



## [Angus Macleod - From Crossbost to Canada to Australia (late 19<sup>th</sup> century)]

Murdo Macleod, 1821, was evicted from Lemreway in 1843 and in 1852 he married Betty or Bess Macleod, 1831, daughter of Angus Macleod, 12 Gravir, and they lived at 20 Crossbost where they had the first two of their eight children. In 1862 they emigrated to Scotstown, Quebec, Canada and the last of their six children were born there. They bought a farm about one mile from Scotstown on the Salmon River.

Angus Macleod, their son, was born at 20 Crossbost in 1860, and was obviously an accomplished story teller who might have entertained folk in the Ceilidh House if he had stayed in Lewis. Some of his letters to the younger members of his family in Canada survived. The following extract from a letter was written to his niece and her husband, Walter and Margaret Burger, by him in 1937. The letter was sent from Portland, Oregon when Angus would have been about 77 years old.

28<sup>th</sup> November 1937

Dear Niece,

I grew up in a newly settled country. My father's house stood hard by our beloved Salmon River where the youngest members of the clan live to this day at Scotstown, Quebec. There also I grew up with a sturdy, young bunch that took to sport in that river like young ducks to water.

In the course of time we became experts in swimming, boating, rafting and added glory to our sport by courting danger riding a log, a block of wood or any stick that would hold us afloat through the rapids, the proficiency we acquired by these activities on the Salmon River didn't come amiss to me out there in the Rockies.

One summer we camped for a time at the Kicking Horse River where that swift and turbulent river flowed out of Kicking Horse Lake. The source of the river however was another lake high up in the mountains. We often went up there duck hunting, and there were a lot of them there and Rocky Mountain goats too. The river came down from that lake over the face of the mountain in a succession of beautiful waterfalls, and flowed into the lower lake and out at the other end and emptied into the Columbia River at Golden 20 miles away.

It was at Golden we made the raft on which we took that joy ride to the mouth of the Beaver. The ride began smoothly enough but we soon got into stronger currents and our troubles began. The raft was overloaded which made it hard to handle, moreover my other four men knew nothing about rafting. My greatest trouble was to keep clear of snags and trees sticking out from the banks in the bends of the river. To tangle with one of these obstructions meant disaster. We went bowling along faster and faster as we dropped down the river and were nearing our landing place where I put three of the men ashore but kept one. We found the raft handled ever so much better. We were in sight of Big Canyon before we knew it, and high time to land which was no such snap in that foaming current. The bank was high and steep too. Steering the corner of the raft to strike into the bank Scotty sprang ashore with a rope while I swung the raft around so that the other end of it stuck into the bank, thus checking it. The nimble young Scotty had a turn of the rope around a tree by that time and we were secure.

The most crucial ride of my life was over. I derived such a wholesome kick from that ride that it is still fresh in my memory after 53 years.

You will remember of course that I told you of having left these men on an island, so more woodman's and raft man's crafts had to be brought into play to get them off the island. There was nothing to do this with but a bare axe. We eventually got on our way following the course of the Beaver heavily loaded with our rucksacks. That night after a big feed of broiled meat, roast spuds and canned fruit we were resting and smoking by our camp fire when we had a visit from a snarling, roaring mountain lion. It came within 40 yards of us. I fired 2 shots into him but never took time to see whether I killed him or not (time was precious on such a trip).

Continuing our journey we followed the Beaver River into the heart of the Selkirk Range where it petered out. We soon came to the head waters of the Illecillewaet River flowing down the

western slope of the range. Rough and tough were our experiences along that river as we followed it to the Columbia River where the town of Revestoke now stands, 80 miles from the mouth of the Beaver River. We were surprised to find two sturdy Scotch Canucks (Canadians) building a house there. They had come from Eastern Canada via the U.S.A. From the coast of Washington territory they made their way to the Columbia River, built a boat and went up the river.

