

EARLY SCOTTISH IMMIGRANTS

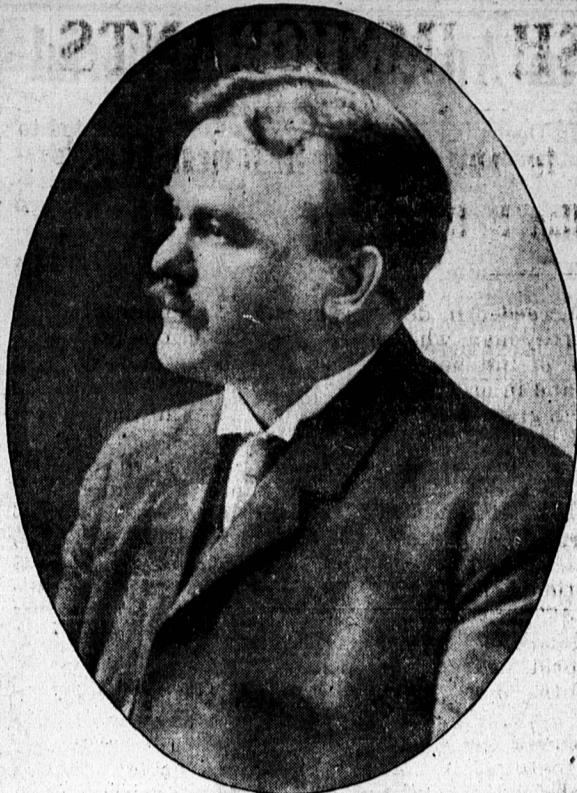
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mediately after his ordination he returned to Scotland and was stationed at Drummond, where he exercised the sacred ministry till 1772. The Scotochronicon says of him: "He was a pious and good missionary."

On his arrival in St. John's Island, he wrote a letter to the Bishop of Quebec, which was to be carried thither by an Acadian, who, however, was not able to visit Quebec in that year. Accordingly, on the 9th of September, 1772, he wrote another letter to His Lordship which he sent in care of a Mr. Cameron, one of his cousins. This letter, written in an easy style of Latin, is dated at Malpeque and acquainted the Bishop of his arrival on the Island. He asked for a renewal of the faculties which he had received from the Bishop in Scotland, mentioned the fact that having studied in Rome, he was conversant with the Italian, French, Gaelic, and English languages, and could, therefore, render spiritual assistance to all the Catholics living in this part of the diocese. He also asked the Bishop for a small altar-stone, as the one he had was rather large to carry about from place to place. The receipt of this letter brought great joy to the Bishop of Quebec, who for years had been trying to obtain a priest for St. John's Island. He therefore sent an immediate answer to Father Macdonald, congratulating him on his safe arrival in the diocese, and giving him the most ample facilities to carry on missionary work among the Highlanders and Acadians.

This latter people numbered now about fifty families, and were settled principally in the vicinity of Malpeque. A few isolated families might be met here and there, but the bulk of them lived to the westward not far from the site of their former parish. They had chosen this place, either because they believed themselves less exposed to danger in this remote locality, or because, on account of its distance from Port La Joie, it had suffered less than the other settlements during the invasion of 1758.

Having received spiritual charge of this people from the Bishop, Father James set out for Malpeque, and spent with them his first winter on St. John's Island. At the same time he directed the Scotch settlers to erect a suitable place of worship at Scotchfort. At his request they went to work with right good will, and soon put up a church, which, though far below the present ideals of ecclesiastical architecture, was nevertheless, in the eyes of the early settlers, a marvel of beauty and design. It was a log building about thirty feet long, twenty feet wide, and about twelve feet in the post. Its roof could boast neither copper nor slate, nor even ordinary shingle; but bid proud defiance to wind and weather, under a modest covering of straw thatch. This church, dedicated to St. John, was situated over a mile west of the old French cemetery, on the farm of Donald MacRae, one of the Scottish emigrants. For over thirty years it was used for divine service, until it had become so dilapidated that it was no longer fit for the purpose. Its site is still pointed out between the railway and the Hillsborough River, on land now held by the heirs of the late Angus Macdonald, of Scotchfort. Early in the summer of 1773, Father James paid a visit to Quebec, where he was received with true paternal kindness by Bishop Briand. There he met, also, the Reverend Father Dosque, former pastor of Malpeque. We can easily imagine the latter's delight at meeting Father James and his eagerness to obtain some information of the place, from which he had escaped fifteen years before. Bishop Briand and Father Dosque vied with each other in their kindness to Father James. Indeed, all the clergy he met showed him every possible consideration during his stay. Holy men themselves, they readily recognized the heroic spirit of the man of God, and were not slow to appreciate him at his true worth. It is not surprising then, that on his return home, we find him writing to Quebec letters in which he puts forth his heartfelt thanks to the clergy whom he calls his friends and benefactors. Writing to Father Dosque, he says that though he is only poorly provided against the rigors of the approaching winter still this gives him no anxiety, as his only concern is that he is so far from a priest in case of sickness. Having just spent a short time amongst the clergy of Quebec, he feels the bitterness of his



