miss the days when humans valued such resourcefulness.



*Typical Hair Saver of the day*

But I digress as is my wont.

I trust you will bear with me, *Dear Reader*, as my mind dances from the present to the past, allowing me to share the tale of my journey.

I do get carried away when I think of my whole grouping, together in the way that we were for so many years.

Besides Bed and Dresser, there was **Table**. A Parlour Table, one might call it today and a striking piece in its own right. About three feet across, I'd say, and large enough to accommodate the two **Windsor Chairs**. The three of them were ready to be pressed into service, should the couple require breakfast in their room.

And then there was **Rocking Chair**. I can't help but smile, thinking of the babies it would help to soothe.

Finally, there was me, the **Washstand**.

We were an impressive grouping. A bedroom set so magnificent that no one who laid eyes upon us would ever forget our beauty.

Carved with gorgeous curves and exquisite hardware. Created with such care, that to this day, people remark upon how little I show my age.

Of course, many people today are not familiar with washstands at all. And I have to admit that by 1893, washstands were already on the verge of becoming obsolete. In a few years, who would even need a washstand when houses were being outfitted with indoor plumbing?

Perhaps my own resilience stems in part from the the fact that early on, I was forced to adapt.

If you look closely at me, you can see that I bear the marks of that early modification. Two small scars show where I was cut when a mirror was removed from me. And my life was altered. No longer was I a washstand.

I was reinvented as a cabinet, a role I relish to this day. And because I was adapted, I was no longer relegated to the private rooms of the homes I have shared. I was able to move into the “public” spaces, and thereby able to witness more conversations and activities.

This, I believe, has contributed in a significant way to my own evolution. And when I think of evolution, I cannot help but think of Charles Darwin. He, who had such influence on the world in the decades before I entered it, once made a comment that I think is relevant to my own story.

To quote Mr. Darwin: *“It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change.”*

It makes me sigh when I think of how relevant that statement is to my own grouping, the Bedroom Set.

But I am getting ahead of myself. I want to set the stage for how we must have appeared when our first family set eyes upon us that first time, back in Chicago in 1893.

And, here, I’m afraid, I must ask you to indulge my imaginings. For the truth is, I do not know how we first met. I have been the subject, however, of some discussion and for my own part have chosen to adopt a certain version of the truth.

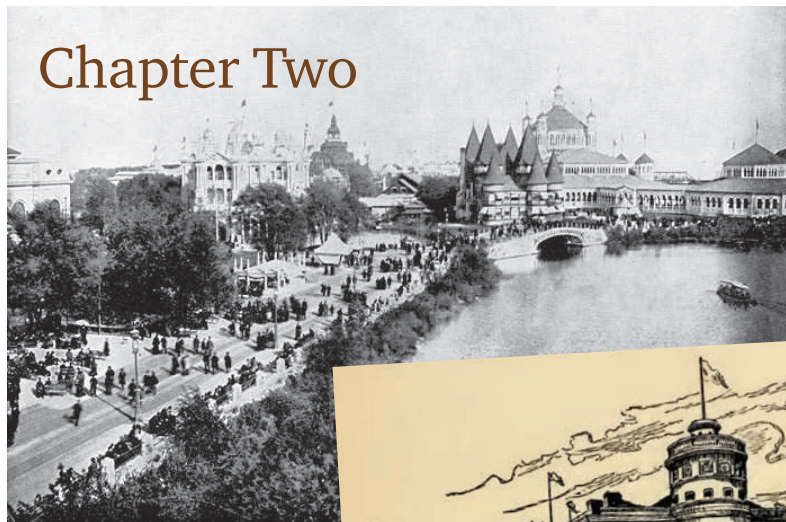
Can you blame me for doing so? I believe it is human nature to invent a story to fill in the gaps of our own knowledge. This, then, is the version of my own history that I have chosen to believe.

If you, *Dear Reader*, can enlighten me with a greater truth, I would indeed be grateful.

And so, my quest begins.



## Chapter Two



*The World's Columbian  
Exposition, Chicago 1893*



CANADA BUILDING.

Several of England's colonies have erected buildings of their own. Notable among these is Canada. The Canadian pavilion covers nearly 6,000 feet and cost about \$30,000. It is two stories high, and has a beautiful site facing the Lake. It is almost entirely devoted to offices and to rooms for public comfort, there being but few exhibits in the building. In order to show the different woods indigenous to Canada, the interior walls, ceilings and floors of the pavilion are finished in wood highly polished, showing the natural grain. Each province furnished the wood required to finish the rooms to be occupied by its commissioners.

Just to the west of this building is that of another English

## I have so many questions about my beginnings.

I do not know how, or even why, I ended up in Chicago in 1893. I have heard it said that I was part of an exhibit of fine Canadian furniture. But, alas, that is the only glimmer of information that has been passed down.

I cannot say with any certainty how my first family came upon me.

But I do have a couple of facts to help build the structure of my narrative.

The first is this fact: More than 27 million people walked through the gates of the Chicago World's Fair.

This is the second fact: One of those people was Robert Ness, a cattleman and farmer from Howick, Quebec.

I believe that the result of this second fact was that my destiny was changed forever.

Mr. Ness came to Chicago for two reasons. He was an exhibitor, entering his own French Coast stallions in the competition of horses from the United States and that new country, Canada.

Mr. Ness was also there in an official capacity. He had been charged with the responsibility of helping to choose the horses selected for the competition.

Another fact about Robert Ness: He was a prominent member of the Council of Agriculture in Quebec's Eastern Townships. In the year leading up to the Chicago World's Fair, he and another gentleman by the name of Raymond Auzias-Turenne, travelled throughout Quebec examining horses for exhibit.

This was a painstaking task. Monsieur Auzias-Turenne was in charge of the project, helped by Mr. Ness. To accomplish it, their first step was to print and mail out circulars to breeders around the province, inviting their participation. Once breeders confirmed their interest, the pair set out to visit every farm.

I have gleaned this fact from a report written about Quebec's exhibits. A bit dry, as reading goes, I suppose. Of course, my own interest is a far cry from that of the ordinary reader.

I approached the report hungrily, looking for facts that might explain my beginnings.

The facts contained therein were a little disappointing, I will confess. My own deepest desire was that a mention would be made of me; even a post-script would have sufficed.

How eagerly I devoured it, savouring every detail about the fruit, the cattle, the mining exhibits, the lumber. My heart raced when I came to the section dealing with lumber, thinking surely this would be the key to unlock the mystery. No. It was not to be.

Nonetheless, every fact contained therein was enough to send my imagination soaring.

The image of Mr. Ness and Monsieur Auzias-Turenne preparing to travel, their faces showing the seriousness of choosing the horses while remaining within their tight budget. The responsibility they must have felt, knowing that theirs was the most expensive undertaking of all of Quebec's exhibits.

Allow me to quote from the report, so that you can see for yourself just what a daunting task it must have been:

"In order to have these horses forwarded, it was necessary in every case that the owner or his representative should accompany them, and for the sake of uniformity and in order to present a good appearance, uniforms were provided for the men. The authorities at Chicago insisted that all horses for competition should be entered in the proper Stud Books. This was accordingly done, and the horses were insured, a value being placed on each. Although the lowest possible rate was

obtained, the sum to be paid was a large one, but it was considered best to insure rather than to expose the Province to the risk of having to pay for any which might be killed or injured.

“The number of men required, together with the cost of fodder and incidental expenses of various sorts, necessitated a larger outlay in this than in other Departments.”

*Dear Reader*, I think you can only conclude, as did I, that Mr. Ness and Monsieur Auzias-Turenne, would have been filled with a sense of serious purpose as they examined the horses.

I try to imagine their demeanour, their conversations. How interesting their task must have been!

And, full of pleasure, too, I'll bet. Mr. Ness was, after all, a very accomplished cattleman. I know nothing of Monsieur Auzias-Turenne, except that he had a wonderful name. However, he was placed in charge of the Horse Exhibit, so he must have had something going for him.

I suspect the two men probably had a ball, visiting farms, chatting and laughing in the spring and summer of 1892. They certainly would have had a lot to talk about. The weather, of course, would have played a role in their lives as farmers and travellers. Business, as well. The news of the day, no doubt. I'm sure they would have shuddered over the great fire that summer in St. John's, Newfoundland, which destroyed two-thirds of the city.

Would they have discussed politics? I think I'd bet my bottom dollar, as they say, on that one.

After all, it was just one year earlier that Sir John A. Macdonald died in office a few months after winning a tough election to form the seventh Parliament of Canada. What a lot of upheaval! Would they have speculated, I wonder, on the chances of their fellow Quebecer Wilfrid Laurier, who had his eye on running Canada? His ambition was to become the first French Canadian Prime Minister. Surely this would have been of great

interest to the two Quebec farmers, especially as their task was to choose horses that would help Quebec shine on the world stage in Chicago.

I can't even fathom for one second the notion that Scottish Mr. Ness and French Canadian Monsieur Auzias-Turenne would have hesitated to discuss what Ottawa was up to, especially since they were visiting farms. For is it not true, that one characteristic shared by all farmers universally is a tendency to express dissatisfaction with politicians?

Oh, I must be careful not to let my imagination wander so, distracting myself or you, *Dear Reader*.

I have to admit the the subjects of their conversations are not germane to my story, however enjoyable a diversion my own imaginings may be.

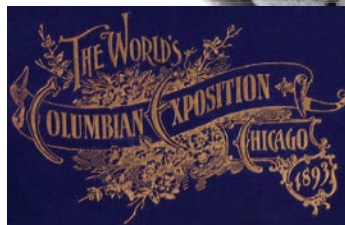
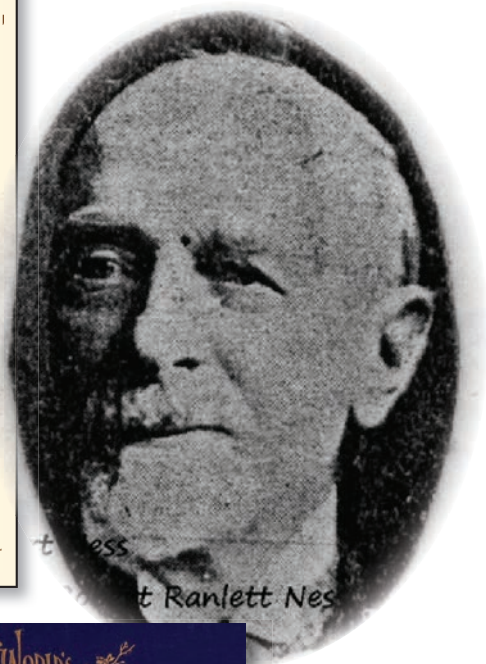
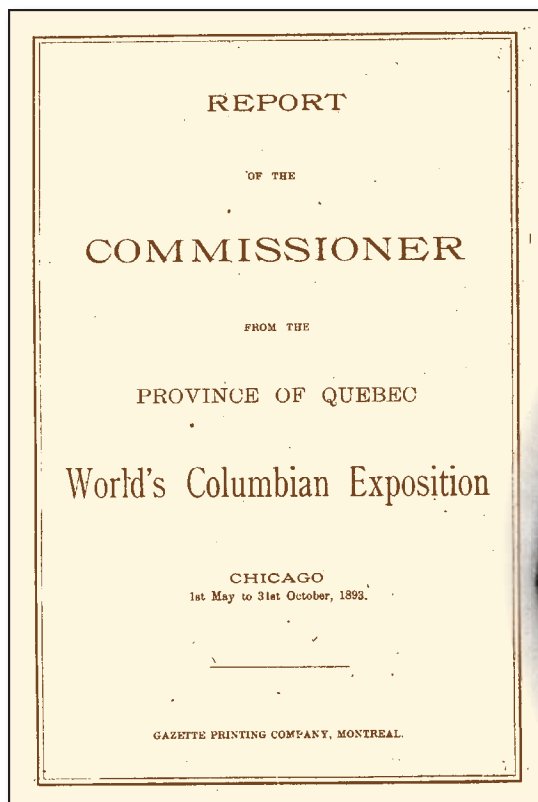
And so, I turn my attention back to the report, examining every fact with the same concentration that I imagine Monsieur Auzias-Turenne and Mr. Ness brought to examining the horses.

