

Chapter 6

DNA Revelations

Neil & Isabella were beginning their married life in the early 1800's in the area then known as Judique. In this timeline, it's considered a sacred duty to be able to recite the "Slionneached" or family tree, the traditional way of passing on ancestral information to future generations - a Scottish family ritual soon to disappear. Because of this Oral tradition, there's very little recorded for these early Scots in Nova Scotia. On top of that, our next male MacDonald generation back had the common name of John MacDonald. I turned to YDNA testing for help.

DNA testing comes in various formats. I chose YDNA testing - a measure of the genetic makeup of Males at various genetic marker levels.

- The genetic makeup of a father & son are the same; brothers are the same; the sons of brothers will be the same & so forth, back & forward thru time. Males of a family lineage have the same YDNA genetic makeup.
- A slight genetic difference is possible between father & son - 1 or 2 markers known as mutations. Sometimes the mutations revert but for the same family, the genetic difference will be very little. For example, my test was done using James Leo's son, Ralph. Mark MacDonald's grandson was also tested. The male lineage relationship is known but they had a genetic difference of 2 at the 37 marker measurement.
- The number of genetic markers tested is also important. Males with a genetic difference of zero to 2 measured at 12 markers can have a larger genetic difference when measured at 37 or 67 markers. This means they can be related males but as the genetic difference increases, the timeline for sharing a common ancestor goes further back into history.

- *The test result chart (1) may help with an overall understanding. If you can connect with someone at 67 markers with a genetic difference of 1 or 2, you have males with the same family connection in relatively recent times.*
- *My interest was connecting to ancestors of recent times. My testing was run at the highest marker count in hopes of connecting to others with similar YDNA test results & with a paper trail for their ancestors back to Scotland.*

YDNA has produced some surprises.

Our MacDonald's match with John Howard MacDonald, whose family arrived in Australia in 1838 from Loch Moidart, Scotland. At 67 markers, his genetic difference to my test was 1 - that's even closer than the match between Mark's grandson & is the same as James Leo's son. John Howard MacDonald's lineage is the same male MacDonald lineage as ours. John Howard's family has provided me with their ancestral information (2). I have John Howard's complete Family Tree - 49 pgs. listing all our Australian cousins.

In 1838, Donald MacDonald & his expecting wife, Marcella, left Scotland from the Port of Tobomory aboard the ship, British King, headed for resettlement in Australia.

Donald was the son of Angus MacDonald married to Mary Corbett from Porta Bhata on the shores of Loch Moidart, within full view of Castle Tioram, the ancestral home of the Clan Ranald's. MacDonald's with Auld's Cove connections may be familiar with the name Corbett & can now recognize that connection back to our ancestral homeland.

Donald & Marcella left Scotland at a time known as "The Clearances"; a time when landowners wanted their tenant farmers gone, replacing them with what they felt was a more profitable enterprise, sheep farming, to feed the growing wool mills of industrial England.

But our Neil MacDonald & Isabella were already in Cape Breton with their families' decades before 1838.

Our MacDonald's left their Scotland & family members like Angus and Mary at Porta Bhata much earlier. They left at a time when they were under pressure to change their religion. But, for a Catholic Highlander that was not an easy conversion. They had fought at Culloden over this & with the British victory over the Highlanders who had rallied behind the poorly organized Prince Charlie, the pressure was on for those Catholics on the Clan Ranald estates to convert. While they struggled to make a living with imposed changes to the land tack system that had allowed them to be self-sufficient, for many, the added pressure to change their religion was too much.

The Catholic Church took steps that encouraged & helped finance emigration. A portion of PEI was organized & prepared to receive Catholic Emigrants. The story of the Glenaladale Settlement in 1772 is well documented. The flow of emigration by Catholic Highlanders to PEI peaked in the 1790's & finally the Govt. passed the Passenger Act of 1803 to stem the flow of emigrants to satisfy landlord cries that they were losing too much income from lost tenant rents.

