Hebridean Traditions of the Eastern Townships of Quebec: A Study in Cultural Identity

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been composed entirely by me and that the research contained in it is my own.

Margaret Bennett, DCE, BA (Ed), MA (Post-grad)

Abstract

Despite the fact that French is the only official language of the Province of Quebec today, and that a relatively small percentage of the population claim Scottish ancestry, this thesis proposes that a cohesive minority group, such as the Hebridean Scots of the Eastern Townships, have, nevertheless, made a significant contribution to the shape of the landscape, and to current cultural and economic values.

The vast majority of emigrants to this part of Canada were from the Isle of Lewis, entirely Gaelic-speaking, mostly crofting families, who suffered the severe effects of the potato famine of 1846—51. Emigration continued till the end of the nineteenth century, by which time relatively large tracts of land that had been granted by the British American Land Company had been cleared and farmed by the Gaelic community.

By examining the historical background, traditional folk culture, society and values of the Gaels of the Outer Hebrides who settled in the Eastern Townships, this thesis identifies the influences of the Gaels on the area from its earliest beginnings to the present day. The study investigates the elements that constitute the *identity* of today's descendents who no longer speak the Gaelic language, but who, nevertheless, have distinctively different characteristics from their French neighbours. By explaining the significance of inherited patterns in Gaelic culture and of subsequent trends in acculturation, the work aims to contribute to a better understanding of the Eastern Townships and of Quebec.

Acknowledgements

At every stage of the preparation of this thesis I have accumulated a huge debt of gratitude. It will be clear from my introduction what a vital part was played by Muriel Mayhew, Duncan McLeod and Ruth Nicolson: friendship, hospitality, and assistance of every kind. From the very first day I was welcomed to Quebec, there were (alphabetically) MacArthurs, MacDonalds, MacIvers, MacKenzies, MacRaes, Mayhews, McLeods, Mathesons, Morrisons, Nicolsons, Shermans, Smiths and Youngs whose friendship, warmth, sincerity, encouragement and enthusiasm have sustained me over the years I have known them. Sadly, not all of them have lived long enough to see this part of the project completed, but I would like to record my heartfelt appreciation of each and every one of them, named and un-named.

I am grateful also to the late Gordon MacLennan who, in 1976, first suggested that I investigate the topic, and to Professor Herbert Halpert whose training, motivation and inspiration set me on the right track in the first place. As a teacher, mentor and friend, Professor Halpert has had significant influence on this and every project I have undertaken since 1969 when I first listened to his Folklore lectures as a post-graduate student at Memorial University of Newfoundland.

At the University of Edinburgh I have greatly appreciated the invaluable advice and support from my two supervisors of study, Dr Alan Bruford and Dr John MacInnes. Good-humoured, critical, provocative, encouraging, amusing at every stage of the writing, I have no doubt whatsoever that they helped sustain my own enthusiasm for the subject, and that this thesis is all the better for their careful reading and advice. I would also like to thank Neil MacQueen who, when I needed technical advice and support, was always helpful. He set aside time, equipment and lab space for me and ensured that my tapes were copied and archived. Thanks are also due to Ian MacKenzie for processing films and printing photographs. Also on the technical side, I am grateful to Tom McKean for advice and assistance with word-processing.

Two other universities have been generous in their support of this project, as I have consulted the libraries at Harvard in Cambridge, MA, and Bishop's in Lennoxville, Quebec. Sincere appreciation goes to Prof. Charles Dunn who not only wrote letters to arrange for me to work in the Widener Library at Harvard, but also to use his personal office there. His generosity can only be matched by his enthusiasm for the subject of this project, as he also gave me permission to use his own collection of Gaelic material recorded in Quebec some twenty years before my first visit there. While I have only incorporated a small part of it here, I will make substantial use of it in the book which will follow. While in Quebec, at Bishop's University, the librarian of the Special Collections, Anne Grant, gave me invaluable assistance by showing me the holdings of books, maps, photographs and tapes relevant to my topic. She made me welcome, and also allowed me the freedom to work in the Special Collections Room and to use copying facilities.