Our chuck (food) was practically gone by then and 65 miles yet to go, but not a morsel of food could they give us. Their own chief food was fish and game. One of these men Douglas Macaulay took us across the river. We followed another stream into the Gold Range, found lots of fish and 3 varieties of berries so we didn't suffer from hunger. We made good time to Shuswap Lake where there was a hotel and store.

A small stream took us down the Thompson River a good distance, then more hiking to the end of the railroad at Spense Bridge below the junction of the North and South Thompson Rivers. Reaching the coast we took a boat from New Westminster at the mouth of the Fraser to Victoria.

Now the incentive for this long and hazardous trip was the Gold Rush in Australia where Scotty and I were bound (only we two reached Victoria). We soon had an introduction to a shipping master who was an old English sailor and Sea Captain. He was a congenial soul and was quite friendly towards us. He said he was sure he could find us a berth with his friend Captain O'Brian of the 'Wm. H. McNeil' a full rigger of Picton, Nova Scotia.

It was the first ship to leave for Australia and was then loading at Hastings Mill over on Burrards Inlet, which place is best known in this day and age as Vancouver, British Columbia.

For the next two weeks we had a grand time picking fruit close by and taking in a barn dance every few nights. Caribou Cameron, perhaps the most famous man that ever lived in British Columbia, was sure to be at the dances and there was no one more jolly and sociable than he. The gent was another Canadian Scotchman. He went to California in the Gold Rush of 1849 but he didn't add very much to his wealth there. He then went to Australia with no better luck. When he returned to the Pacific Coast however he made an immense fortune in the Caribou mines. He settled in Victoria and doled out his money as free as flowing waters. Being a man of the common people he loved to mix with them at these dances. He told us boys how we could find things in Australia and that he was sure we would return to British Columbia, the most glorious land the sun ever shone on, and, 'Boys, when you want work come to old Caribou as I am still working a mine up on the Fraser'. He was then 64 years of age and died 4 years later up at his mine in the swift and raging Fraser.

'Wm. H. McNeil' eventually put into Victoria for part of her crew and took us on, Scotty as an Able Seaman and yours truly as an Ordinary Seaman. My first night on the 'briney' as a sailor is somewhat in the category of my joy ride in the raft, but I shall pass it up and state that after 77 days, some of them wild and woolly while others were equally fine, we landed in the beautiful city of Melbourne, Australia, a week before Christmas.

There we found ourselves among the ever hospitable Scottish, every one of them trying to be the first to entertain us and make us believe that all Australia was ours. The Christmas festivities were in full swing and it was more dancing and feasting for us, but when the first day of the New Year was over, these people were at work like so many beavers, each man back to his vocation - some to the woods, some to the farms and some to vast stock ranches and many to mines.

We went with two young native fellows Scots of course over into New South Wales and took up mining claims along with those boys. We did quite well until too many went in there and ruined our water system. We then went a long ways to the west but scarcity of water was so great that we returned to Melbourne. It was my full intention to return to British Columbia, just as dear old Caribou had said we would. We had been in company with a bunch of fine fellows out west in Australia, all sailors.

Scotty was returning home to his native land and they all shipped out on a Scottish Clipper bound for London, so nothing would do but for me to go with them, which I did. I came back to America by way of Europe, I landed at historic Old Quebec the following spring and I am ashamed to tell that I had not written a word home in three years, but I surprised them the next day after landing, and it was a mighty happy home coming. I found everybody well and prosperous on the farm. My parents hadn't seen me since I was 17 and I was then 21. I stood six feet tall and tipped the beam at close on 200 pounds. After a short stay at home I went to Montreal thinking I would make for the coast in a short time. Instead I went to work with another

Scot, bridge building. He too was of a clear calibre and I stayed with him about two years and then returned to British Columbia.

Signed  
Angus MacLennan.

[ends]

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See also Hebridean Connections, for more information about Angus MacLennan's family:

<http://www.hebrideanconnections.com/Details.aspx?subjectid=36320>