John, known as John MacDonald of the 15th Regiment Afoot was the Grandfather of Marcella above, who went to Australia in 1838. After Culloden, the British encouraged those fierce Highlanders to enlist in their army, an attractive option to a man starving or being hunted. John MacDonald of the 15th Regiment represents those men that took that option. He served at the capture of Louisburg & in battle on the Plains of Abraham at the fall of Quebec. Injured, he returned to Scotland to enjoy a pension, a luxury compared to the scraping for survival of other Highlanders. John's stories to his Highland family & friends about a new world with the opportunity to own land would have contributed to the enthusiasm of the Catholic Highlanders, anxious for land of their own & freedom from oppression.

Those emigrating at this time, had the opportunity to organize the sale of their possessions. These voyages weren't the horrific jammed journeys without sufficient food described in later periods of forced emigration.

The trips were relatively fast with arrivals planned for the best season & with the basics of provisions. Still, there were tears shed by those leaving their homeland & by those remaining behind with the realization they may never see each other again.

I'll leave off on John Howard's family by saying they hung on in Scotland until they no longer had the choice. And what a surprise finding our male MacDonald line in Australia.

*The next surprise was discovering **Stephen Francis MacDonald** with the same genetic makeup as our MacDonald's, living in the **Boston** area.*

His YDNA testing at 67 markers has a Genetic difference of only 1 to my test results for James Leo's son, Ralph & an exact match for John Howard MacDonald in Australia. Stephen MacDonald has the same genetic makeup as our MacDonald lineage. Patricia MacDonald, sister of Stephen's father married Emery King & their son, Richard King, living in Florida, actively pursues his MacDonald genealogy.

Stephen & Richard's ancestry traces back to the Arisaig area of NS in the early 1790's. Deeds, wills, Antigonish Diocese Records & personal views of local parish BMD records have enabled me to complete the generational families for Stephen/Rick's lineage back to Boston (3).

The first Catholic Church established in NS was St. Margaret's of Scotland, 1790/92 at Arisaig NS. Among the first Parish settlers were 4 MacDonald's who took land grants in Malignant Brook - brothers or first cousins - Donald, Alexander, John & Duncan. (4) Stephen & Rick trace to Pioneer Donald.

These Pioneers followed the route established for Catholic Highlanders from the Clan Ranald Estates to PEI, staying initially with friends or relatives already arrived.

There's a hint their father was Alexander & they may have travelled with him but regardless, these men were soon wanting their own land, a reason for enduring the hardships of leaving their native Scotland along with family & friends.

Arisaig is closely situated across the Northumberland Strait from that portion of PEI organized to receive the Catholic Highlanders at the time of the Glenaladale Settlement; an easy boat ride on a sunny day. PEI lots filled & these Highlanders could see today's Arisaig area & the Cape Breton shore - land available to them in grants.

Malignant Cove is adjacent to Arisaig, & Malignant Brook (Maryvale today) where our ancestors had their grants is a minute up the Brook from the shore at Malignant Cove.

Malignant Brook would play an important role in any new settlement with the water flow from the brook powering their early flour & saw mills. The brook provided fresh water for their farms & perhaps an occasional trout or salmon, treats they enjoyed from the River Sheil emptying into Loch Moidart at Porta Bhata back in Scotland.

Just a little way out from the shore at Malignant Cove they would see Judique on the Cape Breton shore where other catholic highlanders, leaving PEI were settling at the same time.

The first priest for these Catholic Highlanders settling in NS was Fr. Angus Bernard MacEachern who came with the first arrivals to PEI in 1772. Later as Bishop MacEachern, he would travel the triangle over water from today's Charlottetown to Arisaig then to Judique to serve the pastoral care of his parishioners including his 3 sisters & brother who had settled in Judique. Communities would continue to spring up with new churches as families grew.

Pioneers Donald and Alexander remained in Malignant Brook raising their families (5). Pioneers, John and Duncan moved on to Judique before 1804, selling their 500 acre grant to a local merchant, Edward Irish (6). The records for the families of Pioneers Donald & Alexander trace their lives in Malignant Brook but all traces of Pioneers John & Duncan disappear from the Arisaig area parishes with their move over to the Cape Breton side.