Several relatives and friends played important parts in encouraging me to see this through. Firstly, my mother, Péigi (Stewart) Bennett, who has always had the most natural way of helping to sustain effort and interest by her endless ability to listen. She not only discussed many of the details I wrote about, but helped me with transcription and translation of the Gaelic texts. Other friends whose firesides, hospitality and encouragement were constantly available were Percy and Jean Burnard, and Tom and Sylvia McKean. All of them have given me havens of tranquillity without which I would have had far fewer opportunities to write than I did. My sincere thanks to each one of them.

Very special thanks are reserved for Marie Salton who, week after week, not only proof-read whatever I had written in the days between her visits, but took a real interest in the topic and discussed every stage of it with me. She painstakingly corrected "typos and clangers" and spotted a host of "bugs", thus saving me from complete embarrassment had they escaped her notice.

Marie's cheerfulness, wit, and wonderful sense of humour, turned what can often be a laborious task—correcting one's own mistakes—into a pleasure. There is only one point which, even someone with Marie's intuitiveness may not have noticed: had it not been for our regular Wednesday morning meetings, this thesis would have taken infinitely longer to complete, for the idea of turning up with nothing done would have ruined my entire week. Happily none of my weeks were ruined on that account, and I looked forward to Marie's visits, not only because each one was a milestone along the road to completion, but more especially because she has the finest qualities of friendship and loyalty. Furthermore, she always made me laugh, and while she would be quick to point out that the metaphor is usually concerned with the "last laugh...", on this occasion it concerns *thanks*.

Thankyou, Marie, for everything.

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INTRODUCTION

The collector-folklorist should never,
in the heat of the chase,
forget his humanist role.
[Hamish Henderson[1]]

Quebec Revisited

In a lecture on Classification and Analysis about twenty years ago, Professor Herbert Halpert, my teacher and mentor, sternly cautioned all his post-graduate students "never begin with an apology".[2] His deeper meaning extended to advising us all to plan and prepare our material in such a way that there would never be any *need* to apologise. Provided one takes in the full implications of it, Halpert's advice is generally easy to follow. I am not certain that beginning with a number of confessions, as this thesis does, is much more desirable. It is, however, deemed essential on this occasion.

What follows here is my "personal narrative", the only one in this thesis. Written at an early stage of the research, it reconstructs the situation that led to this undertaking. While I am well aware that it may seem like an immediate digression from a fairly focussed subject, it will, nevertheless, answer the question so often asked of the folklorist: "How did you choose the topic and

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1 Preface to Kenneth S. Goldstein's *A Guide for Field Workers in Folklore*, p. x, my punctuation.

2 From all accounts, I am not the only former student of Halpert's to remember this. At a meeting of the American Folklore Association in St.John's, Newfoundland, October 1991, more than a dozen of his former post-graduates got together after we had proudly listened to our former professor give the honorary address to the Society. Animated by this reunion from both sides of the Atlantic, and by the fact that we had all shared post-graduate studies together, the only topic we discussed was Halpert. The only aide-memoire missing was the tape-recorder, symbol of our profession. The anecdotes included one about "never begin with an apology", which had impressed the entire group for life, as they had all been present when Halpert encountered a student who had paid no attention to his advice and began his seminar with "I'm sorry I don't have..." The professor stood up, boomed "never begin with an apology", and promptly walked out. Lesson learned.

get started in the first place?" Alternatively, I could simply state that the topic chose me.

The occasion was a social call to the Eastern Townships in Quebec, my first return visit since I lived there in 1976-77. Although I had been in Canada and the U.S.A. several times in the intervening years, I had, for reasons which will become clear, felt inhibited about returning. At the time, I was spending part of a sabbatical leave from the University of Edinburgh investigating the substantial Scottish holdings at two American university libraries, Harvard and Dartmouth.[3] While at the latter, it occurred to me that I was a mere two hundred miles from the Eastern Townships. I should take a day out to tie up some loose ends that had been beginning to invade my conscience: I would phone an old friend and enquire about some others; I could find out the names and addresses of the next-of-kin of three informants I had recorded in 1976, while working on as a folklorist for the Centre for Folk Cultural Studies at Ottawa's National Museum; and finally, I would send them copies of the overseas edition of *Tocher* which I had helped to compile, as it contained excerpts from my tapes of these people: Maryann Morrison, Christie MacKenzie and Bill Young.