The report does not say how many farms they visited, or how many horses were found wanting. It does say they chose 40 horses:

- 5 Thoroughbreds
- 11 Percherons
- 11 Clydesdales
- 3 Standard Bred Trotters
- 1 French Draft (Boulonnais)
- 1 Shire
- 8 Normans

And, as I said, there is not a single mention of furniture.

For now, I must content myself with the knowledge that Mr. Ness travelled to Chicago.



Robert Ness

# Chapter Three

22

35

		HORSES.		
Sec.	Class.	Exhibitor.	Prize.	Amount.
XXIII. French Coach.				
1	Stallion, 5 years.....	R. Ness, Howick.....	3rd.....	\$50.00
2	" 4 years.....	R. Ness, ".....	3rd.....	50.00
2	" 4 years.....	R. Ness, ".....	4th.....	25.00
XXVI. Percheron				
2	Stallion, 4 years.....	Haras National.....	4th.....	25.00
XXVII. Clydesdale.				
1	Stallion, 5 years.....	Haras National.....	9th.....	



## Another fact.

Mr. Ness won prizes at the Chicago World's Fair. He and his horses did well.

Quebec only won five prizes in all, and of those, Robert Ness took three.

His five year old stallion, as well as his four-year old won the third prizes. And another four year old stallion came in fourth.

Quebec's horses won a total of \$150. Mr. Ness won \$125 of that amount; \$50 for each of his third-place wins and another \$25 for the fourth.

You may think that doesn't sound like very much money, and in truth, I have no perspective on this myself. When you have witnessed as much economic turmoil as I have, the dollar is something you often hear people fretting about it. However, for what it's worth, research shows that \$1 in 1893 would be worth \$24.39 in 2012. Using that math, Mr. Ness won \$3,658.50 for his fine horses.

I imagine he was proud.

The only other horses from Quebec to win any money at all were owned by Haras National, which took a \$25 prize for a four-year-old Percheron Stallion.

The Haras National. Now, there's a story for you. It was set up by Louis Beaubien, one of the richest French Canadians of his generation. I get the feeling, reading between the lines, that he had a finger in every pie. He was a newspaperman, a railway promoter, a politician and a fervent nationalist. At one time, he tried to set up a separate French Canadian navy!

Like Mr. Ness, this Beaubien character was a member of the Council of Agriculture. Mr. Ness imported cattle and Monsieur Beaubien, horses.

Just three years before the Chicago World's Fair, Monsieur Beaubien set up *Compagnie du Haras National* to import and breed French horses. He received a grant of \$6,000 each from the Quebec and federal governments with a plan to lease purebred horses to individual farmers and agricultural societies.

And while I've already made it clear that I place no value whatsoever on money, still, I can't resist doing the math for modern times: In 1889, \$1 was worth \$23.81. Multiply that by 12 thousand and we learn that Monsieur Beaubien received the equivalent of \$285,720 from taxpayers to fund his horsey dream.

He walked away from the Chicago World's Fair with \$25, or \$586.75 in today's dollars, for his fourth-place prize. One of his Clydesdales won ninth place, which brought with it no cash prize at all!

As for Monsieur Beaubien, historical research shows that his Haras National was shut down after 1893.

Forgive me for gloating.

I'm terribly proud of my association with Mr. Ness. I feel a bit competitive on his behalf. As luck would have it, his arrival in Chicago in 1893, was likely pivotal in my own story. And it is my belief that I was the biggest winner of all from the trip that Mr. Ness made to Chicago.

tion, who, after visiting the most important localities, purchased such samples as were required, and prepared the same for exhibition in a most artistic manner. In addition to the above, a special exhibit was made by Mr. Foucher of samples of tobacco of his own growing.

The collection consisted of thirty-two varieties in all, and formed a striking display. In the Agricultural Building our space was laid out with much care; the different varieties of grains in glass bottles, the whole being neatly trophy. The whole court was neatly decorated and presented a most pleasing appearance.

Among other exhibits shown in this department was a collection of maple sugar and syrup. The court was in charge of Mr. Foucher, who acted as superintendent during the exhibition.

#### CATTLE

The selection of cattle was made during the fall of 1892, in order that the animals selected might be carefully wintered and prepared for exhibition during the following summer. The selection was made by Mr. Foucher, who acted as superintendent of cattle.

During these visits, I learned that a number of farmers who had gone to the Dominion Government regarding that they should remain in Quebec for three months after the close of the Exhibition.

The cattle finally selected and forwarded to Chicago were as follows:

Hereford.—2 head.  
Guernsey.—2 head.  
Aberdeen Angus.—20 head.  
Ayrshire.—20 head.  
The cattle sent were from the Herds of the following, viz:  
Ayrshire.—H. Drummond, Petite Côte; Thos. Irving, Montreal; R. Robertson, Howick; A. McCallum, Danville; Robt. Edford, St. Anne de Bellevue; Jas. Stephen & Sons, Harrington; T. Drysdale, Allan's Corners; Thos. Watson, North Georgetown; Robt. Ness, Howick.  
Hereford.—H. D. Smith, Chénouet.  
Guernsey.—J. S. Greenhalgh, Danville.

succeeded in getting together superior to any to any in the Department of Cattle. The collection consists of Catholic Educational Institutions.

Owing to some misapprehensions on the part of the exhibitors, it might have been expected that the University, being of the number of Academic Institutions.

The limited space of the exhibits building was an increase impossible to show in the allotment of the full share. The quality and variety of the exhibits were the highest praise and to call forth most favorable comments from the Canadian and American Press, but also from the Provincial countries.

The display made, taken altogether, was a very creditable one. In the Department of Education our Province has maintained an excellent position, and the large number of awards received shows that it met with the approbation of the judges. I regret that I am unable to give a correct list of the awards as I have been unable to procure the official list up to the time of going to press.

#### AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS.

In this Department I secured through the kind co-operation of Messrs. Wm. Ewing & Co., during the fall of 1892, a collection of grains and vegetables and a quantity of grain in the sheaf. These were shipped to Chicago with the fruit, and remained in cold storage during the winter.

Special efforts were made to secure a good display of tobacco, and with this end in view, circulars were widely distributed in those sections of the Province where tobacco is chiefly grown. The services of Mr. F. A. M. Foucher of St. Jacques l'Abbaye, were suggested in this connection.

Our success in this Department, particularly in the Class of Ayrshires, was most satisfactory, the total amount taken in prize being \$1,000.00; with the 26 Ayrshire cattle exhibited making a total of \$7 prize and 9 medals altogether in this class. The animals exhibited were detained for three months in Quarantine at Port Huron on their return; they were released on 8th December, and were all safely returned to their owners.

#### HORSE DEPARTMENT.

This Department was in charge of Mr. R. Anzine-Tourenne, who was assisted in the selection by Mr. Robt. Ness, of the Council of Agriculture. A circular was issued to the various Agricultural Societies and to the leading breeders throughout the Province, and the above-named gentlemen visited the different localities to make selection from those offering to send from the following breeds:

1 Percheron.  
1 Thoroughbred.  
1 Clydesdale.

2 Standard Bred Trotters.  
1 French Draft (Bouillonnais).  
1 Shire.

In order to have these horses forwarded it was necessary in every case that the owner or his representative should accompany them, and for the sake of uniformity and in order to present a good appearance, uniforms were provided for the men. The authorities at Chicago insisted that all horses for competition should be entered in the proper Stud Books. This was accordingly done, and the horses were insured a value being placed on each. Although the lowest possible rate was obtained, the sum to be paid was a large one, but it was considered best to insure rather than to expose the Province to the risk of having to pay for any which might be killed or injured.

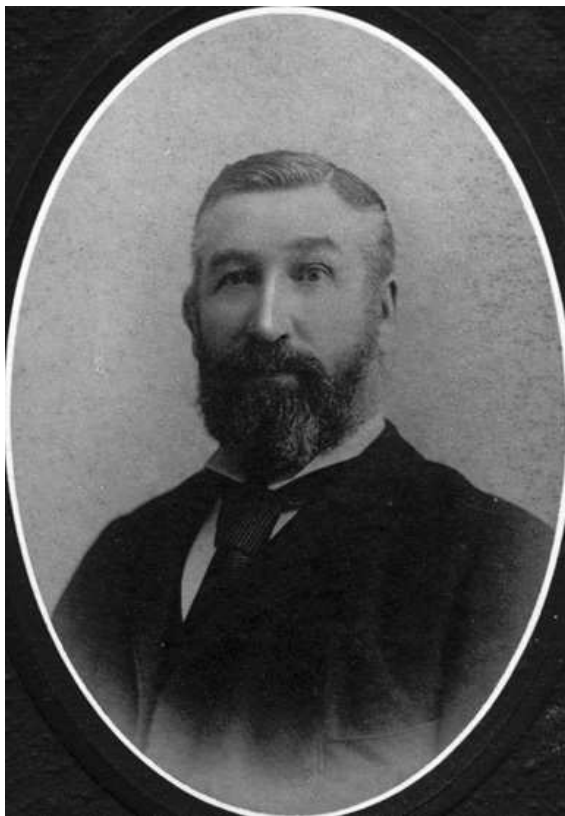
The number of men required, together with the cost of fodder and incidental expenses of various sorts, necessitated a large outlay in this then in other Departments.

When all the horses were ready for shipment from Montreal, I was notified by Mr. W. I. Buchanan, Chief of the Department of Live Stock, that the date for showing thorough-bred and standard-bred trotters had



## Chapter Four

26 |



*Honorable John McIntosh - from John McIntosh, great-grandson*

## Mr. Ness was to become an important figure in my own story.

But I believe there was another man, too, who also played a significant role.

His name was John McIntosh, a politician who served as a Conservative member, starting with the 8th Legislative Assembly of Quebec in 1886. He began as a member of the government of Conservative John Jones Ross, but Premier Ross resigned a year later to become a federal Member of Parliament. In the next 10 years, Mr. McIntosh would serve under three premiers: Conservative Louis-Olivier Taillon, who lost to Honore Mercier's Parti National, who in turn lost to Charles Boucher de Boucherville, who resigned and returned his leadership to Louis Oliver Taillon.

The record shows that Mr. McIntosh held a steady hand despite the hurly-burly of Quebec politics.

Like Mr. Ness, Mr. McIntosh was a farmer from the Eastern Townships.

The Honorable John McIntosh was born in a place called Laprairie, just outside Montreal, but moved to a town called Waterville in Compton County, which had even better farm land. In fact, some agricultural and economic reports of the day claim that Compton County had the best farmland in the new Dominion of Canada.

The town of Waterville was a thriving community, located on a beautiful river and known for its sawmill and hemp rope for ships.

Waterville was famous for another thing, too. And if you will permit another of my flights of imagination, I must take a moment to think about Waterville and whether, in

an odd kind of way, it might have had an influence on my own life.

