

50th Reunion

1928 - 1977



MCKAY - MCKENZIE
REUNION

INTRODUCTION

Away back in the thirties, Zorra was settled by a race of sturdy Highlanders from the north of Scotland, chiefly from Sutherlandshire. As early as 1820 two brothers, Angus and William McKay, settled in the district and some of their descendants are still living there in comfort. After braving the hardships of the forest for nine years, Angus McKay returned to Scotland and, in the following year, returned bringing with him his aged mother and a shipload of Sutherlanders.

With sad hearts and tearful eyes they bade farewell to their heath clad hills and the homes they loved so dearly, faced an ocean voyage of twelve weeks on an old immigrant ship, endured all the hardships of a two weeks journey up the St. Lawrence River in open boats towed by oxen, penetrated the unbroken forest, and in spite of bears, wolves and mosquitos, laid the foundation of the prosperity we see on every side of us to-day.

When these expatriated men and women came to Zorra there were no roads, only a blazed path here and there to guide the traveller. Such a path led in a beeline from Woodstock to where Embro is now situated.

These settlers lost no time whimpering over the cruelties of the past or the hardships of the present but with brave hearts and stout arms they at once went to work, and from dawn to dusk the forests resounded with the strokes of the axe and the crashing of fallen trees.

1977

This year the McKay-McKenzie Reunion is celebrating with its 50th Reunion.

In 1830, ten years after the two first Scottish settlers came to Zorra, the McKays and McKenzies along with others came on the same sailing ship and landed at Quebec.

Owing to a fire some of the family records were lost. However, the following account entitled "When the first settlers came", written about the early settlers who came about the same time, no doubt would be much the same as they experienced.

Passengers provided their own food and bedding and lived all together, men, women and children in cramped quarters below deck. Disease was so rampant among them, that not a few found it was indeed their final journey.

The Erie Canal was opened in 1825 and they took the Hudson River Steam Boats to Albany and on to Buffalo on shallow draft vessels drawn by horses. The canal trip of 350 miles could be accomplished in three and a half days if horses were kept on the trot. From Buffalo the journey continued by sailing ship to Port Stanley.

They were told to prepare for the journey as for death - to lay in provisions as they would be expensive on the ship - to take a good sizeable chest to hold them in with a strong lock.

The trunks with their clothes would be put in the hold in the bottom of the ship. They would only have access to them once in a fortnight for some clean clothes. The food chest would remain with them. Everyone was told to take provisions for two months in case of storms etc. The food consisted mainly of white biscuits, ham, and tea, and we must remember there was not refrigeration like there is to-day. There also had to be a supply of water. Thus our first settlers came, and on from Port Stanley to London - and on - and some of them landed here.

A visitor to Oxford in 1833 three years after the McKays and McKenzies came described the roads in this manner:

"We have experienced the joys of corduroy roads. For miles you are flung up and down, and from side to side of the wagon by the trunks of trees which form the road, some thick and high above the level, others sunk below it. Nothing more rugged or tormenting can ever possibly be conceived."

"The bush is here, the bush is there, the bush is all around. The woods seem moved away from the cultivated land, the trees rising as thickly and in lines as straight as the corn in the field partly cut."

"Looking back you see no break in the long fringe of trees from whence you have emerged but one small opening which swallows up the road. This is the only gap in the dark hedge stretching along the whole horizon."

The McKays and McKenzies came from Dornoch in Sutherlandshire Scotland and were crofters, or renters, on

the estate of the Duke of Sutherland. He decided to use the land for sheep raising so they were evicted from their homes, and had to find a home elsewhere. Having heard about Zorra, they decided to come to Canada. They suffered many privations in Scotland, as well as on their trip across the ocean and getting settled here, in a land which was nothing but bush.

As far as we know of the McKays, four brothers and two sisters came to Zorra. William settled on the homestead Lot 14 - 8th line. The other brothers, Angus, James and John, settled on Lot 15 - 8th line, Lot 15 - 9th line and Lot 13 - 9th line. Mary Ann married John McKay at Ailsa Craig, and Christena married John Ross before they came out, at Rogart in Scotland and they settled on Lot 14 - 9th line.

