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*'Letters from Canada and Rosehall'*

*talk by*

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The focus of tonight's talk is 13 original letters written between the years 1838 and 1868. Most of these were sent from Scotland to Canada. These letters illustrate the strong links between Sutherland and Ross-shire and the township of Zora in Oxford County, Ontario, as well as with Nova Scotia. The letters reveal the hardships, the day-to-day lives, the hopes, the beliefs, the fears, the customs, the religious and political strife, the weather of course, occupations, the interests, and the history of both Sutherlandshire and Zora township in the 19th century. One letter actually mentions the new railway going through.

The letters give us a glimpse into the personalities and the lives of our ancestors and into the history of the area where they came from and where they eventually settled in the New World. They tell also about some immigration information and how Scotland was losing its people to a young British America. That was long before the Confederation confirmed the name Canada.

The author of the first nine lived on a farm called Langwell in the parish of Kincardine in Ross-shire, Scotland. Now I know that boundaries have changed, so when I say a

county it may well have changed. His name was John Munro. His occupation was carpenter and farmer and the letters he wrote were to his daughter, Mary Munro, and her husband, Donald Sutherland, who were living on a farm in West Zora township in Oxford County, Ontario.

Donald had emigrated. He came from Rogart and had emigrated via Tain in 1834. Mary Munro had left via Invergordon, Ness, as it was then called, in 1836 to join him and to be married there about a week after she arrived. These are the first nine letters.

The tenth letter was written by the postmaster at Ardgay in Scotland in 1853 and this letter bears the sad news to Mary Munro and her husband Donald of her father John Munro's death.

The eleventh letter is to Mary from her uncle William Mackay who was actually from Nova Scotia. He was living in Colchester County, Nova Scotia.

The twelfth letter was written in 1868 from Scotland by yet another man named John Munro, but a different John Munro. He's from Lynset Farm in the parish of Creagh in Sutherland. Now it looks like Lynside, but apparently, it's pronounced Lynset to this day, so I'm told, and he is the brother-in-law of Mary Munro Sutherland and Donald Sutherland because his wife is Donald Sutherland's sister Janet.

The thirteenth letter was written by John and Janet Munro's son William Munro and he wrote this letter from London, England in 1866 to his grandparents in Canada, Ebenezer Sutherland and Janet Matheson Sutherland and that couple of course were Donald Sutherland's parents. They had all emigrated at one time or another, but the ones in Lynset had not.

You can see the letters. There's no postage stamp on them, just an ink stamp which we still have in the post office and that ink stamp tells when and how much postage was paid on the letters. Only one letter bears no marks of where the letter was postmarked or its journey at various points along the way. The contents of the letter reveal why. The letters had no envelopes, they were folded in such a way that the letter itself became the envelope and then they used all the precious space on the envelope. You can see that if you look at these two, it's written all over and that's the address that it's going to. They used all the space that they could. They then sealed it with a red wax seal. At least there is one red seal remaining on one of the original letters.

The original letters are the property of a Jean Smith in Canada. Now she's a lady in her 80s, living in Embo. Her maiden name was Jean Sutherland and this is a photograph of her, taken as a little girl in 1923. She is the great-great-granddaughter of John Munro of Langwell who wrote the letters and this photograph here shows one of her. I think that's her great-great-grandfather, her great-grandfather who was the son of Donald Sutherland.

I'll tell you more about that photograph later. I'll tell you a little bit about the characters. John Munro of Langwell Farm in Kincardine Parish in Ross-shire was a carpenter and farmer and the author of the first nine letters. His wife was a Helen Low. Now she was an ailing woman but, in fact, she was very disabled, as you will hear from the

letters. She seemed to have some kind of problem - it might have been a very severe arthritic condition. She certainly was very disabled.

Mary Munro, their daughter, who at the age of 12 was sent as a servant to the household of Dr Angus Mackintosh in Tain and then to his son, Dr Charles Mackintosh, also in Tain. In 1836, when she was, I think, about 23 years old, her father, John Munro of Langwell, travelled with her to Invergordon, Ness, where she began her journey to the New World, what we know as Canada now, to join her husband-to-be, Donald Sutherland. She was sick the whole nine weeks of the journey. She had a dreadful journey. She arrived in Zora in September 1836 and she was married on 9 September 1836.

In the 1851 census, Donald Sutherland is 38. Mary, his wife, Mary Munro, is 38. They have a daughter, Ellen, who is 12, a son, Ebenezer, who is 10, and a son, John, who is 8. There was another daughter born after 1851 called Betsy.

Catherine Munro is another daughter of John Munro of Langwell. In Langwell, she married a carpenter called Donald McCall and lived at Invershin. But by 1839, they moved closer to Langwell to be near their old master, a Mr Hugh Mackenzie of Dundonnell, where they were living quite comfortably. Hugh Mackenzie also paid wages for a schoolmaster to be brought from Invershin for the children of Dundonnell. In December 1839, Catherine gave birth to a stillborn girl and she was very ill after that. By the end of April 1841, less than two years later, Catherine was dead with yet another unborn child and she left five living children. The youngest was four-year-old Andrew, named after a Mr Young, and two daughters, one named Helen, after her mother, obviously, a son, Johnny, and an elder son, Donald, named after his father.