I know this may sound a little far-fetched. But consider this: One of the first-place prizes taken at the Paris World's Fair in 1889 was for a little invention from Waterville, Quebec.

Mr. George Gale had spent much of his life developing the perfect mattress, believing that a proper bed would prevent disease and improve health. He invented oil-tempered steel springs, with a warranty that promised they would never sag.

He took his invention to Paris and it won first prize. The idea of steel springs in mattresses really caught on in Europe. I've heard it rumoured that the British Royal Family adopted the bed springs for beds in their castles. But whether that is true or not, it is true that Mr. Gale's brass and iron beds, with their Dominion Wire Mattresses, became standard in Canadian and British public institutions.

The product was so successful that Mr. Gale established offices in France and England, Leeds, operating out of Paris, Leeds, and London and his factory in Waterville became an important employer. I have heard it said that the factory consumed one million feet of lumber every year.



*George Gale & Sons,  
Dominion Wire  
Mattresses*

No doubt you are asking yourself what this fact, albeit interesting, has to do with my own story. I understand your skepticism, *Dear Reader*, and I am truly grateful for your patience.

I will beg your indulgence further, if I may. Perhaps you will not be surprised to learn that I began to wonder if my own connection to the Chicago World's Fair was even more profound than I had first believed.

Was it possible that I, myself, could have played a role in history?

Was it perhaps that the bedroom set, to which I belonged, was manufactured in Waterville and shipped to Chicago to illustrate the elegant, healthful and well-constructed beds produced in Quebec?

Was Mr. Gale trying to outdo his own success in Paris in 1889?

I admit that I became a little puffed up at the idea of it.

For while I was very proud of my association with the Chicago World's Fair, the idea that somehow my very existence came about as a result of the Paris Exposition was thrilling beyond compare.

Don't forget, *Dear Reader*, that I am from the Windy City, after all. And I don't need to remind you that Chicago was determined to prove America's superiority to Europe. Chicago, by hosting the World's Columbian Exposition was celebrating 400 years of American achievement since the arrival of Christopher Columbus.

I'm proud to say that of the many countless books written about the World's Columbian Exposition, all conclude that it was a pivotal World's Fair, and many claim it was the best.

To quote one: "The World's Columbian Exposition, held in Chicago in 1893, was the last and the greatest of the nineteenth century's World's Fairs. Nominally a celebration of Columbus's voyages 400 years prior, the Exposition was in actuality a reflection and celebration of American culture and society—for fun, edification and profit—and a

blueprint for life in modern and postmodern America.”

You do understand my pride, *Dear Reader*? I am confident that you must.

And, of course, you must also understand, the competitive spirit that rises in my soul when I imagine that I may have been created to demonstrate that the Chicago World's Fair was offering a product superior to the prize winner in Paris.

Paris, you must remember, had impressed the world with its creation for the Fair: The Eiffel Tower. Gustave Eiffel's 300 metre iron tower was the star of the Exposition Universelle de 1889, without a doubt. The fair, like all the world's fairs, attracted exhibits from around the world. The whole point of hosting a world's fair, after all, was to highlight the host country's achievements in architecture, fine arts and new technology.

Let's not mince words. The real purpose of all world fairs was to boast. And, in this, too, Paris had set the standard for future world fairs.

By 1889, Paris had already held four world's fairs, including the one in 1867, when the President, Prince Jerome Napoleon, turned the city's parade grounds into the wonderful sweeping boulevards that give The City of Light its unique beauty.

Twenty two years later, the goal was to mark the 100th anniversary of the French Revolution and to prove to the world how well France had done since the storming of the Bastille.

Please don't think that I, with my Chicago roots, wish in any way to diminish the significance of the Paris Exposition.

On the contrary. You may recall that Mr. Burnham specifically challenged America's engineers to create a structure that would outshine the Eiffel Tower. I think it's fair to say that Mr. Ferris's response to the challenge met that goal! For who among the world's modern citizens does not equate the image of the Ferris Wheel with fun, just as they may very well indeed associate the Eiffel Tower with romance?

Let's face it: Fun, romance and pride were the foundations of the world's fairs.

Oh yes, and one other thing. Let's not forget commerce.

Here, we come to another fact the Paris and Chicago Expositions shared in common.

They both made a profit.

The Exposition Universelle in 1889 was the first of the nineteenth century's world's fairs to create a profit. Imagine that for a moment, if you will.

Imagine twelve Expositions starting in 1851 in London, which gave the world the Crystal Palace. Vienna's in 1873 brought the Rotunde, Philadelphia's in 1876 the telephone, Paris's 1886 the Statue of Liberty, Sydney's the Garden Palace and Barcelona's Arc de Triomf.

Millions of visitors admired and stood in awe. Yet, none except Paris made a profit.

Well, I'm happy to tell you that the fair of my own birthplace was the next to make a profit. In this respect, Chicago's leaders were also determined to outdo Paris.

This is a relief to me because the fair was held during a recession and for a while, it looked as if few people would be able to afford the journey.

I think we have Mr. George Ferris to thank for drawing the crowds in.

It is only now that I have the full perspective of the economic aspirations of countries hosting the world fairs that I can truly appreciate Mr. Ferris and his contribution. Until I truly grasped the importance of money, I was simply giddy at being born during a time when the Ferris Wheel symbolized happy fun times.

It is sobering, indeed, to contemplate the financial implications.

And, as I began to reflect further, I was eager to learn more of Mr. Gale and Mr. McIntosh, the two men from Compton County, who may very well have been responsible for sending that other man, Robert Ness and his horses, to Chicago for the World's Fair.

## Chapter Five

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MIDWAY PLAISANCE.

sixty-four feet into the air. It consists of two skeleton wheels, twenty-eight and one-half feet apart, and held together by strong steel shafts. Between the outer rims of these wheels are suspended



THE FERRIS WHEEL.

thirty-six passenger coaches, balanced upon great steel pivots. These coaches accommodate sixty passengers each, or a total of twenty-one hundred and sixty. The two steel towers upon which the axle rests and revolves are 137 feet high, five feet square at the

**Oh dear, I'm afraid that this serious matter of money has brought me down to earth. I can't help but feel that my head was in the clouds as I started my quest to learn of my beginnings.**

I might as well have been riding in one of the cars of Mr. Ferris's Wheel, high above the ground, blissfully oblivious to the realities of the world below.

Now, that I have considered the role commerce in the Chicago's World Fair, I must also consider that I may be a product of commerce myself. Perhaps I was created, not for beauty, or even to fill a practical need.

And here, I must confess to a certain conceit. It shames me to admit it, but I had hoped that my beauty was the answer to the mystery around my beginnings. I think I had hoped Mr. Ness came to Chicago, saw our beautiful bedroom grouping, and decided right then and there that he must have us. Silly romantic that I am, I dreamed that it was love at first sight.

Now, with the facts of solid research fully in my grasp, I see that romance and fun are secondary goals of all world fairs. The pride, the underlying sense of accomplishment, the icons for the history books are all nothing more than props. Otherwise, why did it not matter that the fairs didn't make a profit?

There was a larger goal, I see now. The exhibits, the products on display, the pleasant surroundings, all designed to sell, sell, sell.

It takes some courage to venture in.

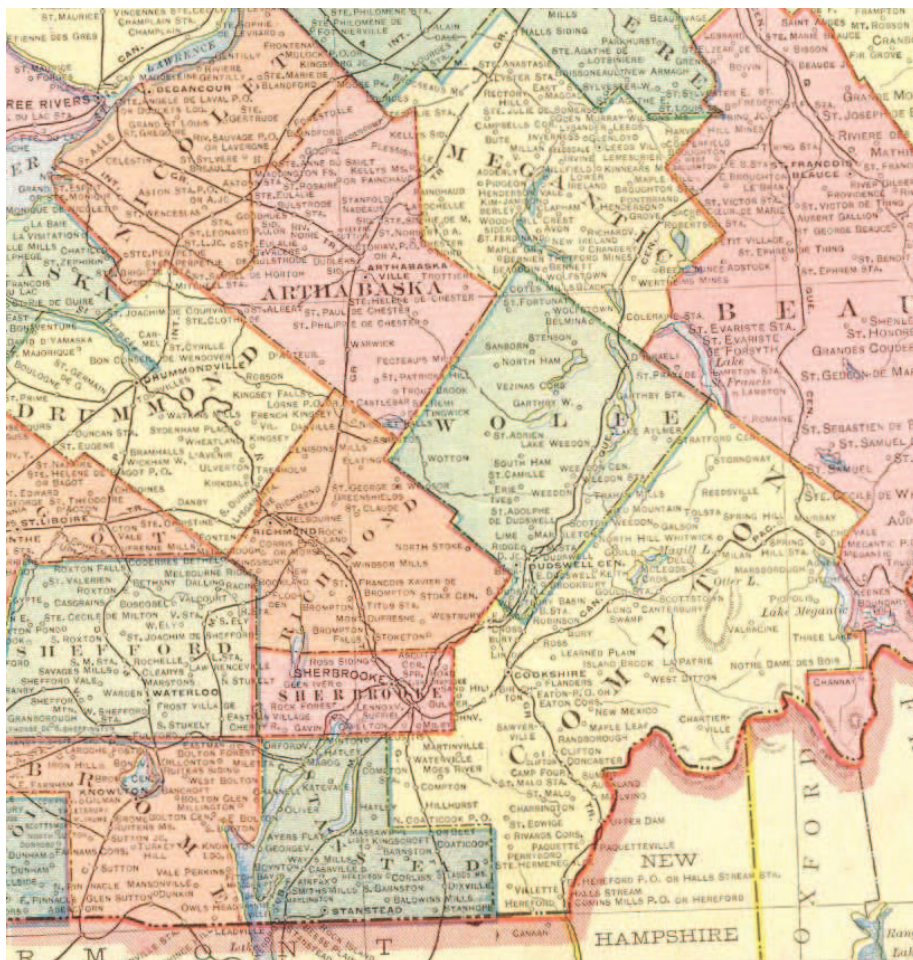
Until now, my courage has not been tested. No matter. My sense of adventure will win out every time.

And, so, I braced myself to learn more about the men from Compton County, even if it meant I learned more of the greed that lurks in men's hearts.

This is a detailed historical map of the Beauséjour area in New Brunswick, Canada. The map shows the international border with the United States, which runs diagonally across the lower portion of the image. To the north of the border is the Canadian territory of New Brunswick, and to the south is the United States. The map is densely populated with place names, including towns and villages such as Beauséjour, St. John's, Miramichi, and others. Major rivers like the Saint John River and the Miramichi River are depicted. The map also shows the locations of various military installations and fortifications, including Fort Beauséjour and Fort Mifflin. The map is oriented with North at the top, and a scale bar is provided at the bottom left.



## Eastern Townships, Quebec, Canada



## Chapter Six

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*Typical farm in the Eastern Townships of Quebec, circa 1880*

## **A fact: Mr. Gale's bed springs won a medal and first prize at the Exposition Universelle de 1889.**

Four years later, his business in beds and springs was booming in Waterville, Quebec.

History describes George Gale as a philanthropist, as well as a businessman and I fervently hoped this was true as I looked deeper for a connection between us.

Mr. Gale was a prominent member of the Congregational Church, whose Presbyterian followers had an evangelical streak.

Another prominent member of the Congregational Church in Waterville was Mr. John McIntosh.

Mr. Gale was the town's major employer and Mr. McIntosh was the Conservative representative in the Quebec legislature.

I can only imagine how much influence the two men wielded.