In the history of Braemar we read that J.B. McKay (we do not know if this was James or John) built the cheese factory on the north side of the road half way up the hill on what is Lloyd Masters farm to-day. The factory was built beside some springs for the water supply, and was quite an asset to the community. There is mention of at least one big supper held there, at a season when it was empty, with a tremendous crowd, lots of fowl and other good things, followed by a program and dance with local musicians on the violins and bones.

During one winter when the cheese factory was empty, Rev. Mr. Salmon of the Congregational Church in Embro, and others, held revival meetings there, with the result the community erected the Braemar Hall to be used as a Gospel Hall. This was quite an asset to the community with a union Sunday School and other meetings held there for years.

The McKenzie family consisting of the mother, three daughters and one son William settled on Lot 21 - 9th line. The father died in Scotland shortly before they came. William died at the age of 24 years and stones erected to his memory and to his mother are in the central part of Log Church Cemetery. Charlotte McKenzie married William McKay, Catherine McKenzie married Robert McIntosh, Elizabeth McKenzie married a Hossack (west of Embro), Ann McKenzie (the second oldest daughter) died in Scotland.

So the descendants of those two families are the ones who make up the McKay-McKenzie Reunion.

The early settlers brought their religion with them and worshipped in homes for services and prayer meetings. From clippings we read that William McKay was one of the founders of the first church in Zorra - The Old Log Church 7th line - and we also read that Donald, the oldest of the boys, often wandered with his dog on the way to church, chasing deer and other wild animals.

So in 1832 William McKay and Charlotte McKenzie were married and settled in a log cabin among beautiful rolling hills and beside a lovely spring of clear sparkling water. Later they built the lovely stone house which is still in use to-day. The settlers brought their skills and with them this house and a number of others throughout the country were built. The spring still supplies the water for this house, but to-day is piped in.

This stone house is a split level type built in the hill. On the west side was a veranda with a wood shed at the north end. It is now a sun porch. You walked in on the level to the kitchen. On the east side of the house you walked into the living room or parlour on the level.

As you entered the west door to the kitchen your first impression was the quietness and dignity and cosiness of it all. A bedroom door to the north west and then a door led upstairs. On the west side a fall leaf homemade table and chairs, where many a good meal was served beside a nice window. To the south side at first was a fireplace but later boarded in with a cupboard and a large wood box at one end. To the front was an old Champion Stove with five lids, three in front and two behind, and to the back of the lids and above was a good sized oven. This stove took good sized and long blocks of wood and many good pies, bread and other baking came out of this oven, including maple sugar cookies. Champion Stoves were something special to own in their day.

To the east side of the kitchen there was a good sized pantry at the south end. North of this was a place just the size of a bed and in it was a beautiful homemade post bed with feather tick and a pieced quilt in Log Cabin pattern and pillow cases with handmade lace. To the front of the bed were drapery curtains with tie backs for day time. In the north east corner was the cellar, where jars and jars of fruit and pickles and maple syrup were kept, also their winter supply of potatoes, apples and vegetables. Underneath, where the

stairs went up was a work table. Homemade mats adorned the lovely floor.

Upstairs on the north side as you entered from the east door or from the kitchen stairway was the parlour with a fireplace to the north. It was inviting with its deep windows, its rag carpet, hooked mats and antique furniture. South of this was a hall where the stair came up and two bedrooms to the south, made beautiful with their antique bedroom furniture.

The attic was used mainly for storage, but the whole house has been remodelled, and the attic us also finished now.

To the east of the house, which now is lawn, there used to be many hives of bees, and many a treat of fine honey was given away. The McKays were noted for their kindness and hospitality.