Catherine's husband, Donald was not at home when she died. He was away with Mr Mackenzie at the time of her death. But Mrs Mackenzie of Dundonnell House took the youngest child, Andrew, into her home, and the two girls and the two boys stayed with her father because they were in school. Johnny, the second son, was a very good scholar and he was sent to school in Edinburgh by Mr Mackenzie. Donald Junior, although also a very good scholar, much preferred carpentry like his father. However, by May 1843, two years after his mother's death, Mr Mackenzie was paying board and school for Donald, ten miles from Dundonnell. In 1843, young Donald was described as taller than his father, pleasant and a good scholar. By June 1848, Donald was a storekeeper in Lewes. Now, I'm not sure if this is somewhere local. It's spelt in this letter, L-I-E-W-S. I haven't found anyone who can tell me where it is. Helen, the daughter, was in service at Ardross and Johnny was being kept in school by Mr Mackenzie of Ardross.

John Monroe Langwell had a third daughter, Isabella, Isabella Monroe Gray, and she, at one point, was offered a chance to emigrate to Canada, her way being paid by an Alexander Sutherland, who eventually did himself emigrate. But she didn't emigrate for whatever reason and by December 26, 1839, she married a John Gray. The marriage took place on a Thursday at the schoolhouse Langwell and it was performed by a relative of Mr Allan. There was no music at Isabella's wedding because her mother, Helen Lowe, was very ill at the time. And Mr Allan visited Helen Lowe after the ceremony while the newlyweds went for a walk.

There were only three people present at the wedding because of her mother's illness, and one of these was, I think, her cousin, a David Bain, who was Isabella's best lad at the wedding. I think that would take the place of what we now have as a bridesmaid. On October 11, 1840, Isabella gave birth to a son, Roderick, called Rory, named for John Gray's father.

In 1843, Rory is described as a pleasant, sensible and wise child, just like his sister Catherine. Now she must have been younger and she would be named for Isabella's sister. However, by 1848, this Rory had a pain in his left foot for 12 months and was now losing strength in it, though the pain was now lessening. Sadly, Isabella, this daughter too, of John Munroe, died on the 6th of March 1846, after being confined to bed for six months. She had given birth to a boy the night they buried her mother, Helen Low Munro, and this baby died at the age of six weeks. She herself was never well and she never recovered. She complained of coughs and sweating and weakness and she too finally died.

Her father, John Munro Langwell, said her husband, John Gray, had spent money on several surgeons, I presume doctors, and others, but all in vain. John Munroe Langwell allowed John Gray, his son-in-law, and Rory to remain there at his home. John Gray continued living there and by 1849 he married the servant girl they employed. Unfortunately, he got into debt and he and his new wife made life miserable for John Munroe, who paid the debts and suffered verbal abuse from both his son-in-law and his wife. John Munroe was lonely and unable to emigrate to Canada due to his son-in-law's debts and eventually he himself remarried five months and twelve days after his wife, Helen Low, died. He married Mary Ross McGeorge.

John Gray, meanwhile, had not paid rent and he received a letter in 1849 from the Factor from Balnagown Estate stating that if he did not pay the rent he was to be out. John Munroe Langwell died in 1853, heartbroken because he was unable to emigrate to Canada to be with his only living daughter, Mary, and her family. In almost all the letters he is desperate to go to Canada to be with Mary Munro, to be with his daughter, and it's really a very sad story and a very poignant story that he was never able to go in spite of them actually sending him money to try and help.

One of the other characters in the letters is a Janet Munro. This is the Janet Sutherland Munro, the wife of the other John Munro who lived at Lynset in the parish of Creagh. This John Munro was also a carpenter and farmer and although his own parents and some of his siblings emigrated, he didn't want to and he remained in Scotland. But Janet, his wife, had wanted to emigrate because her parents and siblings were already in Canada and Janet was the sister, of course, of Donald Sutherland whose parents were Ebenezer Sutherland and Janet Matheson.

John and Janet Munro of Lynset had three children, Ebenezer, William and Catherine and the 1866 letter which I will read to you was from their son William who was a businessman in London, England and he mentions his other brother Ebenezer being a policeman in London at that time, in London, England and Ebenezer wanted to emigrate to Canada when he had enough money. I keep saying London, England in case you think it's London, Canada because in fact the lady who transcribed these letters comes from London in Canada. Eventually Ebenezer did emigrate because on the tombstone of his parents from Lynset in the small cemetery at Rosehall. His name

is on the stone with that of his parents and it states that he died in Vancouver, B.C. and the last letter is from John Munro, the father of William in 1868 to his parents in Canada.

Another letter is from William Mackay and he's an uncle of Mary Munro Sutherland in Canada and he writes in 1853 from Newfield, Earltown, Colchester County, Nova Scotia, and Alexander Ross who wrote the letter in 1853 to tell them of the death of John Munro was the postmaster at Ardgay. (I have to do this. I could tell you a great deal more about them but I really have not to take up too much time with this because I could be here all night.)

And I tell you that this is John Sutherland the son of Donald Sutherland and Mary Munro to whom the letters were sent. That's their son. And this is his wife, Jane Ross Sutherland.

Now, these two married and so my friend who transcribed the letters is a descendant of this Ross family and John Munro is a descendant of John Munro of Lanwell, John Sutherland rather. Now, they married and they are actually related because she is the granddaughter of John Munro of Langwell and she's the granddaughter of Hector Ross mentioned in the first letter which I'm going to talk to you about now. Now, the letters are all the property of this little girl here. Well, she's an old lady now, Jane Smith or Jane Sutherland Smith of Embo and they were transcribed by my friend Susan Arn who was a Susan Ross and is a descendant of the Jane Ross who's there.

