

Copy of a letter in possession of Heritage Society, Dornoch, Nov. 1986

Six Mile Brook

RR No 3 Scotsburn, Nova Scotia

March 29 & 1926

Dear Friend's in Scotland

After lapses of year I again Renew our Correspondences at the time of our former Correspondance when each of us were trying to place our ~~relationship~~ relationship I mentioned at that time to you of a Old Friend John Mackay, a son of David I was to see him last Spring he is still hale and hearty tho about 92 or 93 year's I took all of your letter's with the little Booklet on Dornoch (which you kindly sent me) to him and Read them to him ~~so~~ he was very enthus-tic and said nothing surer than you was our Releation in Scotland and Give me some more Information where in your letter statting that your Son in old Record found where some Mackay Paid Rent he said the Farm Mackays lived on was a good one his Father David Paid £40 Rent and give it up and came to Pictou in 1820 he was the last of the Mackay to come Now if your Son happened to again have access to those Rent Record could possibly find the location of the Farm, It was at Cider Hall Dornoch I presume the last year he had it would be in 1819 Now we come to Thomas, I just went and again Read ~~your~~ over your three letters again I note in one that you say that your Great Grandfather was Thomas and he might ^{P.2} possibly be older than William my Grandfather. Yes my Grandfather's Brother was older and Remained in Scotland that we know when David left in 1820 he spent the last week ~~over~~ in Scotland with his Brother Tomas. But I think (John,

David Son) told me he was at that time in Edinburgh, and
said connected with some Docks But as Edinburgh is not a
Seaport there is some confusion in this But Thomas was
I believe the headest ^(oldest) of the family while William was
next to the youngest. David as our Old Friend told me
Alex Mackay was my Greatgrandfather he had family
Thomas, Alex, Andrew, William, David the last four came
to Pictou a sister Catherine Remained in Scotland. he
also informs me Thomas had a daughter Mrs Petters
(Pelters? Pestens?) lived in Edinburgh. Alex Mackay
(greatgrandfather) wife's name was Jess Ross There were
John but I hardly think a Brother, still One is never
sure, I just turned up a detached Part of a letter
to Grandfather from a William McKay I Presume his
Cousin stating "P.S I was at Edin. two years ago as
a witness and saw your Brother Thos he is married a
second time and doing well"

Grandfather was Born in 1785 Served 9 year in
the army I think under a Capt. Geo Pettley I just
forget the Regiment an Co No But could find it on
his discharge. he came here about 1812 aged 29 died
in 1871 aged 86 Our Old Friend John Mackay give
some of the history he is as Bright as ever a good
Reader and lives on his father (David) Farm / P.3 was
never married has one of his cousins Kepinghouse with
him (Andrew's granddaughter) he is well to do financially
Possibly own cash from \$30,000 to \$40,000 (thirty thousand)
he was in good circumstances and two of his
Brothers died one 25 years and the last 8 or 10 year
ago in California leaving him all their Estates Andrew
his brother was home some years ago and told John
he was selling out in two year (a Merchant) and
going to retire and said where do you think I am

going for a trip. John suggested New York. No he said III
"to Dornoch and see the farm my grandfather lived on the
first" - Poor fellow he died before the two years. That
would be one of my Pleasant anticipation If I could locate
the place If you or anny of your family can locate it I
would appreciate to Get a full description of it I may
say I always follow in Our Papers new of the North of
Scotland wherever I see Sutherlandshire mentioned I always
Read it fully, wonderfull too the attachment some have
for Such. If I ever went over I would Pass the Greater
London and beautiful Edinburgh, and historic Stirling
for Dornoch first I carefully note two of your daughter
(at time of writing) was teachers and other attending School
I am glad to know of them doing well. There are a
number of the Mackay here hold many responsible
Position's I will be much interested to hear again
of all your family and how they are getting along and
also the condition of the North of Scotland the smallest
details will be Read with interest and If there is
anny information they may want known at a future
date I will be only too ^{P.4} glad to tell them. There is a
very cheap fare to Nova Scotia and Canada now I
enclose the ad't. If ~~any~~ anyone is contemplating
comming out It is cheap. there is possibilities here in
western Canada. Teacher (Girls) get about \$100 a
month. Some \$800 term according to class. we here
only Pay about from \$400 to 500 and 600 for a
CxD Class for Term 9 mo wages for unskilled
labour lumbering from \$40 to \$52 month (26 days)
with Board ~~Farm~~ labour about the same anny time I
have help I mostly Pay \$2.00 a Day I farm Keep
some cows, Horses, But mostly Sheep. I have about
Prehaps 3 or 4 hundred acers fenced for Sheep
the worst drawback here is a long winter for feeding

but we get fair Return 4 and 5 months old lambs
from \$6 to \$7 and sometime \$8 wool is about 30 1/4 lb
Better from 35 to 55 we have a good Creamery here at
Scotsburn if I get a Report I may send it. It might
be interesting to see the Return's the Farmer's get But
our of their returns they have to pay a considerable
for short feed's. Some Raises it but Generally speaking
there is a lot bought, There is big Coal Mines in Pictou Co.
at Westville^{ville} and Stellarton (3 miles from Westville^{ville} (mill?)) and
Thorburn six miles from Stellarton. We live ten miles from
Westville thirteen from Stellarton and fifteen from New
Glasgow or more properly Trenton there is a Big steel
Plant with several small industries now there is a lot of
work but still there is a foreign element and often

overcrowded (over) P. 5 on back of P4 the old town of
Pictou is the dullest (C?) dullest (clallest?) in the county tho
the People is all Generally speaking well to do - We
had a Great Celebration there two summers ago lasting
for ten days commemorating the landing of the ship
Hector from North Scotland in 1723 (? surely not - 1773?)
the first Scottish settlers to come to all CANADA landed
at a place called Brown's Point about one mile this
side of Pictou they had a sailing ship Rigged Representing
the Hector of 1778 (73?) come in There were thousands
of visitors from all America They erected a Bronze
monument on a square and on top stands the Highlander
in his kilts Musket and Axe. ~~Perh~~ Perhaps if you was
around Pictou you would have the impression it was more
Scotch than Scotland. There is a lot of lumbering
done in Pictou Co and Nova Scotia we have a lot
of standing timber on our land but I don't find much
time to take it off we had a saw mill twice on
our place some year's ago But we only took a part
there is the Best is left lumber - logged and sawn at