While it was still fresh in my memory, I wrote down a summary of what happened, for, had this course of events not occurred, the present work would have remained unresearched and unwritten. The original "text" was in the style of my fieldwork notebook, which records fairly detailed descriptions of a wide range of events and observations (people, places, house lay-outs, conversations as far as I can recall them, foods, and general points of interest). What follows now is a "tidied up version" of this record, with omissions indicated by ellipses, and additional comments added in square brackets for further clarity of the situation and of my own general attitude:[4]

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[3] Since I was giving a paper at the American Folklore Society in Oakland, California, I planned to use the overseas travel to what I considered to be the best possible advantage.

[4] No attempt is made here to give an "original text" because that in itself is not the point of including it. When I wrote it I did not realize that the

Oct. 30, 1990. Cold, but very sunny. Read Boswell... Phoned Muriel Mayhew in Lennoxville. [Since I had rented her mother's old house in Milan in 1976, our friendship had continued over the years via successive Christmas correspondences, the odd letter or card, and a few visits Muriel had made to Scotland in the years between. The scenario is familiar enough to folklorists: once you fuse a relationship with informants it is not so much a matter of "they are yours for life," but more importantly, "*you* are theirs for life."[5] And so it was with Muriel—a situation which had already lasted fifteen years.] Caught up on recent events, but it seemed inappropriate to wade in with pen and address-book in hand just so that I could send the three *Tochers* to ease my conscience. I didn't mention the subject. That could wait till later. Meanwhile, yes, of course, I would drive to Lennoxville, and no, I wouldn't hear of her driving down to fetch me; and certainly I would love to see some of the others. We chose Thursday, and Muriel did the rest.

Nov. 1 , 1990 Arrived at Muriel's in Lennoxville around 12.30 on my day-trip from "across the line". She was more prepared for a dinner party than the "pot of tea and a bite" originally planned, as she thought this would be the perfect occasion to surprise several close friends of ours. She invited two of her neighbours [whom I had known in 1976], Lois Matheson and Kay Young, [widow of Bill Young whose recording appears in *Tocher*], and two of my own former neighbours from Milan, Duncan McLeod and Ruth Nicolson. I had already heard that Ruth was virtually the last Scots settler living in Milan since Duncan had moved to Scotstown, ten miles away, after his wife's death.[6] Muriel decided not to tell any of the group *why* she was suddenly having a dinner party, or that I was in the country, as she wanted to maximise the surprise. She had arranged for them to come around six, so that she and I could have our cup of tea etc., catch up, and plan the strategy for the evening. In conversation, Muriel

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course of events would take on the significance it did; had that been the case, I would have kept a more detailed record in the first instance, in keeping with the fieldwork practice I employ for any major research project. Further discussion on fieldwork methods will follow.

5 In the Preface to Kenneth S. Goldstein's *A Guide for Field Workers in Folklore*, p. x, Hamish Henderson emphasises the point that informants should never be treated "purely as sources of information, to be taken up and discarded as occasion demands..." As a result, personal friendships formed in the course of fieldwork are likely to be as close as any formed throughout life.

6 This was not actually accurate; there were at least three others—Donald MacArthur (in his 70s) still inhabits the old family homestead where he grew up with Gaelic-speaking parents. Today he is surrounded by French neighbours and most of his social interaction is in French, with occasional use of English. Also in the village is his nephew (married to a French-speaking woman) and grand-nephew who was educated in the French school.