This was sent by John Munro July the 30th 1838 to Mr Donald Sutherland, House Carpenter, Lot Number 16 8th Concession, Township of Zora, London District Upper Canada, British America. Now, in fact that's wrong. All the other letters have Lot Number 16 Concession, 6th Concession. It is quite strange as well. It's quite funny in some ways, that the lady who transcribed the letter, Susan Ross, had other ancestors apart from the Rosses of Rosehall and Embo. Her ancestor John Forbes left Proncy Croy in 1832 and his lot was actually the 8th Concession so they actually lived next door to each other. The two families her Forbes family, not her Ross family but her Forbes family were the neighbours of Donald and Mary Sutherland.

It is quite a formal way that they write the letter. She writes: *"My dear and loving Donald and Mary Sutherland"* not my dear and loving daughter and son-in-law and he ends almost all of them with *"I am your loving father and mother J. and H Munro"*. This letter says he's so pleased to hear from them *"our joy at receiving your pleasant letter we cannot express and that was so many good news"* and he says that *"we count it best of all that we hear from you because we had great fears and dangers as we were always hearing before we got your letter. Before it came a great part of your mother's and sister's time was spent in mourning for you, dreaming in the night and greeting in the day"*.

Now, the reason for that you will find as I go on in the letter. By this time, Mary and Donald have a daughter obviously, because he says her grandmother sends her best respects to her and is well pleased of her name. The daughter was named after her grandmother. She was Ellen or Helen. Now, Helen was very disabled but in this letter he says she was two or three times this summer on her feet the length of the schoolhouse, and the sacrament was administered in Kincardine three weeks ago and

she was brought there on a cart. And then he goes on to tell her about weddings that happened. I won't tell you all about the weddings that happened because she was actually able to go to at least one of the weddings and he tells her that so that she knows that her mother was well enough to go and is therefore at the moment in fairly good health. And then he starts on about death, about the death of her aunt "*Nanny Ross Melville was drowned below Invercarron House on the 10th of May last and one of the girls saw her and it said her corpse was caught before it reached the sea*". So this girl obviously drowned but they were able to recover her corpse and then he goes on to say "*the only thing we missed that you did not tell us was how long the noise of the battles from your dwellings as we was hearing that the rebels were so cruel in Upper Canada as they were in Lower Canada. We was just reminded with all the bad news till we received your letter*".

Now that's why they were upset and crying during the day and worried about them during the night because of this what he calls these battles. In fact they were not battles. They were skirmishes and they were basically a conflict between commercialism and agrarianism in both Upper and Lower Canada. I think Upper Canada was Toronto and Lower Canada, Quebec and that was why they were so concerned about her.

Now this is when we hear of Alexander Sutherland, the man who was going to pay Isabella Munro's fare to Canada. He says *when Alexander heard of your letter to us he came and stayed a night with us. Surely we was much obliged to him for his kindness and good company. He would not attempt to go to America this summer for fear of the passage would not be safe enough but if he be spared to the next season he will go then or never as he is losing his time between two options. He was promising Isabella to pay the passage for her if she would go with him and if they go, surely your mother and me ought to do our best to accompany them.* And then she said he says Janet, this is Janet Munro of Lynset, is very fond of going to America but John Munro her husband, does not seem to be so fond of going. Donald Mackay, he is quite well and is still at Culross and he desires you to write to himself and let him know if there be a good demand for gardeners in your place and if there be so that you will see him there the next summer. And he goes on to tell about people getting married and he says: *I forgot to tell you of Alexander Bethune's marriage along with the rest he married in February one Catherine Ross Downe, William Downe's daughter Dooney.*

Now he says *your mother wants to know if you have cattle and how many and likewise about the sugar trees you mention, are they large sort of trees or how long will they continue to yield their substance? Is it more than once?* And then he goes on about other things and he says *I had worked at Invercarron last year and this year also. It was changeable to some of those that was working there.* He means that they did not have full time work, they just got work if it was available and they were not full time. But he says *I ought to be thankful it was constant to me. I counted a great favour to be so near your weak mother that I may see her every Saturday* and then, *Last harvest we had very poor crops in a great part of the country and especially in this Strath. There was a great appearance of it until the middle of August( that's the crops). They were good up to August and then there came a dreadful night of frost which caused every kind of crop to be mostly useless and unsubstantial.* So this summer is hard upon a great many people in the country. He says he had no cause to complain, meal is at the rate of 20 shillings per each stone.

*We had a very stormy weather in January and February last with hard frost and deep snow and we had the wettest summer since 20 years back but still there is a good appearance of crop in this country. Bella is asking if you had any sheep or any convenient place for them because she is always fond of them. If John Mackay from Culross is near your place tell him that I have seen John Munro his good brother at Invercarron Wood last week.*