And as I began to imagine the significance the two of them might have had upon my own beginnings, my imagination once again ran away from me.

I had an image of them shaking hands and chatting on the church steps on a sunny day, following the Sabbath worship.

Their wives in their finery and their large families, smiling and basking in the fellowship. In my mind's eye, I see Mr. McIntosh's youngest son, John. He is 11 years old and clearly a determined and energetic youngster. I smile, thinking of how our own paths will cross in the future, far away from this time and place.

Mr. McIntosh, or I should say the Honorable John McIntosh, is home for a short period, back in his riding from a break in the legislature in Quebec. I imagine the two men exchanging pleasantries, but conscious of the time and place, not entering into a discussion of politics on the Sabbath.

They make arrangements to meet after their day of rest.

Their meeting is cordial, but brought quickly to the point. They have a topic to discuss. It is the Chicago World's Fair.

John McIntosh has been appointed Commissioner from the Province of Quebec, by an Order in Council passed on June 10, 1892.

Mr. Gale knows the ropes of World's Fairs. Just three years earlier, he won first prize in Paris.

There is much knowledge to be shared.

As I think about what they might say to each other, my thoughts fly in many directions. Would one of them suggest that perhaps some fine furniture should be manufactured for the occasion? An exquisite bedroom set to demonstrate the healthful benefits of the Dominion Wire Mattresses, while also showcasing the fine work of Quebec's craftsmen?

Quebec would have to distinguish itself from Ontario, which was already well into its planning for a Mammoth Cheese exhibit.

I suppress a giggle as I imagine, Mr. McIntosh, a farmer first and politician second, describing what surely must have seemed a folly to him. The giant cheese was the brainchild of Canada's first Dairy Commissioner, Dr. James Wilson Robertson.

Dr. Robertson was in charge of an experimental farm at Perth, Ontario, where he dreamed up the publicity stunt to attract attention for Canada's dairy industry.

Here was the plan he devised for the autumn of 1892: Gather 10,000 cows in Lanark County. Assemble a dozen of Lanark's dairy farmers to get milking for one day. Once the milk was gathered, the cheese makers would create a round of Canadian cheddar in a

circle of 28 feet. It would be piled to six feet in height. Weighing in at 22,000 pounds, the giant would be housed in a freight shed over the winter. During the time, Robertson would invite all kinds of dignitaries and high-profile folks to visit the freight shed and watch as cheese makers turned the thing around every two weeks.

Needless to say, his plans for publicity included newspaper coverage and photographs.

Mr. McIntosh, as he embarked upon his own duties as Commissioner, would have been keenly aware of the Dominion of Canada's ambitions, as well as Quebec's own goals at the Chicago World's Fair.

I know this to be a fact. The conversation between Mr. McIntosh and Mr. Gale, of course, is purely one of my own fantasy.

I think it would have gone something like this:

Mr. Gale would have inquired about the legislature's discussions, trying to gauge how the somewhat polarized politics of Quebec's would shape its presence in Chicago.

Mr. McIntosh would have been diplomatic, I imagine. Without passing judgment on the merits of the plan, he would elaborate upon the categories already selected. Forestry, Fruit, Mining, Education, Dairy, Cattle, Grain and Horses.

Would Mr. Gale have raised his eyebrows, I wonder, at the selection of Education? As an inventor and philanthropist, would he have possessed sufficient political savvy to wonder how Education would serve to advance Quebec's position on the world stage?

If so, Mr. McIntosh likely would have discussed with him the philosophy behind the choice, perhaps even referring to the Minister of Agriculture and Colonization's well-publicized remarks about his desires to promote the new Agricultural School at Oka, Quebec.

I imagine Mr. Gale might have taken this moment to raise his question about how Quebec's manufacturing sector would be represented, as he considered his own business and experience with world fairs.

And here, Mr. McIntosh may have needed to resort to tact and diplomacy. It was pretty clear that the Minister in question did not believe that Quebec should focus on manufacturing at this time. The talk in the Legislature was about encouraging settlement and farming to build Quebec's population and to prevent the province's people from fleeing to America's cities.

How I wish I knew whether they decided that it would be a worthwhile venture to build a bedroom set and ship it to Chicago!

But, of course, this whole scene is another of my fantasies. The only supporting fact I have is that Mr. McIntosh had his work cut out for him.

His deadlines were tight.

He had called a meeting for August 12, 1892, in Montreal to report on his preliminary work. At that time, he would establish an Advisory Council for each of the areas. He had already decided that he would take on responsibility for Grain and Cattle himself.

Once the Advisory Councils were organized and charged with their tasks, Mr. McIntosh must next travel to Ottawa to co-ordinate with the other provincial commissioners and the federal government.

Next, he would travel to Chicago in October for the dedication ceremonies, where he would meet with other Commissioners and ensure that Quebec's exhibits would be well positioned.

And, here, is where I explain to you why I believe the Honorable John McIntosh was a significant figure in my own story.

It was he who appointed Mr. Ness to help choose the horses for the Chicago World's Fair.

The two men must have known each other well.

The Honorable John McIntosh's younger brother, Alexander, was married to the eldest daughter of Mr. Ness, Janet Brodie Ness. And Janet Brodie Ness McIntosh was also the niece of Mr. McIntosh's first cousin, William Greig.

Mr. Greig, besides being Mr. McIntosh's first cousin, was also a member of the Quebec Legislature.

He, too, was a Conservative and represented the area in which both mens' families had first settled when they came from Scotland, Chateauguay-Laprairie.

William Greig was a new member of the Legislature, having been just elected in March of 1892 for the first time.

His cousin, John McIntosh, had already been representing Compton for six years and had been made Minister without Portfolio in 1891.

And, as I started thinking about these two cousins, born only one year apart, my imagination once again carried me away.

For a few moments, I forgot all about my own quest to decipher my own connection to these men and the Chicago World's fair.

Instead, my curiosity took me deep into a path of adventure.

Now, I would enter into the forest of family trees, thirsty for knowledge about the roots of these two farmers, turned politicians, in late 19th century Quebec.

*Obituary from the Montreal Gazette of the Honorable John McIntosh*

which men in this part of the country will be more sincerely and deeply mourned than will that of Hon. John McIntosh. These sterling qualities of mind and heart which gained for him the title of "Honest John," also brought within his list of warm friends men of all classes and sections of the community, without regard to politics, race or religion.

#### LIFE SPENT IN TOWNSHIPS.

Forty-four years of his life were spent in the Townships. No man has



THE LATE HON. JOHN MCINTOSH,

M.P. for Sherbrooke.

done more for the promotion of agricultural interests in this section of the country than he. In 1875 he was a member of the Canadian Meat and Produce Company of Sherbrooke, then exporters of cattle to England. In 1893 he was commissioner of the province at the Columbian Exposition, and in recognition of his services was tendered a public banquet on his return. For many years he was president or director of the Sherbrooke Exposition, which owes much of its success to him. In his public offices as councillor of the village of Waterville, warden of the county, member of the Legislature, sheriff of district and finally member of Parliament, he many times proved himself worthy of his title of "Honest and Honourable John McIntosh." His passing away is a distinct loss to Sherbrooke, and to the whole of the Eastern Townships.

#### HIS LIFE IN BRIEF.

Hon. John McIntosh was born at Laprairie, Que., October, 1841. He was educated at Laprairie High School. He represented Compton in the Quebec Legislature from 1886 to 1894. He was elected to the House of Commons January 25, 1896, to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Hon. W. B. Ives, defeating Mr. Le Baron by a majority of 100. He was re-elected at the general election of 1900. The deceased was a farmer in 1894.

## Chapter Seven

John M. Intosh } John M. Intosh  
Baptism } Farmer in Blair County  
and Margaret Braden his  
wife had a son on the  
twenty seventh October one  
thousand eight hundred & forty one  
and baptizing on the third December  
of the same year and named John  
by me

David Black Minister  
John M. Intosh  
Margaret W. Intosh

James Wells

## As I already mentioned, John McIntosh's family came from Scotland to a place called Laprairie, which is just east of Montreal in the Eastern Townships.

John McIntosh was born in 1841, the son of Margaret Brodie and John McIntosh.

William Greig was born in 1840, the son of Margaret's older sister, Janet Brodie, and her husband William Greig.

When Margaret married John in South Georgetown on June 12, 1838, her witnesses were her sister Janet and John's brother Robert.

*Dear Reader*, by now, you are most accustomed to my romantic ways and I trust you will indulge me as I contemplate their weddings and wish the two sisters to be well and happy in their marriages.

We can assume that they prospered by the simple fact that two of their sons were successful and respected enough to be elected provincially to represent their fellow Scots-Canadians and francophone neighbours.

But, in my romantic soul, I long for them to have felt happiness in this new and foreign land. Margaret's and Janet's early life had not treated them well.

Their mother, Elizabeth Peebles Brodie, died at 26, leaving three children. Margaret was the youngest, being only two at the time. Janet was four and Robert, the eldest, only five.

Janet and Robert were born only 13 months apart; Robert on October 8, 1810, and

Janet on November 21, 1811. Baby Margaret came along less than two years later on August 24, 1813.

It hurts my heart to think how very difficult life must have been for their father, Laird Robert Brodie widowed at 33 with three babes to raise.

Thankfully, his sorrow did not include poverty. Robert had inherited the family land and title to become Laird of Bankside after his brother William died in South America.

The records do not tell the story of his anguish. They tell only of his actions.

In 1815, he arrived in Montreal. He was following in the footsteps of his sister Anne, who had immigrated to Montreal in 1809 with her husband, Hugh Brodie.

Somewhere along the way, in the next two years, Laird Robert Brodie returned to Kilbirnie, Ayr. In 1817, he married his late wife's cousin, Janet Crawford. She was 25 and 10 years his junior. They had four children, a pair of twins: James, Ann, Jeannie and Mary. In 1822, at the age of 40, Robert Brodie Laird took his wife and seven children and sailed again for Quebec.

After settling in Quebec, Robert and Janet had three more children, only one of whom, Barbara, survived. The Brodies prospered and became influential through their business and civic activities. Robert Brodie, along with his brother-in-law, Hugh Brodie, were instrumental in setting up schools and churches. And they went out of their way to help newcomers to Quebec settle in.

The story of Robert Brodie's arrival in Canada is documented by Robert's grandson, Robert Brodie in a story written in 1934.

"He had a large family and brought a cow with them to supply milk for the younger children. It was the first Ayrshire cow brought to Canada. He had means and he and his brother-in-law, Hugh Brodie.... looked out for a farm for him. They were undecided between a farm on the Glengarry side of the St. Lawrence or on the Chateaugay side. However, they prayed over it and drew lots and the lot fell on the

Chateauguay side. Our grandmother, in her old days, talking of this way of selecting a farm said “*They were weel guided for there were a wild lot of Hieland men in Glengarry.*”<sup>1</sup>

Dear Reader, imagine how I, on a quest for my own roots, feel such pride in their courage and conviction. And as I read more of life on the Brodie farm, I begin to understand further whence I have received my own sense of adventure!

The sense of adventure permeates the report of Robert Brodie, the son of Mary, who was Janet and Margaret’s half sister, and her cousin Robert Brodie.

Robert Brodie had fond memories of growing up and hearing stories of life on the Brodie farm, about a mile west of Turcot Bridge.

“It was a good farm and had a good spring on it, suited for cattle raising. My mother, Mary, told the story of going to back pastures for the cows and finding some deer lying down amongst the cattle and one of their neighbours, taking a shortcut through the woods, had to stay up a tree all night on account of the wolves.”