was downhearted when she told me of the difference I would see in Milan [her home of childhood and adolescence, and mine for nearly a year]. "Just about all the old folk in Milan are gone...and Scotstown's not far behind." Imagining I was stopping at each familiar door, I still persisted in asking. "No, they're gone too," was all I heard until I reached the MacKenzies in Scotstown. [The fact that John was seventy-six and his wife, Christie, was seventy-two when I recorded them some fourteen years previously will reveal my eternal optimism.] Muriel said they had had to move from their family home in Scotstown a few years ago, and both of them were in the London Residence, a predominantly French nursing home in Sherbrooke.[7] John went blind in his early eighties and Christie was confined to bed most of the time, though both of them were "clear as a bell". Muriel suggested that instead of sending *Tocher* to their daughter, I should visit them—"it's only into Sherbrooke, you could go when I'm peeling the potatoes. They'd love it!" No doubt I would love it too; but perhaps they wouldn't remember me after all those years. Muriel didn't see why not—"they appear to remember everyone else." On the spur of the moment I went, and found them just as she said, "clear as a bell." Christie instantly remembered my visits to their home, and was delighted to see herself in the *Tocher* I had brought. Although John had been asleep in his chair when I arrived, he woke up and asked who was visiting. Fairly deaf, and quite sightless, he relied on Christie to keep him informed. "Oh, yes, yes, yes," he said, and immediately he reminded me of an occasion I had long since forgotten, when my car got stuck in the snow in front of their house in Scotstown. "But I couldn't push you out today," he added, joking about his decline in health. Though the visit was short, we covered a number of topics, and ended with Christie's customary "come back again soon." Perhaps she had not understood that I was only on a day trip, and had not moved in as I did the last time. I returned to Muriel's in plenty of time to fit back into the plan.

When the time came, we decided that I would answer the door and she would stand back and enjoy the excitement. It worked perfectly—delight, surprise, disbelief, laughter, tears, and welcoming embraces—and the dinner party that followed was as happy an occasion as any of us could wish for. We caught up on many events that had happened since we last met. Both Duncan and Muriel had visited Scotland a number of times, though I had not seen any of the others. The reunion was an extremely happy and memorable occasion, marred only by the fact that I would eventually have to have a late, snowy return to where I had been staying. Would I not plan to come back and stay a day or two, for we'd only begun

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[7] Sherbrooke adjoins Lennoxville and is the main city of the area. Until relatively few years ago, people used to distinguish between them by referring to the former as the French town and the latter as English town. Although Lennoxville still has a large English-speaking population, the visitor does not immediately see the difference as all the street signs and shop billboards are in French, in order to conform to Quebec law, even if the occupants are English.

> to catch up? Time and time again the conversation returned to the year 1976 when I lived in Quebec, and the times we had all enjoyed together. I have to admit that when the subject focussed upon the National Museum project which brought me there in the first instance, I felt slightly uneasy. [I confess that nothing had lessened this feeling over the years, and for reasons that I will elaborate upon shortly, I had been ill at ease with that subject since 1979.] Assuring me that "there's no need for you to feel like that", Duncan told me of a number of Quebec Gaelic songs he had collected, ones he hadn't shown me last time, and he'd now like to give them to me—"otherwise who's going to be interested in them?" Muriel [the only one in the company whose mother tongue was Gaelic, although, through lack of use, she could not claim to be a fluent speaker] said that there was hardly anyone left who spoke Gaelic, so I should definitely visit the MacKenzies again, and record them, this time in Gaelic [my earlier tapes were in English], as they still spoke it to one another and to their daughter, Jean. "And it's kind of funny to hear them speaking Gaelic in a French home!" Muriel assured me my bed would be waiting for me when I returned.

It was snowing quite heavily on the night-time drive back "across the line". Though the roads were still in reasonable condition and driving was not too difficult, the weather threatened to get worse. Perhaps the snow would make my decision for me. I would phone the road report in the morning, and then tell Muriel what I had decided.

In a matter of twelve hours, several of which were spent sleeping, I was confronted with a number of issues. First of all, there was every folklorist's dilemma: if you don't go and visit these elderly informants now, you may never have another chance. While the same can be said about people of any age, the fact that the two in question were at that time ninety-eight and ninety-three, added a sense of urgency. Secondly, and on a more human level, I genuinely did want to visit the MacKenzies, not just to renew old friendships but also to reassure them and acknowledge to them how much their contribution to my earlier recordings had been appreciated. At the same time, having been thoroughly reassured myself that the previous evening's visit had cemented the bonds of friendship and reawakened common interests, I was finally able to confront a grim issue that had remained unresolved for more than fourteen years.