Now John Munro his good brother would be his brother-in-law I think and then he said *and if you will see the men you mentioned to me, be sure to remember me kindly both to Alexander Matheson and Hector Ross. Tell them that I hope they need not be vexed at themselves for leaving Rosehall.* Now that is the Hector Ross that my friend Susan Ross is descended from and it's this lady here that Hector Ross is her grandfather. And then he says *we trust you will not neglect to write us again and especially if you earnestly wish us to follow Alexander Sutherland as we believe you do. Your mother is very willing to venture herself, weak as she is still expecting to see you again there.* That's in Canada and *Isabella saith that she will go with Alexander Sutherland although we would not be able to go. She would not stop any longer so Isabella at this time is saying that she'll go with Alexander Sutherland even if her parents are unable to go. So I don't know what happened and why she suddenly hopped off and married John Grey.* And then he says on the back of the letter, that's the first letter here that by the way is the first letter, the one I'm reading to you: *will you be kind enough to enquire from me of John or Donald Calder from Bonar Bridge. They have a sister married on one William Callum in this strath who is very fond of going there. If their brothers will call for them they mean if their brothers will say to them come out to Canada and sort of be there for them when they go first, then they would like to go. Mr Alexander Ross sends his best respects to John McFinley and saith if he can recover his money he will send it by the first sure hand that he will see going there.* And then he ends by talk about his little grandson, Little Donald. This is Catherine and Donald McCorrell's son and he says, *Little Donald sends his compliments to you and he saith if he will be spared for a twelve months after this that he will write you himself. He is a good scholar and they have the school just beside them now. He couldn't have been very old but he was going to write,* then he ends by saying, *whether you will see my face in this world or not I long for it, your truly loving father, John Monroe.*

When John Monroe and his daughter Mary parted at Invergordon they were not to know that neither of them would see each other again. He would never be able to go to Canada. The second letter is very short and this is the reason. This is the one that's not stamped because this was taken by hand and so that's why it's such a short one, he said *I am doing this in the greatest hurry and whenever your mother will recover anything if that will be God's will. I shall write again. I cannot say anything else here at the meantime as the bearer is in such a hurry.* Then here he writes, *I shall write you again very soon, excuse my hurry this letter.* He said *I am writing this because there is a James Orr going to Canada. He's leaving this country tomorrow and I hope that he or Mr R Young will have the goodness to carry this to your length.*

So that's the one that was written and delivered by hand. The third letter was written in 1840, that one was 1839, this was 1840. And again it says: *You may suppose ere long now that you altogether neglected by us, except for a few scribbling lines sent by*

*James Orr. However her mother has not been very well; she has been since confined to bed, not able to move either head or foot of her own accord without assistance of some other person. I did not trouble any other person to watch her as yet (he has been looking after her himself) you may believe that my rest was very inconsistent. And then he says I was not willing to tell you so much of her severe pain and trouble, to give you a sore heart, but it is her own request not to conceal it from you. And then he says, Isabella married John Grey on the 26th of December. John Grey is a lad from the east end of the parish of Creagh, and he had worked with John Munro of Langhill. At the moment they were staying with John Munro and his wife. He says we could get plenty employment in this country but the sawyers work here is reduced too, and I think the word isn't probably nonsense, sawyers is now paid here by the seal measurement. So they lose more than the third part of their work by the new plan. There are plenty of work coming to us from Balnagowan. It is impossible for me to attend that at the meantime but that is not what I regret.*

Now again concerning Donald McCorral - this is his son in law and daughter. *I'm very sorry to tell you that they left our neighbourhood at Invershin in April last year and went to their old master Hugh McKenzie Esquire of Dundonnell. Now Mr Gowan, and she thinks it's Young is the name, gave him an offer of £30 a year and £4 for his chance Esquire, from the gentry the hunting here, that would be at the time the gentry came up for the shooting and the fishing and probably he would have gained another £4 while they were there, plus the £30 that he was offered. But John Monroe says and all that would not please him but gone to Dundonnell. He wasn't enticed by that money. However Mr McKenzie is very good to them and brought a lad from the school a schoolmaster from Invershin for the children of that place and he is paying the most part of his wage. So you know they were fine. And then he says: Give my best respects to Ebenezer Sutherland and tell him that his letter to his mother arrived at Ardgay on the 20th Inst. Now Ebenezer Sutherland of course was the father of Donald and in order to reward Ebenezer for his good news to us I have to tell him that Alexander, his brother was here last week and I told him I was writing soon and he earnestly desired me to be sure to tell his brothers that his mother, himself and John and the little boy is making every preparation in order to start forward from Cromarty by the term of Whitson first. The term of Whitson first but as for John and Janet, that's the Monroes of Lynset, I do not suppose that they are anyway inclined to start this season. Then it tells here again of the marriage of Isabella which was taken by Mr Allan.*

Then the next letter is the fourth letter which was written in 1841. There seem to be big gaps between the letters but I suppose if they wrote once a year that's probably all they were able to do and sometimes there's longer gaps but some of the letters of course may have been lost. It says: *"Your welcome letter bearing very melancholy news (obviously Donald and Mary have lost a child) can we save our dearly beloved children from the sharp sickle of death no, no, by no means. Beloved Mary (now this is 1841). Beloved Mary, I trust you will be strengthened by the Lord to hear with patience what I am now under the necessity of stating you, sitting here with a sore wounded heart and wet eyes concerning your dearly beloved sister Catherine, she is now no more living in this world she died in childbed and she was not delivered of the child at all she and the child died and it was never actually delivered. Her poor husband was not at home. She left five children. The youngest of them is a boy which is near four years of age, that's Andrew and he is brought to Dundonnell House and*

*Mrs Mackenzie promised me there would be no fear of the child while she lives. The youngest of the girls is with her grandfather, that is with her other grandfather, not John Monroe and the others left there. That's the other children I left in the melancholy habitation of their poor father, I would bring one of them home with thee, but they are very attentive at school and it would be a pity to remove them while they can attend it and then he talks about her mother's health again and says that the Monroes at Lynset are in good health."*