Oh goodness. Once again, the images of the family’s life in Canada has set my imagination off in all directions.

As I read more of life on the Brodie farm, my own sense of connection to history became even more heightened.

“In 1837, there was great discontent amongst the people of Canada who had no franchise, so some of the people rose up in rebellion.

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<sup>1</sup>From “The History of the County of Huntingdon and of the seignories of Chateauguay and Beauharnois” by Robert Sellar, published in 1888: *The story of the choice of farms was attributed to Alexander Gardiner who was married to Mary Brodie, aunt to Janet Grieg and Margaret McIntosh. Sellars writes “ Among those who came in 1820 to see the country was Alexander Gardiner who had emigrated from Renfrewshire, Scotland, that summer, and who was in search of a farm. He hesitated between Dundee and St Andrews, when his brother-in-law, Hugh Brodie, Petite Côte, proposed to leave it to the lot,—a not infrequent mode of deciding a difficulty among the devout Presbyterians of the last century. After earnest prayer, a half-penny was tossed up, and thrice the side that stood for Dundee came uppermost.”*

William Lyon Mackenzie was the leader of the rebellion in Upper Canada and Louis Joseph Papineau in Lower Canada. Papineau and his followers went the wrong way about it by declaring war against the English settlers and by arresting their neighbours who had shown them nothing but kindness. My father and my Uncle Hugh were Officers in the Militia. My uncle was a Captain in the Lachine Troop of Cavalry.

“On Hallowe’en in 1837, a Sergeant from Headquarters came to the house and told Uncle to rouse up his troop of Cavalry. Grandfather was quite worried but Grandmother went about polishing up his uniform. He mounted his black horse and rode first to Snowden.”

Robert grew up hearing stories of a cruel and nasty war. The rebels beheaded a farmer from Laprairie, just one year before his aunt Margaret Brodie and John McIntosh married and settled there.

“The rebels paid dearly for their cruelty. They were badly defeated at Odelltown not far from Hemmingford and also at St. Eustache, northwest of Montreal. Father and Uncle Hugh were in the engagement and father was sorry for the poor beggars. They went into the Church for safety, but were shelled by the English, and until the present day there are marks of bullets on the walls of the old church. There were no fights in the Chateauguay district as the rebels came no nearer than a couple of miles southwest of Ste. Martine, where they erected barricades.

“Mother said she remembered when her elder sister and herself baked seventy-five loaves of bread one day to feed the Militia who were camped nearby.

“After the rebellion came a time of peace and prosperity. Grandmother said good came of the rebellion, for her boys had been invited out by the neighbours to their dances and card playing and there was some

danger they might have married some of the French lassies, but after the rebellion, there was no mixing with them.”

Well, I should think not!

Oh my, how I wish I could learn more about what life was like for Janet and Margaret as they started out their own lives as married women.

Their two sons, John and William, were born just three and four years after this rebellion ended.

How different the scene was when I first encountered them in 1893, both of them elected members of the Quebec legislature. By then, both the times and the family had become well settled.

And both John McIntosh and William Greig were to become part of my life.

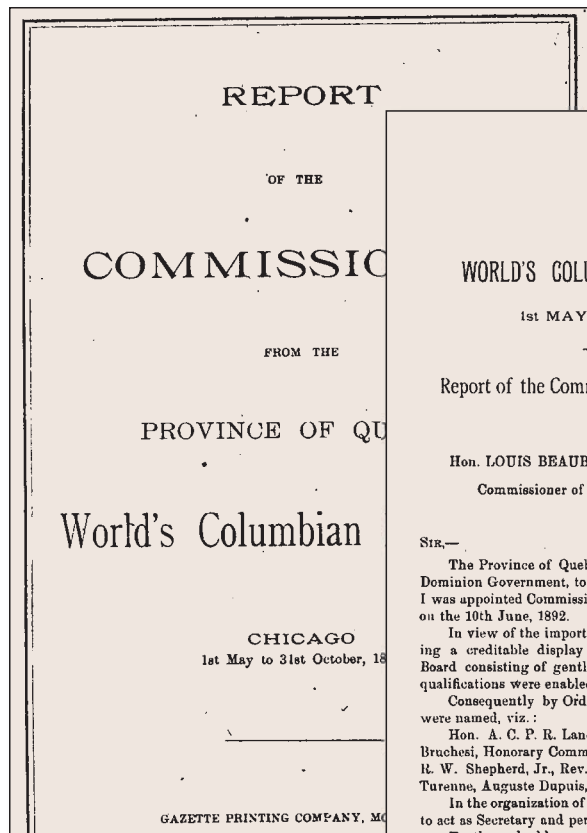
I know now that our paths are interwoven, even though how it began is still a mystery.

The descendants of the McIntosh and Greig families have been taught that I, and my Bedroom Grouping, came from the Chicago World's Fair. But how it came about remains a mystery.

In my quest to solve it, I shall turn to another source: The report prepared by Mr. McIntosh, detailing his work in the year before and during the great fair itself.

## Chapter Eight

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### WORLD'S COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION, CHICAGO.

1st MAY TO 31st OCTOBER, 1893.

Report of the Commissioner for the Province of Quebec.

Hon. LOUIS BEAUBIEN.

Commissioner of Agriculture and Colonization,

Quebec.

SIR,—

The Province of Quebec having determined, on the invitation of the Dominion Government, to take part in the World's Columbian Exposition, I was appointed Commissioner for the Province by Order-in-Council passed on the 10th June, 1892.

In view of the importance of the Exhibition and with a view of securing a creditable display the Government decided to name an Advisory Board consisting of gentlemen who from previous experience and special qualifications were enabled to aid and assist in the work.

Consequently by Order-in-Council of 11th July, 1892, the following were named, viz. :

Hon. A. C. P. R. Landry, Hon. H. G. Joly de Lotbinière, Rev. P. N. Bruchesi, Honorary Commissioners; Hon. G. Ouimet, Messrs. E. E. Taché, R. W. Shepherd, Jr., Rev. J. C. K. Laflamme, S. C. Stevenson, R. Auzias-Turenne, Auguste Dupuis, H. S. Foster, G. A. Gigault.

In the organization of the work of the Board, Mr. Stevenson was named to act as Secretary and performed the duties appertaining to that office.

To the valuable services rendered by these gentlemen, I am much indebted, and I desire to place on record my high appreciation of their labours.

## Once again, I turn eagerly to the report. This time, I am determined to maintain a scholarly objectivity.

I vow to put aside the conceit that comes so naturally to us natives of the Windy City. Rather, I think I would be much better suited to adopt the cool-headed grit of the Brodies, coping as they did with rebellions and all manner of wilderness.

And so, I turn to the title page: *“Report of the Commissioner from the Province of Quebec, World’s Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1st May to 31st October, 1893.”* Gazette Printing Company Montreal.

A 38-page report, secured on my behalf from the National Library of Australia. I’m keenly aware that the document is historical. John McIntosh, Honorable Member for Compton County, wrote and submitted this report almost 120 years ago.

Looking at it now, I know that I must summon seriousness. Even though my heart flutters with glee at the very title, I cannot allow emotions to sway me from my task.

I turn to the first page.

*“World’s Columbian Exposition, Chicago. 1st May to 31st October, 1893. Report of the Commissioner for the Province of Quebec. Honorable Louis Beaubien, Commissioner of Agriculture and Colonization, Quebec.”*

It takes a moment to sink in.

Honorable Louis Beaubien. No! It cannot be.

That crook!

I find myself overcome with dismay.

Beaubien. He, who took all those dollars of taxpayers' money to pay for his fancy horse dream and managed to reward them by winning only a single prize in Chicago. One measly prize of \$25! Mr. Ness, an honest breeder, beat M. Beaubien fair and square. Did M. Beaubien even care? He was one of the richest French Canadians of his generation and he happily took the taxpayers for a ride. Was it all just a lark to him?

Oh, now, I confess I was vexed. I could muster no objectivity. And, instinctively, I wanted no part of anything that involved M. Beaubien.

I didn't like it one bit that Mr. McIntosh was reporting to M. Beaubien.

After a few moments, however, I calmed down and my quest came sharply into focus. I reminded myself of my promise to have courage and to embrace adventure even if I encountered unpleasantness as I delved into my roots.

I consider M. Beaubien's presence in my life a bit of unpleasantness, indeed.

I allowed myself a moment.

But, I recovered quickly from the shock and admitted that it was time to stand back and give myself a reality check.

I don't like M. Beaubien. Fair enough.

But I have no right to slander him as a crook. There is nothing in history to indicate that he ever committed any wrongdoing.

And, if Mr. McIntosh was associated with him, he must not have been bad. Or was he?

Before I can delve further into Mr. McIntosh's report, I must set my mind at ease about M. Beaubien.

And, so, I turn to historical records of the Quebec legislature.



## Chapter Nine

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*M. Louis Beaubien*

**The first thing I learn about M. Beaubien was that he was deeply religious, part of an “ultramontane” movement that wanted to preserve Catholicism and the French language, while still accepting the sovereignty of the British Crown.**

He married a Scots Canadian, Suzanne Stuart, who was the daughter of Andrew Stuart, the Chief Justice of the Quebec Superior Court. I soften a little, reading his words of praise for Suzanne after almost 30 years of marriage: “I enjoy the acquaintance of an excellent lady, a scion of one of our old families, the ornament of society from the good qualities of her mind and of her heart, the joy of her family in which she can count the grandchildren of her children; skillful among all, no one ever excelled her in the little industries of the home and in the management of her brilliant flower garden.”

I admit I do like the sound of the values expressed by M. Beaubien. But I am far from won over with his kind words.

He was also a big dreamer, as evidenced by his horses and the Haras National. One of his dreams was to build a railway, which he believed would help keep Quebecers from moving to the United States.

It’s true, to be sure, that he would have stood to make a nice profit if the railway cut through his land, but history makes it clear that his motive was first and foremost to colonize Quebec.

As a farmer who had inherited huge tracts of land, M. Beaubien was one of the wealthiest landowners in Quebec.

He had strong opinions about the value of farming and its role in developing Quebec. And he spent his life promoting this belief above all others.

And here is where I must confess that I judged M. Beaubien too quickly and too harshly.

For the record, here is a description of his beliefs:

“Beaubien distinguished himself by his passion for farming even more than his activities as a railway promoter. From the beginnings of his career as an MLA, he spoke in favour of agricultural progress. He suggested that free land be given to students who had attended an agricultural school for two years. From 1869 to 1886, he was a member of the Council of Agriculture, a consultative body of the provincial government and he used it to spread information through specialized journals, agricultural societies and exhibitions and experimental farms.

“He was also president of the Hochelaga Agricultural Society, a member of the Ayrshire Breeders Association and the Montreal Horticultural Society. In 1877, after visiting Lansing, Michigan, and Guelph, Ontario, Beaubien publicly criticized the schools in Quebec for not attaching sufficient importance to practical instruction and declared himself in favour of having a single school for the province. He also suggested giving students a salary in addition to their living allowance. This stand drew a vigorous retort from Abbe Narcisse Proulx, the principal of the school at Sainte-Anne-de-la-Pocatiere (La Pocatiere), who did not appreciate criticism from the member from Hochelaga. This incident illustrates Beaubien’s boldness and outspokenness; he apparently never hesitated to express his opinion, even at the risk of alienating close associates.”

It turns out that despite my emotional reaction to M. Beaubien’s poor showing, as

compared with Mr. Ness, at the Chicago World's Fair, M. Beaubien distinguished himself in other ways. It transpires that he was an original thinker about economic matters.