It was the importance of this final point that eventually swung the balance in favour of returning to Quebec as soon as I possibly could, as hitherto I had never been able to come to terms with what I had perceived to be *the* most serious blot on my career as a folklorist. Hanging over me had been the fact that some fairly sensitive material I had recorded during the folklore project for the Centre of Folk Culture Studies at the National Museum had been published in a museum monograph, *without my permission, and without the permission of my informants*. I regard this as a folklorist's nightmare—once experienced, it is likely to return and haunt its victim at any given moment, which it did, regularly, for fourteen years. It raised several questions surrounding the placing of recorded tapes while under contract, and of the control over material. Most important of all, however, was the fact that it offended a number of the people I had worked among and whose trust I had earned.

It was Duncan McLeod who first brought this to my attention while he was on a visit to Scotland shortly after the monograph was released. I was surprised to hear that he had seen any publication, as I had not, at that time, had any notification of it from the Museum. The only thing I had been told was that they had hired an editor to draw together the reports of the three researchers, cultural anthropologist Sharon Bohn Gmelch, sociologist Iain Prattis, and myself, folklorist for the project. Aside from his surprise at the "tone" of the title, *Cultural Retention and Demographic change: Studies of the Hebridean Scots in the Eastern Townships of Quebec*, several things puzzled Duncan about it, and he had some painfully direct questions to ask me. Since I had not, at that time, received a copy of the monograph, I was rather disadvantaged, with no idea of what was to come. To begin with, why did the name Laurel Doucette appear on the cover, when she was not involved in the project...? And finally, what did I think the people felt about that story about X___ that is in it?[8] He emphasised the point that nobody he knew

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[8] I decline to mention the actual name here as it is not relevant to the point I wish to make. Intimate details of a personal nature, revealing the

could agree that a writer had any right to put such a story in print; and neither could I. This has been an uneasy confession, but it is also one that has been necessary, as it is central to understanding how and why this thesis topic emerged.

Although the face to face confrontation was a shock to me, perhaps the advantage of it was that Duncan could see from my reaction how taken aback I was; that it was not an idea I would have entertained, had I been given the chance to edit and publish my own collection. Having said his piece, having spoken on behalf of his kinsfolk, he was outstandingly generous in his appraisal of the project. People appreciated the fact that so many of their stories were recorded, and were in fact happy with most of it. All the more pity that a project with such potential had been spoiled. As a result, it was a mixed blessing to them that the monograph was not available at book stores for the general public to chance upon. Instead, one had to write to the National Museum to obtain one of the limited number that were printed.[9]

It has often been said that the only way to stop a ghost from haunting is to confront it and lay it to rest. Until that return visit to Quebec, I had never been able to lay this ghost to rest. Lest my reader conclude that I chose to write a thesis on the subject solely for the purpose of exorcism, I would hasten to deny that. It was simply the discovery that I *could* return to Quebec, sit in a room with all the people I had inadvertenly offended, and find out that they themselves had already resolved the issue. Contrary to what I had imagined, they laid no blame at my feet, but placed it squarely on the doorstep of the National Museum who, according to the terms of my contract, were entrusted with the collection. Furthermore, with the passing of time they had begun to identify passages of the Museum publication which actually gave them enormous pleasure. They inadvertently demonstrated this from time to time by referrring to it in the context of conversations,

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illegitimacy of a child (by 1976 a middle-aged adult), understandably caused the outcry.

9 It was listed as out of print very soon after publication, thus indicating that a good number of people did "write in for it."

such as "Bessie's recipe is in the book" or "Bill Young told a story about that," and would summarise the essence, having read and reread it in the hitherto offending collection. It was only when I had finally attained peace of mind that I was in any position to reconsider the Eastern Township as a subject of research.

> Nov. 13, 1990. Returned to Quebec. Visited Sherbrooke and recorded Christie and Johnnie MacKenzie. Mostly Gaelic. Stayed with Muriel in Lennoxville.