Railway Sell from \$22 to \$24 per thousand now, when I
logged some 12 year ago It was only \$12 but costs then
was much less I will quote some prices of merchandise
Hay Pressed \$8 to 12 (scarce) Oats 76¢ to 90 wholesale
Groceries Tea 47¢ to 58 Sugar 100 \$6 to \$7 Molasses
58 to 68 Gal Beef Farmer Receive from 84 to 104 the
Butcher Retail from 12¢ to 2 ¢ lb Flour \$7 to
\$9.50 Brl Those prices may interest you to compare
with the costs of living here.

p 6. In Pictou Co there is some very fine farm. But there are
many vacant farm and many good one's the land is
mostly all good But in lots of caseses (?) the owners
work away lumbering or on Railway and use the farm
a place to stay or Eventually it Run out and they
leave or sell to some nearby farmer there is some
Settlement farther west where they mostly all left and
are leaving considering to far from towns moving
near, It is 8 to 10 miles from Scotsburn Sta good
farm's and good buildings this part 6 miles Brook?
there is some fine level land and B...r Intervals But
hill and "Glens" surrounding is on the north (wooded)
farms Prices is \$600 to \$4 and 5 Thousand Dollars a
fairly good one from \$800 to \$1600 Some farm is
often sold for much less But the higher Price is in
Better Repair. The Canadian West is where the most
immigrants go It is a fine wheat farming of Country
but very cold in winter and it cost a lot to start as
every thing is done on a large scale It is mostly
all "wheat" and a failure in wheat is no crop. But
I often Regret to see Doukhobours and such
take the Best west farm lands and our own Scotch
nor have the best or as good. Well I suppose
you will be getting impationed reading this letter but
Perhaps it may be of some Interest - I would consider

it if from Scotland. We my wife and Boy is well
the Boy is 7 Past (William Lloyd (? Floyd ?) Big and Healthy.
If we can Place this Thomas MacKay we can

p. 7 back of p. 6 - we could more easily trace
release ship I think there may be some mistake in the
Rent that David paid where it is £40 or \$160
as that to me seems to high But all our names
is the same in Both Your's and Our's family

Hoping you and family is well I have not
Received an answer to the last letter I written
some year ago I think I included you
amongst other freind I sent a small peice of our
home made maple sugar. I did not make anny
since

I Remain

Yours very sincerely

D. W. MacKay

P.S. Do they Speak Gallic or Gaelic yet in
Scotland It is not spoken much her But is in
the adjoining countries of Antinogish and Cape
Breton I can understand most of it as father
and mother had it But I cannot converse in it
I regret to say

Notes

1. When he says "Freinds", does he mean relations? "Freinds" are relations here in the north. I don't think his spelling of this is significant as he always uses ei for ie.
2. Cider Hall Farm is a few miles SW of Dornoch, a big, wealthy farm belonging to the estate of Skibo Castle, Andrew Carnegie's Scottish seat. It does not surprise me to hear that the rent was £40^{even} in those days, as it is a large farm with excellent land. It changed completely in the years 1815-20, as it passed into the hands of the Duke of Sutherland, who was clearing his lands of tenants, and using violence if necessary. On Cider Hall there were a number of hovels, huts, cottages and dwellings of folk who had no tenure - i.e. no leases which gave them any rights to the tiny plots of land they were working. They were very poor, and improvident, and around 1815 they were all evicted ruthlessly and forced to go and live on Dornoch Muir, a barren area with poor soil and no hope of their ever making a decent living. Later they were evicted even from there, and many went to live in Embo, to make a living from fishing. Their descendants are there today, mainly called Mackay and Fraser, and they are the only Gaelic speaking community left on the east coast of Scotland.

At Cider Hall the old steadings (farmhouse and outbuildings) were pulled down, and a new Regency style (very beautiful) house was built - I think the date on it is 1816, certainly either 1815 or 1816, and the new house + buildings are about

half a mile to the SE of the first farm and all the
hovels, which were all destroyed completely. It looks
to me as if the Nova Scotian Mackays were the last
tenants of the old farm and the new tenants of
the new one, with the rent put up to £40 p.a. and
not liking it a bit. Also being the Sutherlands' tenant
was no joke after Skibo, and I can see only too
clearly why they would leave. This was the Duke
of Sutherland's policy, to evict the local men and
install his own men, mainly from the south. He
particularly disliked Mackays, as his family and the
chief of the Mackays had been fighting for decades
— and he disliked the former Skibo tenants, since
the late owner of Skibo had made a very good
attempt to prevent the Duke from carrying out his
clearance policy. It was the Skibo man's untimely death
that led to the clearances, and to Cider Hall having to
be sold to the Sutherland estates. It is now back in
Skibo lands as Andrew Carnegie (I think) bought it
back later in the 19th century.