He was a powerful speaker, who urged farmers to engage in the dairy industry and to build silos, which he called the farmers' savings bank.

He liked money. And he wanted farmers to make more of it. He believed that farming was coming of age; a time when science and the economy would come together to create new and more lucrative crops.

He railed against the number of young Quebec men who were destined for classical education by the priests. And here, as the Minister for Colonization, M. Beaubien tried to reconcile his passion for farming with keeping Quebecers on the land and away from American cities.

In a speech to the Legislative Assembly in December 1893, M. Beaubien held forth on colonization: "Alongside of this word, I shall place the word 're-peopling; the re-peopling of our old parishes. In some of these, desertion has passed like a tornado, a fire, leaving everywhere a void. Numbers of houses are locked up, under the care of a neighbour. If he thinks fit, which seldom happens, he will get something out of the farm to the profit of the absent one.

"How many vacant farms in your parish," asked I of a good priest, who was doing his best to get up a farmers' club. "From thirty to forty," replied he with a sigh. "And the parishioners? "Gone to the large towns."

Beaubien was on a quest of his own: to set up agricultural clubs which would oversee local production and recruit students for agricultural schools.

He clearly considered John McIntosh an ally and held him in high esteem, making several complimentary references to the honorable member for Compton in his speech.

Two months after the Chicago World's Fair ended, M. Beaubien gave John McIntosh another assignment. This time, it was partly as a reward for founding the Compton Model Farm for the Eastern Townships, a school also founded by the legendary

cattleman the Honorable Senator Cochrane.

M. Beaubien made the announcement to the Legislative Assembly: “Three members, one of whom is appointed by the government, compose the syndicate. The House will learn with pleasure that we have chosen my honorable colleague, the member for Compton, as our representative. The eminent post among his fellow citizens, was his due since he was the founder of this school and took the greatest pains to arrive at the desired end, its successful establishment.

“It was also his due, on account of his success as a farmer, for that business alone our honorable colleague raised himself to the distinguished rank he holds among us.”

I will have to admit that M. Beaubien conducted himself well, for the most part at least.

From time to time, he annoyed people, including Prime Minister John A. Macdonald, who did not take kindly to an action of M. Beaubien in 1882. It had to do with the railway and the profits that stood to be earned for the sale of M. Beaubien's lands in east Montreal. It was a complicated deal, but in the end it fell through. All the years that M. Beaubien spent fighting for railways to encourage colonization proved fruitless. He never forgave the Quebec government for supporting his rivals and he publicly voted against his own party.

The Premier of Quebec, Joseph-Alfred Mousseau made sure word got to John A. Macdonald, telling the Prime Minister he would always congratulate himself for not bringing the traitor Beaubien into his cabinet.

In the next election, in 1886, M. Beaubien withdrew his candidacy at the last minute and said he was retiring from politics.

Shortly after, he set up the Haras National with the grants he received from the provincial and federal governments. Coincidence, I wonder? Or was M. Beaubien rewarded for withdrawing from politics and allowing another candidate to step in?

We will never know. But we do know that M. Beaubien did not last long outside the world of politics.

In 1891, his old friend, Charles Boucher de Boucherville became Premier and invited M. Beaubien back into the fold. He ran again and was elected in 1892, during which time he reignited his dreams for profitable farming and agricultural schools.

I will allow the historical record to have the last word on M. Beaubien:

“Beaubien often disagreed with the agronomist Edouard-André Barnard. In 1892, for example, when Barnard was trying hard to organize the Syndicat des Cultivateurs in order to unite the members of agricultural circles, the commissioner refused to grant government subsidies. He supported instead the Syndicat Central des Agriculteurs du Canada, a rival Montreal organization whose two vice-presidents happened to be his son, Joseph, and his son-in-law Raymond Auzias-Turenne. Obviously, Beaubien did not always make a distinction between public and private interests.”

Even though I judged M. Beaubien too harshly and too quickly, I’m certain I would have judged him even more harshly had I known that Monsieur Auzias-Turenne was his son-in-law!

However, the historical record is truly immaterial to my personal quest.

What matters is that M. Beaubien had a vision for Quebec farmers and when it came time to choose a commissioner to oversee the crucial showing that Quebec would make on the world stage, he chose a farmer. He chose John McIntosh and John McIntosh enlisted M. Raymond Auzias-Turenne, and he in turn enlisted Robert Ness.

For my own quest, all of this means that Mr. McIntosh and Mr. Ness went to the Chicago World’s Fair.

And, I believe, one of them brought me and the rest of the bedroom grouping back to Montreal, where my true adventure began.

## Chapter Ten

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## CENSUS OF CANADA, 1891.

Province

Quebec

District No. 149

PAGE 3

SCHEDULE No. 1.—Nominal Return of the Living.

TABLEAU No. 1.—Dénombrement des Vivants. Enuméré par moi ce \_\_\_\_\_ jour

NUMBERS IN THE ORDER OF VISITATION.					NAMES.	SEX.	AGE.	Married or Widowed.	Belongs to Head of Family.	Country or Province of Birth.	French Canadian.
Visited and Shown.	House in occupation.	House under habitation.	House in habitation.	Family.							
Habitués dans l'Ordre des Visites.					1891	Sex.	Age.	Married or Widowed.	Lien de parenté avec le Chef de Famille.	Pays ou Province de Naissance.	Canadien Français.
Établis dans l'Ordre des Visites.	Malsons en voie de construction.	Malsons in-habitées.	Malsons habitées.	Family.							
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	—	—	—	—	Jane Louisa	F	35	M	L	Quebec	—
2	—	—	—	12	Chambelin Marie	M	58	M	—	U.S.	—
3	—	—	—	8	" Veronne	F	50	M	W	Quebec	—
4	—	—	—	—	" Gertrude	F	18	D	—	"	—
5	—	—	—	—	" Marguerite	F	11	—	D	"	—
6	—	—	—	—	" Nettie	F	9	—	D	"	—
7	—	—	—	10	McIntosh Alex	M	32	M	—	"	—
8	—	—	—	—	" Jennie	M	25	M	W	"	—
9	—	—	—	—	" Mabel	F	5	—	D	"	—
10	—	—	—	—	" Robt	M	2	—	S	"	—
11	—	—	—	—	" Wm	M	6	—	S	"	—
12	—	—	—	—	Robertson Jane	F	27	M	W	Quebec	—
13	—	—	—	9	Blie' Adolph	M	49	M	—	Quebec	—
14	—	—	—	—	" Philomene	F	43	M	W	"	1
15	—	—	—	—	" Delphine	F	21	—	D	"	1
16	—	—	—	—	" Joseph	M	19	L	S	"	1
17	—	—	—	—	" Annie	F	17	—	D	"	1
18	—	—	—	—	" Alfred	M	13	—	S	"	1

## Two facts: Mr. Ness and Mr. McIntosh went to the Chicago World's Fair.

And the second fact: Sometime after the World's Fair, my bedroom grouping joined Janet and Sandy (Alexander) McIntosh and their growing family.

I have so many questions about how my grouping became part of the McIntosh family.

*Dear Reader*, please forgive my speculation.

I wonder: Did Mr. Ness buy the bedroom set for his eldest daughter, Janet? Was it a gift? Did she ask him to buy it for her?

I don't have many facts to help ground my fantasy. Nevertheless, there is this: In 1893, Janet and Sandy had moved from the McIntosh farm near Waterville. They bought a house at 319 Victoria Ave in the new Montreal suburb of Westmount.

I think of M. Beaubien and realize that Janet and Sandy were part of the emigration to the cities which he so feared.

There are no facts to say when exactly Janet and Alexander uprooted their young family and moved to Westmount.

Census records in 1891 place them and their three children at the family farm in Waterville, Compton County. The census form is a stark document, handwritten by someone whose first language might have been French. "Janet" is shown as "Jennet", age 25. Alex, 32, Mabel was five years old and Bruce, 2. Baby William is 6 and a half months old.

Baby William. Born September 15, 1890 and christened William Alexander. The third child of Janet and Sandy. I realize this is the famous Uncle Billy, who would have a profound impact on the McIntosh family! His adventurous actions would shape the lives of generations to come.

And Mabel Elizabeth, born November 7, 1885, the eldest. She, too, would become an important person to me and my people.

The census of 1891 shows that Janet had help with her growing family. Jane Robertson, the 27 year old daughter of a Scottish-born mother and Scots Canadian father is listed on the census as a domestic. Jane Robertson was a member of the Free Church, as were Janet and Alex.

I'm happy that Janet had help on the farm.

Janet Brodie Ness, like her mother-in-law Margaret Brodie McIntosh, did not have an easy start in life. Like her mother-in-law, Janet Brodie Ness lost her mother as a toddler. Janet was only two when her mother died. Her mother, Elizabeth Greig, died on July 11, 1867, only days after Canada became a country. She was 31 and had been married to Robert Ness for less than three years when she died. Janet Brodie Ness was their only child.

On February 17, 1871, when Janet was six, her father remarried. He and his new wife had six children together, four boys and two girls. Two of the boys, William and John, would become doctors. Some of them moved to the United States, including a daughter who married into the Bass boot family.

I've heard it said that Mary Anderson, Janet's stepmother, sent her to an Anglican boarding school in Montreal, as was the custom of the day, for promising young women. Whether young Janet was happy or not, we do not know.

We do know that she travelled a bit with her father. Mr. Ness was said to have crossed the Atlantic Ocean 100 times with his cattle, sometimes bringing Janet with him.

When she was just shy of her 19th birthday, on October 22, 1884, she married

Alexander at Woodside Farm in Howick. One of the witnesses was the groom's eldest brother, John McIntosh.

After living on the McIntosh family farm for a few years, Janet and Sandy moved to Westmount and into a large house at 319 Victoria Ave.

By 1893, their family had grown to five children. George came after Billy and was now two years old. And there was a new baby girl, the first sister for Mabel. The new baby was named Elsie Margaret, born June 16, 1893, less than a month after the opening of the Chicago World's Fair. Baby Elsie!

She and I would spend many years in each other's company.

And I was pleased as punch to learn that Elsie and I entered the McIntosh family in the same year, 1893, and that the Chicago World's Fair was a marker for each of our lives.

And then, I discovered another interesting fact. Sandy and Janet did not christen their new baby until she was six months old. Why wait half a year? Was this usual for the times?

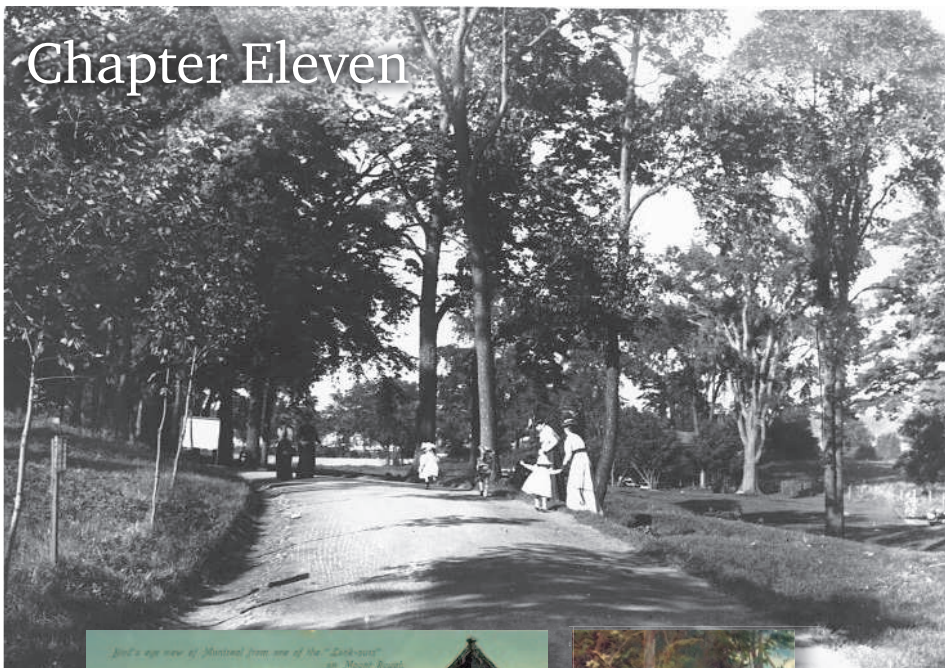
Or was the family otherwise preoccupied?