Other than that it's bits about other people in the area that he talks about, but they are not so much of interest to us at the moment. Then he says, "My dear son and daughter, this letter is written in 1843 15th of May 1843 and again it's from Langwell *My dear son and daughter certainly you would be stricken to the very heart considering the lamentable state of your mother. She cannot turn herself in bed since three and a half years without the assistance of another person; neither can she put her feet to the ground he says, since three years now. I paid more than £7 sterling to servants*" Without any assistance from any living he had to pay for someone, there was nobody living who was able to help him and then he writes, *there is a very lamentable report concerning the Church of Scotland which I cannot really express in the least in comparison to what is at this present moment.*

*You would be surprised to hear that all the ministers of Easter Ross Presbytery is to be turned out of their churches at Whitsun unless there will be a great change contrary to their expectation at this present time. Only Mr Ross Fern is to continue in his church because he has now* (the word looks like V O I L E N T L and then there's another word) but obviously Mr Ross is not going to walk out because this of course is him describing the disruption of 1843 in the church with about 500 ministers to leave their churches in Scotland and other ministers to be placed in their stead by Parliament. The cause of the discord is much misunderstood even by those most learned in the kingdom but especially by the low class of people. *All the congregation in the north of Scotland signed promising to follow them as the true Church of Scotland and there are now collectors collecting money in order to maintain the minister and to build new churches for them and that of course is the story of the disruption.*

*We did not get our own little place to such good order as some of our neighbours did but yet we made 8 balls meal of 8 stone weight and after sowing seed I suppose we'll make another 2 balls yet, and now about 14 balls of potato and all of them very good* and then he talks about people in Canada: *I won't talk to you about them because there is so much else to tell you. Master Shewey says, this is Mr Mackenzie is paying the school and board for young Donald 10 miles from Dundon and I hope he will do something for him afterwards.* Then he says *Isabella's daughter is called Catherine and of course they have a son Roderick. She says likewise I wish to know, is the government road to pass near your place and we wish to know is Mary coming on and distilling sugar and making soap as she commenced. We wish to know if your cattle is confined between 2 marches of your own land or is there any liberty of pasture beside that where they can go, and how do you get your swine fed as you keep so many of them and then he goes on to say Mary you would be surprised to see our cattle so much confined as they are now. All the face of Bray Langwell is planted commencing at Invercarron Marsh and extending west all the way to Ardoyne. We have only passes through for our cattle and peats. There are not one sheep seen in Langwell from east*

*to west. They got 5 pounds 5 shillings the pound of abatements of their rents for wanting their sheep. They got money off their rents if they didn't keep sheep.*

*John Gray is working at the plantation dykes last summer and he have some to do there yet. Work is being scarce now in the country I was not at Lynset since we received your letter but send a true bearer with the contents of it and they are all well. He says give my compliments to Alexander Sutherland to his mother and to John. Give my compliments to William Mackay Bain. Him and I was very intimate and I wish him well. ( They actually work together.) Be so as to tell Alexander Murray's daughter that I was at Alexander Monroe's on Sunday at Bonar Bridge and saw her father since 10 days and they are all well. And likewise her sister Dad Crony and her husband as well. Mary the gamekeeper's wife sends her best respects to you and desires you to enquire once more for her cousin of the name of one Alexander Ross, an old soldier from this place. As for the regiment, no I cannot really tell. He's not sure which regiment this old soldier was in but his cousin wishes her to try and find him. Alexander Bethune is building a new house in front of J. Bame's house at Ardgay. I wish to know did he ever return an answer for your letter to him last year as he told me he did. That's the one Alexander Bethune who was married.*

*Now the next letter is dated 1847 April the 26th 1847. He said he was pleased to hear from her. I longed very much in my great distress when your letter came to my hand on the 19th inst. But in the comfort was great cause of lamentation and that is for the want of our beloved Isabel who is no more to be seen in this world but departed of life on the 6th inst after her great and long suffering to confine to bed for the space of more than six months”.*

*This was the other daughter who died in childbirth and he says: My dear Mary, do not provoke the Lord with too much mourning and sorrow as I always do for my lovely child who was most kind to me, and not only to me but to all. Then he says The only obstacle that stands before me for leaving this place is thus. I could not be free from some debt and I would rather to continue in a narrow circumstance than to leave anything of that kind unsettled and for that cause only I stand between two opinions and you may believe that my mind cannot be easy while I must continue in such condition. I trust that you believe that I would not wait a day more in this place if I could leave it in a decent manner. He can't come because he has debts. The grain of every kind was not scarcer than it had been in former years, but owing to the failure of the potatoes, some hard-hearted people locked up all the grain in stores in order to get it to the highest price.*

*We are always hearing of great support coming other places but very little of it is seen here yet. The price of meal is from 28 to 30 shillings per ball. Mr McIntyre Colrane has few balls to sell of his potatoes and he took 50 shillings per ball for them and some other people took more and that shows the state of the poor people in this country.*

*Then he talks in the next letter and this is the one to which there was the red wax seal still adhering. This was written in December 1847. This was April 1847 and this was December 1847 and this is when he is still talking about the death of his daughter Isabella and he says, John Gray, that was Isabella's husband and myself stay together in the house as we were and we have a servant girl in the house since a 12 month and she is to stay for this half year. But still I find myself much behind now owing to*

*the Lord's hand being so long upon us and my own silliness of John Gray because John Gray is in my debt since he came to this place. He had obviously stood as guarantor for goods that John Gray was getting. At £11 and some odd sterling in part is the sum that he is in debt to his father-in-law. He say. And for the other part I cannot deny payment because I had been so simple as to give my name for value he was getting. Likewise if he had now been clear of this place I would get for the selling of it and my own effects along with what would clear my debt and pay my expense to your place but for that I know not to look. He knows he's not going to get money from John Gray as he hath no any other where to tell, and her that is no more would not believe even for her sake that I would hurt him in the least. This is Isabella, although I would lose a great deal by it. Since I received your last letter I asked him of what he had in mind to do about the place. Did he mean to stop in it or not if I would go to America.*