> Nov. 14, 1990. Duncan McLeod came in from Scotstown. Spent the afternoon looking at the songs; recorded him talking about them and about his own considerable collection of historical and genealogical material of the area. See transcription for list of songs and other papers. Muriel joined us. Looked at old photographs of the communion services and was amazed at the huge crowds outside the churches. More recording. Enjoyed the time immensely, even though I feel torn by present commitments. Have to go home [to Scotland] on the 18th.

> Nov. 16, 1990. Boston. Harvard Library has an impressive collection from the Eastern Townships, including Prof. Charles Dunn's collection of tapes from the 1950s and 60s.

Although I had been well aware of Duncan's wide knowledge of his local area and of his ability to draw the material together, yet he was not one of the main informants of my 1976 project. There were sound reasons for this, the main one being the fact that he was, at the time, working towards the completion a project of his own.

When I first met Duncan McLeod, he was already well known as Milan's local historian, having taken on the enormous task of amassing files and boxes of magazine articles, newspaper clippings, locally printed songs, poems and sketches, alongside several shelves of books. Knowing that he was about to publish *The Milan Story* and that he intended to continue his work as a collector, I did not press Duncan to be recorded. He had already earned his reputation as a local historian, and I had yet to prove that my technique of folklore fieldwork had anything to contribute to the Eastern Townships Scots. Furthermore, there

were several researchers all attempting to gather material relevant to their own interests: the project co-ordinator and Gaelic scholar, Gordon MacLennan, the anthropologist, Sharon Bohn Gmelch, and the sociologist, Iain Prattis. I felt it would have been crass and insensitive to invade his "patch" any further, or make him feel ill at ease in any way. Instead, I enjoyed both the McLeods as close neighbours. I could call at the store or the house and converse, or could have them visit with me. It was by far the best arrangement, and out of it grew a warm and lasting friendship which facilitated many discussions about both projects.

When Duncan McLeod attained part of his aim by privately publishing *The Milan Story* via a printer in Sherbrooke in 1977, it was eagerly received by a wide range of individuals both inside and outside of the geographical area. Largely based on family recollections of his home town, several years of correspondence with former inhabitants now living all over Canada and the United States, and excerpts from his substantial collection of clippings, *The Milan Story* is carefully linked and supplemented by his own text. Not surprisingly, the book was sold out within a very short time, and requests for another edition flowed in. Ever anxious to remain accurate, Mcleod began revising and updating information that had, in the meantime, changed. It was an ambitious project from one man's fireside, and Duncan began to realize that he might need several lifetimes to fulfil his original aim. *The Milan Story* represented only a fraction of what he had gathered, and it scarcely put a dent in the files.

He explained to me in 1990 that his random collection of Gaelic songs that lay in front of us, for example, might never be tackled, as he was not a Gaelic speaker or singer. Would I not take them and see if I could do something with them?[10] There was also the consideration that the rapidly ageing population of the district had lifetimes of memories: their own, their parents, (many from the

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10 Duncan's request will not, however, be fulfilled by this thesis, as it can only deal with comparatively few of the songs from his collection. I have, however, translated them all to date, and will include them in the book which will be the final stage of my Quebec project.

Isles of Lewis and Harris), their grandparents, (all from Lewis and Harris), and their great-grandparents—and very few of those were contained among the clippings. "But what about all those tapes you made in 1976?" he asked, indicating that he valued the folklorist's approach with its verbatim tape transcriptions. "That Museum report doesn't cover it all... It's too bad that's all we have of the old people talking...there's a lot more than that." While I thoroughly agreed with Duncan, he was, however, only a fraction of the way towards convincing me to abandon my (then) current research project (the writings of Martin Martin, circa 1695) in favour of a study the traditions of "our peole in Quebec" ; I was completely unaware of the fact that he yet had his trump card up his sleeve, and, whether he knew it or not, it would win him the game, hands down.