YDNA links our Neil MacDonald & Isabella, living in today's Auld's Cove before 1838 to Pioneer Donald at Malignant Brook. Records link Pioneers Donald, Alexander, John & Duncan & show that John & Duncan have sold their grant of 500 acres in Malignant Brook & are living in Cape Breton before 1804. The names in the families of the children of Neil & Isabella indicate that John is Neil's father & Pioneer John is related to Pioneer Donald back at Malignant Brook.

The connection of our MacDonalds from Auld's Cove / Judique with those from the Arisaig area wasn't known until it came to light thru YDNA testing.

The early Deeds indicate these Pioneers couldn't write - they mark their signatures with an "X". Although not far across the water in miles, it was a time consuming trip in an open sailboat, if they had one. Men farmed hard to feed their families 6 days a week with a little time off on Sundays for church but still with basic animal chores even on Sundays. Roads were yet to be built. There wasn't any postal service. Perhaps they shared messages thru the priests' travels but over generations, without writing or easy travel, appreciate how connections would fade between the families of Pioneers Donald & Alexander in Malignant Brook & Pioneers John & Duncan in Judique until science came along to reunite our connections.

Those familiar the land around Judique & area know that near the shore the land is flat but starts to slope rapidly upward, mountainous by NS standards, running roughly like that from Creignish through to the heights of the Cabot Trail. These back lands were known as "ranges", & settled by later arrivals; i.e. Judique Rear, Creignish Rear. To the sons of the first settlers the relatively flat land on the shore only a mile or so away, directly across the Strait on the Nova Scotia side must have appeared much more appealing & ready for homesteading than the mountainous areas behind their fathers' farms.

The original land grants for Auld's Cove are dated 1830 to Donald, John, Duncan, Angus MacDonald & John O'Brien (7). These men joined John, Angus & Archibald MacDonald already living there. Although their grants are official in 1830, their farms are already established & mapped by that time, in fact they're all showing in an 1817 Havre Boucher census of residents, making them the first settlers in the area.

In this generation of settlers, Deed records tell me that John & Duncan are related. These & the other names have a familiar ring to those we know in Arisaig & Scotland. I still have dots to connect, but I believe among these Auld's Cove men are the sons of Pioneers John & Duncan in Judique.

When Neil MacDonald & Isabella MacEachern and their family moved to the NS side in Auld's Cove, prior to 1838, they were joining Neil's brothers already located there.

If you're curious where Neil's farm may be located, you'll see on the map a grant for Morris. That land went from Morris to MacLean's, then to Neil, then to Little Neil, roughly where the Kelmac restaurant was located.

Of course there are dots still to connect. Pioneer John's land sale in 1804 mentions his heirs. Neil MacDonald had siblings & I want to satisfy myself on the names within his family. But at this point we're back at the generational level of the first Catholic Highland settlers in the Judique area. The population is small & I'm in hopes of sorting for good results & will update this writing.

But for now, there's a comfort in knowing the origins of our MacDonald ancestors who emigrated to NS so long ago & to have knowledge that Pioneers Donald, Alexander, John & Duncan were saying good bye to other family members on the Clan Ranald Estate at Loch Moidart, Scotland.

In the Generations Document (8), under Dennis, represents the male MacDonald lineage of William C. MacDonald. Under Stephen & Richard is the lineage from Pioneer Donald at Arisaig with the same genetic makeup as William C. MacDonald. Then you have John Howard's ancestors back to Loch Moidart, Scotland. Across, the men are aligned by generations with the bottom line showing the Pioneers arriving here & their brother/1st cousin Angus Mor, back in Scotland.

This excerpt from Robbie Burn's "Such a Parcel of Rogues in a Nation" seems a fitting tribute to the diaspora of Scots from their homeland so Landlords could gain money to play like their English friends.

"O would, or I had seen the day that Treason thus could sell us, my auld grey head had lien in clay, Wi' Bruce and loyal Wallace! But pith and power, till my last hour, I'll make this declaration; we're bought and sold for English gold- Such a parcel of rogues in a nation! "