

In Those Days in Victoria County

William Millar & Norman MacLeod - Presbyterian pioneers



by Jim St. Clair
One hundred and eighty nine years have gone since the first officially established Presbyterian Congregation, that of Mabou and Port Hood, came into being.

And one hundred and ninety years have passed since the unofficial congregation of Normanites arrived in St. Ann's under the leadership of Rev. Norman MacLeod.

And now for the first time in its history, The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Canada will take place in Sydney during the days of June 6th to 11th. With many scheduled meetings and worship services, the gathering will bring together lay people and clergy from across Canada.

While often, the Norman MacLeod group are stated to be the first Presbyterian group in Cape Breton, at the time of his arrival and for a few years thereafter MacLeod was not an ordained minister nor was his congregation under the aus-

pices of any official Presbyterian organized body.

At the time of his arrival in Nova Scotia, William Millar of Tarbolstone Ayreshire, Scotland came prepared to be appointed by the Presbytery of Pictou to the newly formed congregation gathered in Mabou and Port Hood.

The congregation had the support of Rev. Dr. McGregor of Pictou who had visited the area in 1818 and realized the necessity of a finding a minister to care for the group, many of whom were Presbyterian in origin (the Worths and the MacQuarries) while others were Congregationalist (such as the Smiths and Hawleys) and still others were members of the Presbyterian Church of Ireland, such as the Wrights.

Millar, duly ordained by the Presbytery of Pictou, immediately began his ministry in the communities of Mabou and Hillsborough and Port Hood and Cape Mabou and Mount Young. He remained in that congregation until he retired in 1861.

While it is unclear whether or not Millar and MacLeod, who was eventually ordained by a presbytery in Upper New York State, ever met, it is certainly clear that they had little in common either in their theology or in their association with groups in Scotland.

MacLeod remained a dissenter from any of the several Presbyterian groups in Scotland or in Nova Scotia. He often wrote (and preached) of the errors of their structure and their doctrines.

Millar, although under the direction of the Presbytery of Pictou, rarely attended any meetings of that body. His attitude was that the local congregation should exercise the power to appoint and to remove ministers. He was by attitude

an "Antiburger" and also had no facility in the Gaelic language as he was a Lowlander rather than a Gael. But the majority of his congregation spoke and understood English rather than Gaelic. So he was well placed.

While Millar died at his home on Mount Young, near Mabou, and is buried in the First Settlers Cemetery in Hillsborough, MacLeod died in Waipu in New Zealand far away from his former home and that of many of his parishioners around St. Ann's Bay.

Two very different individuals with quite separate attitudes towards authority and somewhat opposing views of the teachings of Presbyterianism! And yet each was influential in the establishment

of churches of the Presbyterian persuasion and the growth of communities.

While there were other Presbyterians in parts of Cape Breton such as West Bay and River Inhabitants and Sydney before the arrival of MacLeod and Millar, it took many years for organized churches to be formed in those places.

As the delegates to the 136th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Canada gather for business meetings and to explore their theme of "Sailing into the Future," the accomplishments of both Millar and MacLeod in the establishment of Presbyterianism in Cape Breton and indeed in Nova Scotia and Canada need to be recalled.

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The Dearborn Slip Andrea Beaton

slip jig D.C.



Andrea Beaton was honoured with an ECMA award in Sydney last February for her CD titled *Branches*. With over 20 originals on the album it was difficult to choose a single tune for this column. I chose *The Dearborn Slip* both because slip jigs are not common in contemporary Cape Breton and because the melody rings true to older Irish and Scottish music from the 18th and 19th centuries. Andrea's music is taking her all over the world. She just got back from a tour abroad which included gigs in Cuba, Bermuda and Ireland. In June she will be touring the US. Locally, you can hear her later this month at the Doryman in Cheticamp. Sat. May 29, 2-6 PM, Doryman Tavern, Cheticamp. - Andrea Beaton, fiddle with piano accompaniment (likely Joel Chiasson).

Victoria County's New Residential Curbside Organics Collection

Garbage Shipped to Guysborough

For the month of April, 2010, **219.74 Tonnes** of garbage were shipped bringing the total to **11,925.33 Tonnes**

Residents can now put organic material such as vegetable peelings, table scraps, meat, fish, poultry, dairy, bones and soiled paper in transparent green bags to be collected weekly along with recyclables and garbage. Special transparent green bags for compost are now available in grocery & hardware stores in Victoria County.

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