*He said that he could not tell what to do as he had no other place to go which grieved my heart very much. If his family were near, I would not ask such a question of him. Then I asked of him would he be willing to go along with myself and he said he would if he could go but it was needless for him to think of that as he was not able. You may consider it hard for me to leave the place with all my pains and expenses house and all with him and nothing for them. I have my own a good cow, one heifer and a horse and some furniture which I suppose would pay all my debt but still I am afraid that all what I could collect would not be enough to bring me there without some assistance. Therefore if it will be convenient for you to venture some money to me in order to assist me in my voyage. If the Lord would be pleased to bring me there in safety I trust that you would not lose it. Parting he says with the poor orphans, (that's his grandchildren), is the only thing I would regret.*

*Now I have no much of any consequence to inform you but you told me in your former letter that there was many collections being made in America for the distressed in our country and we hear that such was done in several foreign countries for our relief but we never received any good or benefit by that money. I never heard of a shilling that came to the parish of Kincardine of Creagh of such money for all their distresses. We are only hearing that so many thousands is stored upon banks in Edinburgh but we never saw nothing of the kind. The parish of Loch Broom got a good share of it as they have a good minister that called for it but our minister never own it. I think he meant their minister never did anything about it.*

*There is a good crop in the country this year but the potatoes failed as they did last year and that distressed the poor again. The ball of meal is just now at the rate of 20 shillings but it will be higher soon owing to the failure of the potatoes. I did not see John Munroland since I received your last letter but I heard in Alexander Bethune's house since four days that they are in good health. Now be sure to give my best respects to Alexander Sutherland and if I shall be spared to see land in America I would not much time until I would see him again. Give my kind and I think its regards to Hector Ross. I would be very happy to see him likewise not forgetting Willie Mackay.*

*The next letter was written in 1848 and he said surely you will be much surprised and disappointed to find the lines from my hand instead of seeing my face by this time that these lines will arrive. I ought to thank you kindly and be very much obliged to you for all that you have done in order to help me on my voyage to your place. In accordance to your order a few days after receiving your money I did go to Mr. Sutherland.*

*I found the gentleman very kind. However I did not take up the money on that day for fear of some obstacle might come in my way contrary to my expectation for which I am very sorry to say that such is the case. But in a few days thereafter I thought that I could make my way through all difficulties and I did go to Mr. Sutherland and took up the money of his hand and that now is a heavy burden on my mind as I have been altogether disappointed in all my efforts.*

*My dear Mary I hope you do not suppose that I would take any man's money without being fully determined to use it according to your expectation. The sum I received is £3 sterling which I intend to return to Mr. Sutherland again. It will be more affliction to my distressed mind if you will have them pay there and me sitting here lonely without any living soul with me in my dwelling. When I goes out that would make me welcome back again. When I thought to get away I did not engage the servant last we had a year and a half but John Grey did engage him for himself and other people think of her that she is expecting to continue with him. All this makes me still uncomfortable in several things.*

*Eventually John Grey does marry the servant girl. If I had been free of John Grey's debt which would not keep me back from America only but will ruin me here. Also as I have told you before that I have been bound to him for the sum of £11 sterling to which there are now £3 of addition since that time and moreover when there was a great report going that I was to leave this place there came a man to see me and gave me the offer of £12 sterling for leaving the land and the house to himself. Surely I would accept that of such an offer had he not been John Grey that I would not like to deal hard with him but now it is easy seen that he has no mind to relieve me of one single sixpence either for the debt or for anything for the land and the house.*

*After receiving your letter myself and other good friends for me wrote to several places to Ray Country to Wick, Cromartie and Greenock and from these we got seven different letters back explaining their own different charges and the best and the cheapest offer was from Greenock which was £3.15 from Greenock to Montreal and that included £1 of bread and so much water per day, doctor and head money. Such offer grieved my heart seeing that I could not accept it after all my efforts. And then he said them and he's talking about John Munro of Lynset and he says they, that's John Munro, and every tenant in Lynset must build their houses two storeys high and of the addition to their rents but without a day of lease. He means that they've been told to build their houses two storeys high- they'd put another storey on them, their rents are going to go up but they're still not going to get a lease. And John Munro of Lynset is prepared for such building. And then he just talks about the grandchildren. I think time is getting on a bit.*

*Now the last letter that John Munro of Langwell wrote to his children was on the 30th of April 1850 and he said I must confess that you have a great cause to be very displeased at me for not answering your letter dated the 9th of March 1849 but I beg of you to excuse me for such delay as I have not been well ever since the time I received your letter. He says: I'm in such low condition. Surely you will be very much surprised to hear of my marriage and no less displeased of me for the same but when you will hear of part of the way that I have been used since this two years you would excuse me and that by John Gray and the woman which I brought to the house for a*

*servant and now became his wife last February. Himself and her thought that they would be able to give me so much abhorrence of the house and place as to abolish me out of it without giving me a sixpence nor yet pay a sixpence of the debt for which I have borne for him.*