Perhaps there is a clue in here about the McIntosh family's connection to the World's Fair. I wonder if it is possible that Sandy had also travelled to Chicago with his father-in-law, Robert Ness, and his older brother John? Would the family have waited until the men returned with the horses, following a period of quarantine, to hold a baptism ceremony for baby Elsie?

This, of course, is just my curiosity and imagination at play.

What I do know is the story about Chicago passed down through the McIntosh family's oral history. They say that the bedroom set belonging to Janet and Sandy came from the Chicago World's Fair. No matter how it came to be, the fact is that in 1893, I, Washstand, and the rest of my Bedroom Grouping, were brought to Montreal to our new home. To our new family.

## Chapter Eleven



*One of the Look Outs at Mount Royal*



*Frederick Law Olmstead*

*Mount Royal Park  
from the McCord  
Museum Archives,  
Montreal*

## And so began my life in Canada.

In Montreal, any twinge of homesickness I might have felt for Chicago, was eased by the nearby presence of the beautiful Mount Royal Park. The connection to my hometown is that it was designed by Frederick Law Olmstead, the famous landscape architect who created the garden oasis atmosphere of the Chicago World's Fair.

Montreal was just coming into its own as a place where beauty was starting to matter. And like Chicago, Montreal had requested the services of Mr. Olmstead to imprint something that lifted people's hearts.

He wanted his design to highlight the natural beauty of the mountain and he certainly succeeded. Just a couple of years after I arrived at the McIntosh house, the suburb that we lived in was changed to reflect the beauty of the park and the mountain itself. In 1895, Cote Ste. Antoine was changed to Westmount, reflecting both the mountain and the elegance of the thriving suburb.

Mount Royal began just a few blocks from the McIntosh house on Victoria Avenue and while I can't say for sure what the family did when they left the house, I imagine that they did take Baby Elsie in her pram for a walk through the park.

The McIntoshes entertained at home, as did most families of means in Montreal.

As was the custom of the time, Sandy and Janet listed their visiting hours in Dau's Blue Book, the social register of Montreal. By 1905, Miss Mabel McIntosh was also listed. You can still find the listing on Page 95 of the social register: "McIntosh, Mr and Mrs. Alexander, 319 Victoria Avenue, (and) Miss Mabel McIntosh receive on the 2nd and 3rd Thursday."

The McIntoshes are listed, along with all four branches of the Birks, with Mr. and Mrs. Henry Birks, on Pine Avenue, also receiving guests on Thursday.

The publisher of Dau's Society Blue Book explains in its purpose in the preface: "We do not claim that the Blue Book is either a City or absolutely an Elite Directory; neither do we pretend to pass upon the social or financial standing of the parties whose names are contained therein. It is simply a compilation of about thirty-five hundred names of the most prominent householders of Montreal, Ottawa and Quebec, published in the most convenient form for reference by our lady patrons.

"The title 'Blue Book,' is given the work because of its blue cover. It does not refer to blue blood, as many people suppose. Webster's definition of Blue Book is as follows: "Blue Book- a book containing a list of fashionable addresses."

The McIntosh house at 319 Victoria Avenue was certainly fashionable. It was also a very busy and full of life!

Shortly after I came, more babies followed. Agnes Mary was born in 1894, then Annie in 1897 and Jeannette in 1899.

There was sadness, too. In 1894, the year after I arrived, the McIntosh family experienced the blow of two deaths. Baby Agnes Mary dies at only six months of age. And later that year, Janet lost her grandfather, Robert Ness Sr.

But the memory of baby Agnes was kept alive. In 1904, Janet and Sandy had their last baby, a girl. They named her Agnes.

The years flew by.

With the new century and the new decade, came much talk of people moving to the new Canadian west. Waterville's sons had already made their mark in Alberta. Matthew Cochrane had headed west to establish the Cochrane Ranch near Calgary before

the century was even out. And like many English speaking Quebecers in the Eastern Townships, John McIntosh's son John, headed to Colorado.

John spent a couple of years in the United States before deciding to head to Edmonton in 1902. He worked hard and prospered in the bustling new Alberta city. He bought a farm and when Edmonton experienced its first big land boom, John decided to develop his farmland as a housing subdivision in the northeast. It became Calder, Edmonton's first suburb where railway workers bought modest houses to raise their families.

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Billy McIntosh was eager to join in the adventure. He headed west and started a full-on campaign for his parents and siblings to join him.

Eventually, he won.

Sandy and Janet and the rest of the family left the house in Westmount in 1911. They headed first for Toronto but for some reason, they decided against settling there. Perhaps they found the city to be a cultural backwater; Unlike Montreal, which established the Montreal Museum of Fine Art in 1860, Toronto didn't even have a public art gallery!

Mabel, with her artistic talents, may very well have been less than impressed with Toronto and its fledgling plan to open its first gallery a year down the road.

In 1912, Janet and Sandy and their family boarded a train and headed to Edmonton. The couple, with six of their seven children, ranging in age from 26-year-old Mabel to eight-year-old Agnes, were finally about to join Billy. Elsie stayed behind to complete her education as a teacher.

They arrived just as the new legislature building was opening. Others have remarked that it might have seemed strange: An elegant sandstone structure in a European-style architecture, with a giant dome and corridors graced with marble, the finest building in a city with muddy streets and wooden sidewalks. The city was still at the peak of the first big boom and many of the young people who came to seek their fortune were living in wooden shacks or tents.

But, from what I hear, the fresh and vibrant frontier city pleased the McIntoshes.

By the time the census was taken in 1916, most of the McIntosh family was living with Billy in the Edmonton neighbourhood of Strathcona. The only family member not living in the McIntosh home was Mabel, who had already enrolled in nursing school in Calgary.

Mabel was hoping to serve as a nurse in the First World War but she graduated too late to be sent overseas. Nonetheless, she did sign up. War records show Mabel McIntosh as a Soldier of the First World War. She also married a veteran, George Mackintosh, a Scottish newspaperman who had come to Alberta at about the same time her family did. Mabel met George when he was a patient recovering from a war wound in the Edmonton hospital where she was nursing.

When Mabel married George in 1920, they received a piano as a wedding present from her cousin, John McIntosh. He was the youngest son of the late Honorable John McIntosh, the man so pivotal to my own story. Do you recall, *Dear Reader*, how I smiled at the thought of the young John McIntosh as I imagined the scene on the steps of the church in Waterville back in 1892 when his father was newly appointed Quebec's Commissioner to the World's Fair?



*Mabel & George's Wedding Invitation Plate; Photo by Ian Stewart*

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1. NO.	2. GRADE OR RATING	3. SURNAME	4. CHRISTIAN NAMES
	Nursing Sister	McINTOSH	Mabel E.
5. UNIT OR SHIP	6. DATE OF CASUALTY	7. R.M. FILE NO.	8. RELIGION
C.A.M.C.	Oct. 6, 1936.	395-13-624	Presbyterian
9. CIRCUMSTANCES OF CASUALTY		10. NAME, RELATIONSHIP AND ADDRESS OF NEXT OF KIN	
<p>Died at University Hospital, Edmonton, Alta.          Cause - Cardiac failure.          Death was due to service, authority CPC.4,20-11-36.</p>		<p>Mr. George McIntosh, (husband)          10011 - 129th Street,          Edmonton, Alta.</p>	
11. LOCATION OF BODY AT TIME OF CASUALTY		12. REGISTERED NO. OF GRAVE	
		<p>Lot 6          Section II</p>	
13. LOCATION OF GRAVE AND CEMETERY SUPPLIED TO			

Unit C.A.M.C. Rank N/S. Name McINTOSH Mabel E.

### OFFICERS' DECLARATION PAPER

CANADIAN OVER-SEAS EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED BY OFFICER

(ANSWERS)

- (a) What is your Surname? McINTOSH
- (b) What are your Christian Names? Mabel Elizabeth
- (a) Where were you born? (State place and country) Waterloo - Iowa
- (b) What is your present address? Stegville, Trail, B.C., Vancouver
- What is the date of your birth? 7. Dec. 1881
- What is (a) the name of your next-of-kin? James Ross McIntosh  
(b) the relationship of your next-of-kin? brother
- What is your profession or occupation? Teacher
- What is your religion? Presbyterian
- Are you willing to be vaccinated or re-vaccinated and inoculated? Yes
- To what Unit of the Active Militia do you belong? C. C. Co. 6
- State particulars of any former Military Service Nil.
- Are you willing to serve in the CANADIAN OVER-SEAS EXPEDITIONARY FORCE? Yes.

The undersigned hereby declares that the above answers made by him to the above questions are true  
M. E. McIntosh (Signature of Officer)

Taken on strength (place) Edmonton  
 (date) Jan. - 10 - 1911

James Ross McIntosh (Signature of Commanding Officer)  
Stephanna Melling Hopt

### CERTIFICATE OF MEDICAL EXAMINATION

I have examined the above-named Officer in accordance with the Regulations for Army Medical Services.  
 I consider him fit for the CANADIAN OVER-SEAS EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

Date 6. 11. 36 1918  
 Place Edmonton  
 (Insert name "R" or "N")

Official  
 Medical Officer.

M. F. W. H.  
 20-11-36  
 R. G. 275 3-37

Looking back through time, I knew then that young John would grow up, marry Grace McBean and settle in Edmonton. Miss McBean, the daughter of a wealthy Montreal grain merchant, had studied dance in New York under Arthur Murray. While her husband built his fortune as a land developer, Grace earned her own reputation for opening a school and teaching young ladies of Edmonton how to dance. Was it Grace's idea, I wonder, to give the piano to one of John's favourite cousins as a wedding gift?

The piano was much enjoyed by Mabel and George, who made their home in Edmonton, where George became the sports editor of the Edmonton Journal and where they had two children Sheila and George.

I chuckle, *Dear Reader*, as I recall a story Sheila once told about a scene she imagined a child, wondering about the preponderance of relatives named George, with the surname of McIntosh on her mother's side and Mackintosh from her father. "What I would ask myself would a policeman think if he ever stopped a car with them all in it and asked their names. George McIntosh, my uncle would say. George Mackintosh, my father would say. And my brother would also say George Mackintosh. Surely the policeman would ask: Are you being smart with me?"

George McIntosh, Mabel's brother served in the First World War and returned to Alberta to pursue a career managing grain elevators. He and his wife, Jessie, had one child Peggy and lived in several small towns in Alberta.

Billy, having lured the whole family west, decided to move back east! In 1918, he went to New York, where he and his wife Margaret Ewing, raised a family of their own.

Bruce married Margaret Durnin and lived in Brandon, Manitoba, for many years before coming back to Edmonton. They had a daughter, Elsie, a journalist who settled in Maryland. After Margaret died, Bruce joined Elsie and lived the rest of his life with her and her husband, enjoying sailing on Chesapeake Bay.

