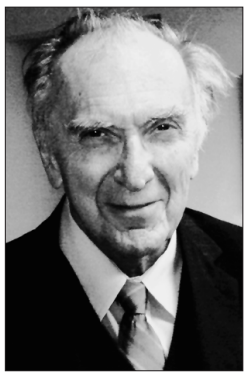


*In Those Days in Victoria County*

# The doctor is out - in a boat, on a sled...



by Jim St. Clair

For many months and indeed years, we have grown accustomed to the reference to the midwife Julia MacNiven Noble in the name of the Little Narrows Ferry - Caolis Silis, the Straits of

Julia.

From local lore, we know that Julia journeyed many miles in what is now Victoria County during the time that she and her husband Dr. John Noble lived at MacNiven's Island (now MacInnis Island), on the South Side of Whycocomagh, and for a short time in Whycocomagh.

Noble had arrived in Cape Breton in 1823 in the vessel owned and operated by Colin MacNiven, formerly a Taxman of the Island of Tiree. Within two years, he and a fellow-passenger on board the sailing vessel, Julia Ann MacNiven, the captain's daughter, were married and set up house-keeping. No doubt, his professional education was of great benefit to his young wife who gained a great reputation during her rather short life. Many families carried her name "Julia" or "Silis" in Gaelic for several generations in commemoration of her. She was thirty-nine when her remains were placed by her grieving husband, children and relatives in the MacLean Cemetery, Stewartdale.

At his request, Bard MacLean, a native of Tiree, and resident in Barney's River, composed a lament which is still sung at Gaelic programs on both sides of the

Atlantic - "a Lament for Mrs Noble."

With his training and licensing as a surgeon, he was often called to bedside in remote areas in winter and summer. As was true of his neighbour on the South Side near Portage, Dr. Kenneth Chisholm, he frequently went in his small boat to one end of the Bras d'Or Lake to the other. On foot or on horseback, he went on errands of healing inland to Middle River and Margaree. In later years, he resided for several years at Mabou and then at Little Judique. Indeed, a small side street in Mabou carries his name, "Noble Street." After the death of his wife from the effects of the birth of her sixth child, he moved to Malta, Ontario where he practised for some years.

In contrast to Dr. Chisholm and other early physicians who tended patients in the early years of settlement in the hills and valleys of what is now Victoria County, much can be found about John Noble in records remaining in archives.

Born in Inverness, Scotland, the son of John Noble, Sr., noted as a dyer of wool, John Noble the younger, in 1815 entered into a legal relationship with Dr. John Inglis Nicol, of Inverness. He promised to serve



Dr. John Noble circa 1820 from a silhouette

for three years as an apprentice. The document, which survives, is quite specific about what is required of a medical apprentice: "serve and obey his master, night and day;" shall not "commit fornication, contract matrimony or play cards;" "to conceal his master's secrets as revealed to him;" "he shall be careful of his master's medicines and drugs."

In return, Dr. Nicol agrees by the covenant "to instruct the said John Noble in all the art and parts of said profession and employment of surgery..."

In addition, there are certificates still extant which certify

that Dr. John Noble completed three courses at the College of Physicians in London England and was certified as a doctor and surgeon by that organization.

With this superior education, for reasons unknown to people today, the young physician went to the Hebridean Island of Tiree to set up his practice and then set forth for Cape Breton Island with the MacNiven family. A paper silhouette of a young John Noble survives which shows him to be sharp-featured.

According to a descendant living in California, Dr. Noble's medical kit is still kept and cherished by great-grandchildren. It would be very interesting to know what medicines he carried in that bag as he went on his many trips around parts of Cape Breton which are now within Victoria County.

Dr. John Noble was a physician and surgeon of superior education, who brought his skills to the sick and wounded of a pioneering island nearly two hundred years ago and was well regarded in his day.



## The Restaurant at the Chanterelle Country Inn

*Savour a cuisine created from locally and organically grown ingredients*

**Hosting Dinner for Parties for six or more every weekend from November 4 to December 11, 2011**

Choice of Menus! Two Days Notice Required!

*Please call 929-2263 for information*

## Bookmobile Schedule

**Wednesday, November 2:** Cape Smokey School (11:15-11:45 am), Cabot High School (12:15-12:45 pm), Neil's Harbour at the Highland Manor (1:30-2 pm), White Point (2:15-2:45 pm), Smelt Brook (3-3:30 pm), Dingwall at Church (4-4:45 pm).

**Thursday, November 3:** North Highlands School (10:15-11:30 am), Bay St. Lawrence Community Centre (11:45-12:15 pm), Cape North (1:45-2:15 pm).

**Wednesday, November 9:** Wagmatcook School (9:30-11:45 am), Little Narrows-Ferry (1-1:30 pm), Hazeldale (1:45-2:15 pm), Washabuck Community Hall (2:30-3 pm).

**Thursday, November 10:** Rankin School (10-11:30 am), Iona at St. Columba Church (11:45-12:15 pm), Jamesville at Dunn Road (1:45-2:15 pm), MacKinnon's Harbour (2:30-3 pm), Ottawa Brook (3:15-3:30 pm).

## FIDDLER'S CORNER by Paul S. Cranford.

If you have a tune you would like to share with other Cape Breton fiddlers or a musical event that could be promoted in this column contact The Victoria Standard or Cranford Publications ([www.cranfordpub.com](http://www.cranfordpub.com)). Email [psc@cranfordpub.com](mailto:psc@cranfordpub.com)

### Alf McConnell's March

Brenda Stubbert, SOCAN

march

**Brenda Stubbert** composed and recorded this march early last winter when she was preparing the sets for her newest CD project, *Different Strokes with Different Folks*. On that CD, Brenda is joined by Nuala Kennedy, Howie MacDonald, Kenneth MacKenzie, Dave MacIsaac and Blanche Sophocelous. The tune *Alf McConnell's March* was also published in a recent compilation of songs, tunes, photos and stories titled *The Celtic Colours Collection* (2011).

## Victoria County's Residential Curbside Organics Collection



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.

For more information on Recycling or Composting Programs, call Cape Breton's **Recycling Hotline at 1-877-567-1337** or see "Recycling" in the Aliant Yellow Pages