*Such reports go far abroad that it was heard in Balnagowan Castle and in February 49 there was a letter sent to John Gray by the factor saying unless he would be out of the house and place in the space of ten days that they would force him by law. Then he turned against me like a madman maintaining that I had been the author of the whole, but I never knew who gave them such information. Then he sold off his cattle and brought away almost the crop without paying a single penny of rent since two years. Moreover himself and the wretch he married and his sister robbed the house, it says, with a strong brand and took away every article that pleased themselves.*

*There was one article for which I was very sorry and that is the large white sheet which you gave to your mother in order to cover her corpse at her death, and that sheet was brought likewise, and the small trunk that was promised to Helen McCorral, (that's his granddaughter by Isabella before her death). When I was determined to go away this time to you I paid my own share of the bill we had in the bank thinking he would pay his share directly. Instead of that I be to pay his share likewise with your money which was and shall be a great vexation to my heart thinking depriving you of your money and spending it for his use. Now the thing that vexes me greatly thinking that you suppose I never had a mind to go to America and especially when I did marry in this place but surely you would be sorry for my case if you knew that I had been five months and twelve days in the lonely house without a living person to look after me nor pity my condition.*

*I did marry Mary Ross McGeorge. I hope that she will be kind to me in my old age for the short time of my pilgrimage in this world. Obviously he realises there's no chance at all now he's ever going to be able to go to America. There were no more letters written by John Munro of Langwell after that but there are a further four letters.*

*One was received at Embo in Canada on August the 2nd 1853 and it's from Alexander Ross the postmaster at Ardgay and it says: Dear Sir, your letter addressed to John Munro Langwell Ross-shire and to my care and duly received and in being to my care I dispensed it. I am truly sorry to inform you. Recently John Munro departed this life in May last, that was in May 1853. He departed of a bad fever of which several in this parish died of. He was only eight days confined and was well attended and very respectably buried. He had no family to this last wife and as I have learned he left this little subject to his wife. Can I think there will be very little after paying his debts. He was a sincere well-wisher of mine and I feel much grieved for his daughter, I mean your wife. He was a good man and I hope he hath made a good change. I am glad to hear John and William Ross Matheson's children are well. Give my compliments to Donald Feet and tell him his friends at Ardgay as well. And that is the letter and it says Your much obedient Alexander Ross.*

*The next letter was written on June the 8th 1853 and the sender is William Mackay and it is addressed to Donald Sutherland and it comes from Nova Scotia. The letter is stamped in both Truro and Amherst, Nova Scotia on June the 6th 1853 and St John, New Brunswick on June the 8th 1853 and Quebec on June the 14th 1853 and London,*

Upper Canada on June the 18th 1853. Of course that is when they received the letter. On the 29th they received it. It was written on the 29th of May 1853. This is an uncle of Mary Monroe Sutherland and I assume that he was either married to John Monroe Langwell's sister or to Helen his wife's sister: *Surely I consider the writing of the letter a heavy task on account of my sight and want of practice.* He then talks about his family and he says I got no letter from Scotland since more than a year.

*I wrote to William my nephew in April 12 months ago and got no answer as yet. I got no letter from your father since the death of your mother but I always hear from him upon William's letter. He married and I think he would need to do so as he was left destitute of any person to do anything for him. He obviously doesn't know that he won't know at this time that John Monroe of Langwell is dead. He talks a great deal about his family there in Canada. He says we keep two horses, a pair of oxen, five cows and some small cattle, twenty sheep or sometimes more and four pigs.*

There's not very much else except about family matters which have nothing to do really with John Monroe.

The second last letter - I'm going to read this letter first before the next, for this one here which is actually dated 1866. This one is dated February 1868 and is written from Lynset. Now this is the farm where the other John Monroe lives. This is written 1868, fifteen years after John Monroe Langwell died and he says he's writing to his mother not to Donald Monroe but to his mother and he says *I take the present opportunity of writing you after a long silence. It was the reason for us delaying so long that we were expecting from time to time a letter from Catherine but we did not as yet we have not had one as yet. We are troubled very much about them.*

And then he says *Dear Mother, I may inform you that Jessie got married twelve months last New Year to a young lad from the town of Fearn, five miles out from Tain and they are staying with ourselves. We are hearing regular from William and Eben,*(that's Ebenezer and William, who were brothers and the sons of John Monroe and his wife Janet.)

*They are still in the enjoyment of good health and doing well and John Alexander and Marian is going to school. All the friends in the parish of Rogart are well as far as we know. Dear Mother, when you write we would like to know all about our brothers and their families and friends in that place and especially about John, and are you hearing from his daughter Willamina and how is Marian's husband and family. We hope and pray that all your families is kind to you in your old days, especially Donald's wife, Mary Monroe.* Then he says, *there is nothing new in this country but the train is coming over Portnalik bridge and going east Rogart to Dunrobin.*

Now I tried to find out where Portnalik was because it's spelt Portnalik here it's mentioned in this next letter as Portnaluk, L-U-K. I asked Christine, I asked her and she thought that it was somewhere over the Invershin direction and then I asked John Robertson because he's got lots of things about railways and knows a lot and he also thought that but he had never heard of the name Portnalik. I asked Lily Byron and Lily knew of course and she said, oh Portnalik it's pronounced Portnalik and it is the bridge at Invershin. I got this book, very kindly Dr Straun loaned me this book, and that's the bridge of course that he's talking about and all he says about it at the moment, just

*that it's going over the Portnalik bridge and going east Rogart and to Dunrobin. Hugh Murray's family is put out of Lynset and is stopping in Bonar and then he says, William is very much surprised that she's not getting an answer to his letters. And this is his London address. I add no more at present please write when convenient. I am concluding with our blessings to you and all our brothers and their families and to Uncle James so I remain your affectionate son till death, John Munro Lynset.*