Jean married Dr. Orvil Wilson and moved to Innisfail, Alberta, where they raised their only daughter, Carmen.

Besides Mabel, only three others of my original Montreal family stayed in the Edmonton area.

Elsie married Gordon MacDonald, a contractor in Edmonton, who eventually turned the business over to his son Jack MacDonald. When Elsie and Gordon's daughter Dorothy married Tommy Campbell, it was said that the Edmonton minister never imagined he would marry a MacDonald to a Campbell!

Annie also stayed in Edmonton and married Dr. William Turner.

Agnes married Frank Welbourne and moved to the Winterburn Farm, a favourite summer destination for all of the McIntosh siblings and their children. How the cousins loved to ride in the stone boat on the Winterburn Farm! The city has changed a lot since then. Today, Winterburn is an exit on the freeway and no longer even on the outskirts of Edmonton.

That's my family. The people of my family.

But, you are aware, *Dear Reader*, that I am part of another family, too. My Bedroom Set Grouping.

Just as I had my own adventurous journey in the past 120 years, so did the other members of my grouping.

**Bed**, I'm sorry to tell you, is no more. Oh, it must be 50 years ago now, that he was lost. He was left with Elsie Parks, Bruce's daughter, who was forced to leave Bed behind when her husband was transferred to the Netherlands for his work. When the family returned, Bed had been damaged and had to be destroyed because of the rot. Such a sad fate for one so magnificent.

**Table and one Windsor Chair** continue to live in Alberta, where they have remained since arriving from Montreal. They were placed with Carmen, Jean's daughter, who treasured them in the Calgary home she shared with her husband, Peter Simon and two daughters Maureen and Cheryl.

When Carmen and Peter divested themselves of their belongings to move into smaller, assisted-living quarters, Table and the Windsor Chair were donated to Heritage Park in Calgary. They are on display so that all visitors may enjoy their beauty and history! Truly a wonderful fate, especially for us coming Chicagoans with our strong need to be admired.

**Rocking Chair** has lived with Carmen's daughter, Maureen Simon Holmes, for many years. I'm happy to tell you that Rocking Chair has been restored to her former beauty and grace after many years of languishing in disrepair. Maureen cherishes her every memory.

I don't know what happened to **Dresser** or its splendid mirror. But I'm sure they have their own stories to tell. For if there is one thing I have learned in the 119 years I've been on this earth it is that everyone has a story.

Dresser and Mirror are kept alive by the stories passed on through the family. In the case of Mirror, Sheila remembers its unique purpose with the cornucopia hair saver. She has fond memories of her grandmother, Janet, brushing her long hair and placing the strands in her special container on the mirror.

Our Grouping has been divided over time. A long time ago, as the family moved within Edmonton, we were divided and reunited again. I suppose it is fitting that as part of a Scottish family, the furniture itself should become part of its own small diaspora! And that we should adapt each time we unite and part ways again.

I'm happy to tell you that I am not alone and separated from my entire Grouping. I live with the **other Windsor Chair**. He lived with Sheila for several decades and eventually Chair and I were reunited. His presence is a comfort to me. We share so much history.

For if there is one thing I have learned in my long time on this earth is that you just never know what is going to happen. And it is good to have companions who know your story.

This then, has become my story. I am the **Washstand**. I came from the Chicago's World Fair as part of a Bedroom Set belonging to Alexander (Sandy) and Janet McIntosh. They brought me to Montreal in 1893 and then to Edmonton in 1912.

These are the facts of my story. But the question of how and why seems to have no answer.

When I started this quest, I was hoping to find out why I was in Chicago and how I came to be brought to Montreal.

Along the way, I learned many fascinating things about the world of 1893 that I was brought into and also about the people who affected my future.

Those facts are rich in history. Richer, I must admit, than the one mystery that I failed to uncover.

I can now see how my identity that is woven into a larger fabric of the McIntosh and Brodie families. And also into the much larger tapestry of Canada, a tapestry that is still being woven and one in which I continue to play a part.

I may not know why I came to Canada. But I do know that as proud as I am of my American roots, I understand that my roots in Canada are far deeper and more significant to this country.

# Epilogue



*Sheila & Neil Stewart*

## It is now 2012.

One hundred years have passed since I first came to Edmonton.

I think it's fair to call this city my home, for when I think back to my journey from Chicago to Montreal and then to the west, most of my time on this earth has been lived in Edmonton.

Not just in Edmonton, of course. After the McIntosh family settled here, I moved within the city a couple of times. And later, I moved to Calgary. And later still, to Victoria, B.C.

The places. The times. How they fuelled my sense of adventure!

But it is the people who created the bonds of affection that I know so well.

There are so many. Janet and Sandy had a big family. I've been fortunate to have met and known many of their children's children. And now, their children's great grandchildren!

The one who had the most impact on my life, I have to admit, was Baby Elsie. Elsie and I, who almost shared a birthdate!

It is because of Elsie that I am where I am today.

It was Elsie who took me after Sandy and Janet passed away. She kept me with her in her own home. And when she divested herself of most of her belongings to move into Canterbury Court, she choose to keep me. Of all the things, she passed to others, it was I that she clung to as her companion in retirement.

Elsie and I were together for almost her whole life. How I missed her when she went to Quebec and Toronto for the education that would lead to a long and enjoyable career as a teacher!

Elsie was a very special aunt to her niece, Sheila, Mabel's daughter. Sheila has a good eye for home decorating and excellent taste in furnishings. I know you will forgive me, *Dear Reader*, for admitting how I basked in Sheila's admiration. She loved me. Elsie could see it, too.

And, so, it came to pass that Elsie chose Sheila for me. When Elsie neared the end of her life and had to move from her apartment, she asked Sheila to take me.

It gave me comfort to be with Sheila after Elsie's passing. And I believe I brought comfort to her, too. I believed my presence in her Calgary home kept alive her fond memories of Aunt Elsie. I do believe this.

When Sheila's husband, Neil Stewart, retired, the couple moved to the coast. It was an adventure for them. And for me, too. It goes without saying, if you will forgive my conceit, that Sheila never even considered leaving me or Chair behind!

For the next 20 years, I lived with Sheila and Neil in their beautiful house in Oak Bay. What a wonderful life we shared! Friends visiting from all over the world! Old friends and new. And, family, too.

One of the first to visit was George Mackintosh, Sheila's brother and the son of Mabel and George. He's the one, who as a five-year-old, took off on his tricycle riding as fast as he could over Edmonton's wooden sidewalks. He caused bit of alarm that day as his parents tried to find him!

Elsie's two children also came to 2354 Windsor Road several times. Her son Jack MacDonald and his wife Adele, whom everyone calls Del. Jack and Del's children, Doug and Heather.

Elsie's daughter Dorothy and her husband Tommy Campbell and their grandchildren.

Elsie's sister's daughter, Carmen and her husband Pete Simon.

They all came. They sat in the living room, where I occupied a prominent spot and I listened to their stories. The happiness of their family. And the sadness, too. For it is fair to say that the descendants of Janet and Sandy, like the couple themselves, knew the pain of losing adult children. Only they can know the sorrow they felt. I was a mere witness.

But there was joy, too.

The grandchildren who came so late in life for Sheila and Neil. I was in my 112th year myself when Sheila's son Sandy and his wife Darlene appeared with Baby Callum. It fills me with such happiness to remember Sheila's and Neil's delight with Callum Bruce.

And then just two and a half year's later in 2008, another boy! Andrew.

The living room was not nearly as quiet after that!

From time to time, Ian would come to visit. I knew Ian well. He used to visit Elsie when she lived in Canterbury Court. He was clearly fond of his great aunt, even though it may very well have been a sense of duty that compelled a young man in his early 20s to visit his mother's aunt.

Elsie told Sheila that she very much enjoyed Ian's visits and thought he was a fine young man, although she did complain that she had to do most of the talking. I know that Ian was enthralled with her stories and he shared her love of Edmonton and its history.

I remember Ian coming for Christmas that first year Sheila and Neil lived in Oak Bay. As always, the Christmas decorations included the paper house which I was proud to bear. I loved having Sheila place that house so carefully on my surface. A place of honour for the cherished green house, with its red chimney and plume of smoke created with cotton batting.

The next Christmas when Ian came, he brought with him a new wife, Judy. I remember well the twinkle in Sheila's eye as she observed Judy staring at the six stockings lined up

on the fireplace. You could almost hear the wheels turning in Judy's head as she puzzled over the letters on each stocking.

The "N" for Neil, "S" for Sheila, "I" for Ian, "G" for George and "S" for Sandy. No mystery there. But how was it that there was a "J" for Judy?

Sheila waited a few minutes to let the mystery deepen. And then she leaned over to Judy and said, "I made those stockings in 1961, the year Sandy was born."

There was a pause. And then Sheila delivered her punchline. "The "J" was for our dog, Jock." Another pause. "We're very pleased that Ian married a "J".

And now, I've had one Christmas back in Edmonton. The stockings with "I" and "J" hung on the fireplace.

I live with Ian and Judy. They have a Border Collie, very much like Jock. Ainslie is her name. She has her own Christmas stocking, too.

It all feels very familiar to me. I'm happy to be back in Edmonton. And I'm happy that Sheila chose Ian for me.

I know that I'm in safe hands.

# Acknowledgements

This story came about when my husband Ian asked his mother a simple question about the Washstand: What kind of wood was it made from?

No one was sure, so I set out to learn as much as I could about furniture of the late 19th century.

One question led to another.

It was Ian's cousin, Maureen Simon Holmes, who told me that she had always heard that her great grandparents bought their bedroom set at a market, which was part of the Chicago World's Fair.

I began to research in earnest and the idea of writing this story took hold.

Much of my research was conducted through online tools. The biggest breakthrough was finding John McIntosh's report in the National Library of Australia, of all places!

I wanted the story to be a surprise for my mother-in-law, so I conducted my research in secret.

Thanks to Uncle George Mackintosh for helping me in my quest and not spilling the beans!

I also want to thank Ian's distant cousin, Susan Davis Sullivan, with whom we connected over the Internet. Susan has done extensive research on the Brodie family, from which she is descended.

Susan shared my passion for the family's story and provided invaluable genealogical information. She was extraordinarily generous in helping me through this project.

I can't thank Susan enough.

I owe a debt of gratitude to my friend, Marguerite Baker, for her critical eye. She is my first editor and critic. Her husband, John, is my first audience, a talented story teller who listens and encourages in equal measure.

And finally, I thank Ian, without whom nothing in this story would be possible.

Marriage

Alexander M<sup>c</sup> Intosh & Jane<sup>s</sup> Brodie Reid

On the twenty second day of October in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and eight four at the residence of the bride's father, pursuant to License, Alexander M<sup>c</sup> Intosh, Yeoman, of Watersville, County of Compton, Inverclyde, a bachelor, son of John M<sup>c</sup> Intosh of the same place, and of his wife Margaret, maiden name Brodie, and Jane<sup>s</sup> Brodie Reid, a spinster, daughter of Robert Reid Junior of Horvick, County of Chateauguay, Inverclyde, son of his wife Elizabeth, maiden name Spier, the bride a minor, were joined in Marriage by me in presence of the undersigned witnesses

J. S. M<sup>c</sup>Bean, Minister

The Marriage was } Alex<sup>r</sup> M<sup>c</sup> Intosh  
Solemnized between us } Jane<sup>s</sup> Brodie Reid

Witnesses }  
John C. Currie





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