They suffered many hardships, but the greatest tragedy was the loss of two of their children. John, aged ten, and William, aged three, who died within a week, from one of the children's contagious diseases. Stones erected to their memory, as well as their parents and the McKenzies are in the central part of the Log Church Cemetery, 7th line of West Zorra. It may be of interest to note that pictures taken in the Rogart Cemetery in Scotland show the McKays and the McKenzies stones side by side there too.

Other members of the family were:

Catherine - Mrs. Alex McKay	Lot 9 - 8th line
Donald (Bain)	Lot 18 - 8th line
Margaret	Lot 14 - 8th line
Angus (Bain)	Lot 14 - 8th line
Annie - Mrs. William McDonald	Lot 11 - 8th line
William (Bain)	Lot 23 - 8th line

Andrew, (next to Margaret), a doctor, practiced first at Underwood and later was one of the leading doctors in Woodstock for fifty years.

Perhaps here it might be interesting to explain why the (Bain) McKays. There were so many McKays and the nicknames were given to distinguish the different families. Bain was Gaelic for white, and as the father had very fair hair, that was the reason. It followed for generations and they signed their names with the "B".

To these families and their descendants we owe the McKay-McKenzie Reunion which we all enjoy, and hope it will continue for many years to come.

In 1928, some thought it would be nice to have a reunion. A meeting was arranged at the home of Mr. and Mrs. John McDonald with the result that Aug. 6th was set, Committees were arranged and later the youngest member of the family offered his home. The day was a great success and about one hundred and fifty attended.

The oldest son, Donald B. McKay, in his 95th year, was present. Letters of regret were read from Dr. Andrew McKay (President) Woodstock, Mrs. Charlotte Ferguson of Richard's Landing, John McKay from Cincinnati, John W. McKay in Fenelon Falls, Miss Jessie Lamden of Delmer, Miss Edith McKay in Minneapolis and from McKenzie McIntosh in Windsor.

McKay McDonald presided for the program in a splendid manner and a good time was enjoyed. Music on the bagpipes by Alex McKay of Golspie was a highlight of the day. Musical selections with harmonica and banjo by Gordon, Mack and Douglas McDonald, Scottish Dancing by Nora and Cora McKay accompanied by Miss Janet McKay, and a reading by Jeanne Innes added much to the program. Speeches were given by John H. McKay of Ailsa Craig, Donald Innes, Ernest McKay from the 8th line, Dan McDonald 10th line and Alex Murray 8th line.

Mr. and Mrs. J.H. McKay of Ailsa Craig extended an invitation for the 1929 reunion to be held at their home on the 1st Friday in June. A hearty vote of thanks was extended to Mr. and Mrs. W.B. McKay for their very generous hospitality.

A program of sports was enjoyed, and two ball games were followed by a picnic supper. A wonderful day for the family came to a close by all singing "God be with you 'till we meet again". The oldest member present was Donald B. McKay.

A banner was made for this picnic by the McDonald and McKay girls and added much. It was later replaced by one made by Cora McKay, and for the 50th Reunion, a new one is being donated by Elizabeth McKay Perry and Isobel McKay Parker.

The One Hundredth Anniversary of the McKay and McKenzie families coming to Zorra was held at Southside Park in 1930. One of the highlights was two pipers of the Hamilton Pipe Band who came with James and Ernie

McKay of Hamilton and they were very generous with their music. A delicious birthday cake was made and donated by Mrs. W.B. McKay of the 8th line. A photograph of the group was taken.

Another group picture was taken in 1934, and these pictures are treasured to-day.

During the years pipe music for the Reunions has been given by Alex McKay, pipers from the Hamilton Pipe Band, Jock Fraser, Gordon Morris and Wm. Pearson.

Among the prize winners listed at the first Reunion (which includes the oldest and youngest present) were:

Donald B. McKay, Bruce Ross, Edythe McIntosh, Bruce Innes, Ruth Hey, Lilian McDonald, Doroty Hey, Gladys Sutherland, Donald McIntosh, Douglas Innes, Charlie Long, Agnes McDonald, Grace Hey, Catherine Ross, Calvin McIntosh, Howard Innes, Andrew McKay, Lawrence Innes, Harvey Kittmer, Alvin McDonald, Lawrence Sutherland, Dorothy McDonald, Isabelle S. McKay, Isabelle McKay, Nora McKay, Stanley McLelland, Cora McKay, Jean Innes, Kathleen McKay, Clarence Steels, Mr. & Mrs. Wilfred McKay, Alex McIntosh, Mr. & Mrs. Thomas McKay, and Lawrence Innes.