Now the last letter was written by William Munro the son of John Munro of Lynset and he is writing to his grandmother. That would be his father's mother and he's writing from London in England - his address is 290 Princess Street Stepney, London, England and he says: *Dear Grandmother, I received your letter a fortnight ago, I was happy to know that you are all well. I have seen a daughter of Angus Ross Lairg former of Lynset last Sunday. She is a servant in a gentleman's family near London and she got leave for a month to go and see her friends. During that time she went to Lairg and she went to see them at Lynset. She told me that father and mother and the rest of the family are quite well, they are very busy just now at the harvest. They have a pretty fair crop of corn and the potatoes are much better this season than they were many seasons ago. I was told that the Murrays are to be turned out of Lynset on account of their being bad neighbours and they will not subject themselves to the rules and by-laws of His Grace the Duke of Sutherland which the present Factor will put in force on them.*

*The Factor put a tenant from Rogart in the lot that John Murray had who went to America a few years ago, and Hugh and Mary is in their father's lot at present. She told me they were getting on well with the railways. Portnalik is about being finished, It is one arch, the one end on Ross-shire and the other on Sutherlandshire. It must be a fine arch which I fancy and that of course is the arch he's talking about. There's another picture inside of the bridge in Invershin. Then he says it will soon be open to lay it, that's the railway but they say it will take two years yet to finish it to Golspie.*

*The Prince and Princess of Wales, our future King and Queen was at Dunrobin Castle this week. The Duke and Duchess and a great many of the aristocracy, they stayed there for three weeks and the Prince reviewed the Sutherland volunteers before he left. He is to come every season for he likes the place very much. He is to build a shooting lodge at Gordonbush. Business of every description is very slack in the city just now on account of the failures in the banks and other warehouses this season but hoping it will get better soon. I have seen my brother Eben (that's Ebenezer) last week. He is in the Metropolitan Police Force. He says if he had the money that he would very much like to go to America. He grows very stout since he came up to London (and Ebenezer of course does get to Canada - he dies in Vancouver). I am looking out for a situation just now. it is a difficult matter to get a good situation at present on account of the commercial business being so slack. I remain your affectionate William Monroe with the best and kindest respects to you, Mr James Matheson and all uncles. I would have sent papers to M Matheson regular but I was rather unsettled the last four months that I did not get them.*

Now these are all the letters. I have gone over them very quickly because I could be here forever more talking about them. This is the first letter, a copy of the original and you can still read bits on it bits that I have told you about. It tells you here about the girl Nanny Ross Melville was drowned below another cavern on the 10th of May last

and as one of the girls was seeing her corpse, it was caught before it reached the sea. You can read it even though it is only a copy and in fact it is a copy of a copy. This tells you about what he describes as the battles which of course were just skirmishes and it does give you an idea of why there was trouble. These are the envelopes as I told you what they used as an envelope and they wrote on every bit of paper that they could. Now these are the obituaries of Donald Sutherland and of his wife Mrs Don Sutherland. This is the daughter Mary Munro, the daughter of John Munro and it tells you that she enjoyed in early life the privileges of Christian influence and godly training through God fearing parents and under the pious ministry of Dr Angus and Charles Macintosh of Tyne, father and son, and then it tells you about her going out there and how sick she was all the time travelling out and it tells you a great many more things. It tells you about her beloved husband and two sons and two daughters and here this is the one of her husband. Now she died in 19th of August 1889 and he died in 1891 less than two years after. But he had an accident, he fell and broke his hip and that's what happened to him, that's why. He slipped and fell on the ice and either dislocated or broke a thigh bone at the socket. A doctor was called in and did all he could to relieve him. That was February 1889 but unfortunately he didn't survive.

He died early. He's one of the early settlers of West Zora and he emigrated from the parish of Rogart in Sutherlandshire in 1834 settling on the farm on which he died. He settled there in 1836. He was a carpenter in the town of Tain in Scotland and did the same kind of work of his trade in this country. Now there's only one son mentioned, he actually says his family consists of three - one son and two daughters, but in fact he had two sons and I don't know why the other one is not mentioned. But that's their obituaries.

Now Mr Hampton very kindly put a recent picture of Langwell Farm, this one here and these are all pictures of Langwell Farm in the 1920s and 30s. That's Langwell Farm - all of these in the 20s and 30s. This is the lady who owns the letters.

Now I felt a great privilege and I was quite overwhelmed when I went out. I knew about these letters but my friend had said to me why don't you talk about these letters that I gave you? And I said no, I don't think I would and she said I should. Then I went on a visit to Canada less than two years ago and I met this lady who is now an old lady in her 80s , and lo and behold she went off and she brought out all 13 letters to let me see. She said open them up and look at them and they were just like that but brown with age and the ink was all brown but they were just wonderful. I was absolutely quite overwhelmed to see these letters and to be able to look at them and read them. It was quite a poignant moment especially the story of John Munro. I mean I've told you very briefly but this man in almost all the letters is just desperate to get to Canada to his daughter Mary and it was very sad the way he was treated by John Gray.

I think there's nothing else I can tell you. Is there anything you want to ask me or have I got your eyes glazed over with all. My husband always says don't ask her anything because she's liable to tell you (laughter) and I don't think that's a compliment (laughter). I get absolutely obsessed with history, especially history of people, places too but people. I just love genealogy and so does my friend in Canada so the two of us got on extremely well.

Thank you I think it's raffle time.