HON. CHIEF JUSTICE MATHIESON

isolation more keenly than ever, now that he has returned to his own flock and he bemoans the sad circumstances that condemn him to his voluntary exile far from his brother priests. On September 28th, 1773, he writes to the Bishop of Quebec, that his health is good, but that he is in great dread of the winter, which he finds more severe than in Europe. He admits, however, that he is now better prepared for the cold than he was last winter, because he brought a stove from Quebec, by which he could make his room comfortable. In this same letter he makes a statement which goes to show the spiritual destitution of the Acadians in the Maritime Pro-



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vinces at that time. He says that a number of Acadian families, who had not had a priest among them for eleven years, come all the way from New Brunswick, that they might approach the sacraments. They tried every means to induce Father James to go with them to the mainland and become their parish priest; they used all manner of persuasion to obtain his consent, but he would not abandon his chosen flock. He promised, however, to pay them a visit the following year, should no priest come to them in the meanwhile.

Father James did not live to attain the allotted three score years and ten. His zeal for the glory of God consumed his energies in a short time. Thirteen years of missionary toil in the wilds of St. John's Island proved sufficient to undermine a constitution always delicate; and accordingly, in the height of his usefulness, when his presence would seem a necessity to his people, he died, as deeply regretted in death as he had been loved in life. The sad event occurred in 1785, when he had reached the age of forty-nine years. As he lay on his bed of death, his lonely condition must have come home to him with heart-rending reality, for no priest was



HIS HONOR LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR McKINNON

near to administer to him the sacraments of the dying. What he had foreseen with anxiety and fear, when writing to Father Dosque twelve years before, was now being only too fully realized. The last rites of Holy Church which he had so often conferred on others, were denied him in that supreme hour; and so he died without a priest to bless the clay with which his mortal remains were soon to mingle or chant the Requiem when his soul was gone to meet its God.

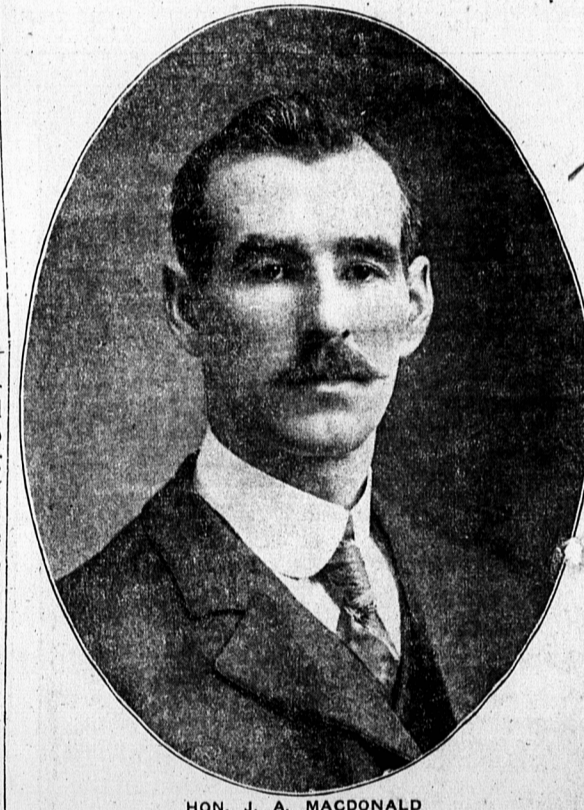
The loving hands of his grief-stricken flock laid his body reverently to rest in the French cemetery at Scotchfort, where it has lain ever since in an obscure grave, unmarked save by a tree of spruce or fir, nature's protest against a people's forgetfulness. Strange ingratitude of man! A century has sufficed almost to erase the name of Father James from the traditions of a people for whom he preserved the



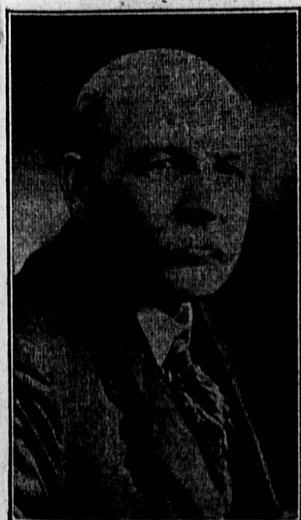
HON. PREMIER BELL

sacred deposit of faith. His name is practically forgotten, whilst we reap in peace and contentment the bounteous harvest he sowed amid incredible privations. The descendants of those for whom he labored owe him a debt of gratitude for keeping alive the fire of divine faith amongst their ancestors, who in turn transmitted it to the Mainland when earnestly requested to do so, and when his own personal interests imperatively demanded it, the condition of

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