	<u>REUNION LOCATION</u>	<u>PRESIDENTS</u>
1928	Mr. & Mrs. W.B. McKay	Mack McDonald (Vice)
1929	Mr. & Mrs. J.H. McKay (Ailsa Craig)	Mack McDonald
1930	Southside Park	Mack McDonald
1931	Southside Park	John McDonald
1932	Southside Park	Andrew McKay (Tavistock)
1933	Mr. & Mrs. John McKay (Ailsa Craig)	Dan McKay (Woodstock)
1934	Southside Park	Donald Innes
1935	Mr. & Mrs. Donald Innes	J. McKenzie McIntosh
1936	Southside Park	John Thomson
1937	Southside Park	Wilfred McKay
1938	Mr. & Mrs. Murray Innes	Dr. C. McKenzie McKay
1939	Mr. & Mrs. Dan McDonald	Dr. C. McKenzie McKay
1940	Mr. & Mrs. Wm. Marshall	Albert Ross
1941	Mr. & Mrs. Herb Howe	Albert Ross
1942	Southside Park	Douglas McDonald
1943	Mr. & Mrs. Chas. Kittmer	Douglas McDonald

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1944	Mr. & Mrs. Wm. McGee	Alex. McIntosh
1945	Mr. & Mrs. Alvin Innes	Alex. McIntosh
1946	Mr. & Mrs. Herb Howe	Alvin Innes
1947	Mr. & Mrs. Wm. Ross	Alvin Innes
1948	Mr. & Mrs. N. Coulthard	Herbert Howe
1949	Mr. & Mrs. Albert Ross	Herbert Howe
1950	Mr. & Mrs. Murray Innes	Gordon McDonald
1951	Mr. & Mrs. Wilfred McKay	Gordon McDonald
1952	Tavistock Park	William Ross
1953	Embro Park	William Ross
1954	Stratford Park	Ernie McKay
1955	Mr. & Mrs. Archie Steeles	Ernie McKay
1956	Mr. & Mrs. Mac Howe	Edwin Ransome
1957	Mr. & Mrs. Alex McIntosh	Edwin Ransome
1958	Mr. & Mrs. N. Coulthard	Mac Howe
1959	Mr. & Mrs. Mac Howe	Mac Howe
1960	Mr. & Mrs. Finlay Kittmer	Dr. Gerald McKay
1961	Mr. & Mrs. Burns Innes	Burns Innes
1962	Mr. & Mrs. Hilton Morris	Andrew McKay
1963	Tavistock Park	Donald Matheson
1964	Tavistock Park	Eugene Ross
1965	Tavistock Park	Eugene Ross
1966	Tavistock Park	McKenzie Hey
1967	Tavistock Park	Finlay Kittmer
1968	Mr. & Mrs. Wallace Innes	Edgar McKay
1969	Tavistock Park	Howard Murray
1970	Harrington Comm. Centre	Fred Howe
1971	Harrington Comm. Centre	Don McKay
1972	Harrington Comm. Centre	Bruce Ross
1973	Highland Park School	Gordon Marshall
1974	Highland Park School	Ross Kittmer
1975	Kintore A.J. Baker School	Ross Kittmer
1976	Toll Gate School Hwy. 59	Bruce Innes

.....Committee.....

CREDITS

This history has been compiled by a committee consisting of:

- Mrs. Catherine Findly
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Information has been obtained from these sources:

- the Secretary's minutes
- area records
- memory files of oldtimers

Any errors or omissions are completely UNINTENTIONAL.

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Mrs. Audrey (McDonald) Rafuse did the typing.

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