As already indicated by my brief diary entry above, we were in the home of Muriel Mayhew in Lennoxville. As I recall it, she joined our company with her customary Highland welcome of tea and scones and sat down beside her bookshelves. Brought up in a Gaelic-speaking home in Milan, the same village as Duncan, Muriel has an impressive collection of Scottish books which reflect her love of Scotland and especially of her mother's native Isle of Lewis. Only the night before I had brought her a house-present to add to her collection, my newly published book *The Last Stronghold: Scottish Gaelic Traditions of Newfoundland.* Duncan reached for the book, thumbed through it, nodded approval, and got straight to the point. He spoke to Muriel as though I were absent, and although I did not tape-record the event, the words reproduced here rang loudly in my ears for several weeks and are as close to Duncan's original as I can recall: "Nice, eh, Muriel? Well, she made that book for Newfoundland. Nothing for Quebec, though. Suppose she'll wait till we're all dead and gone, but what use would that be to any of us?" (Perhaps I detected a faint smile there.) And turning to me he continued: "I don't see why you couldn't do one for Quebec. I've got enough would fill dozens of books. You could start on that; otherwise what's going to happen to it? I'll never do it all. And when I'm gone they'll probably throw it all out. Be no trouble at all to get plenty of stuff here."

No trouble at all. Just a simple matter of a major research project for a PhD I had started two years previously, to say nothing of other basic issues such as living in Scotland and maintaining a full-time job. And, just for the record, I would like to state that Duncan McLeod ruined several nights' sleep, several weeks of tranquillity, made me feel thoroughly on edge, and completely convinced me that there was only one possible course of action. I would return to Scotland both animated and anguished and tackle this dilemma.

My PhD supervisors, Drs Alan Bruford and John MacInnes listened patiently, and as scholars and collectors of oral tradition they both saw the urgency of the task. They supported my proposal, and in a letter shortly thereafter, MacInnes encouraged me not to lose sight of the immediacy of the project, and reminded me that Martin Martin had been dead for nearly three hundred years, "he could wait another three".[11] The Faculty Postgraduate Committee then gave me the official approval I needed.

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11 I hesitate to record my aim of bringing out an annotated tri-centenary edition of Martin Martin's *Description* in 1995.

The Scope of the Present Study

The Thesis

Despite the fact that French is the only official language of the Province of Quebec today, and that a relatively small percentage of the population claim Scottish ancestry, this thesis proposes that a cohesive minority group, such as the Scottish Gaels of the Eastern Townships, has, nevertheless, made a significant contribution to the shape of the landscape, and to current cultural and economic values. By examining the historical background, traditional folk culture, society and values of the Gaels of the Outer Hebrides who settled in the Eastern Townships, this study will identify the influences of the Gaels on the area from its earliest beginnings to the present day. By explaining the significance of inherited patterns in Gaelic culture and of subsequent trends in acculturation, the study will contribute to a better understanding of the Eastern Townships and of Quebec.

Aims and Objectives

Central to the research topic and to this thesis is the collection and documentation of the *folk culture* of the Hebridean settlers in the Eastern Townships of Quebec. Under the wide umbrella of *folk culture* stand many disciplines: language, literature, sociology, anthropology, history, geography, religion, medicine, agriculture, botany, home economics, to enumerate some of them. My approach to this particular topic comes from the direction of Folklore and Folklife Studies, generally referred to as *Folklore* by the scholars whose fieldwork methods, research techniques, analysis of data, and writing have inspired me.[12]

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12 See, for example, the current global use of the term as confirmed by the Folklore Fellows at the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, who, in their Folklore Fellows Summer School of 1992 list folklorists from 24 countries, and give a breakdown on numbers as 9 from North and West Europe, 7 from Asia, 3 from Africa, 2 from North America, and 1 from South America. See also the international list produced by the American Folklore Society, Centennial edition, 1989. In addition, Europe has produced many folklorists who pre-date this publication, the best known being Arnold van Gennep. As far as Quebec is concerned, folklorist Marius Barbeau, whose

In the century and a half of its existence,[13] the study of Folklore has undergone many changes, and, like any discipline which retains a vitality to those whose study it is, it is constantly exploring new avenues of expression. Definition has always been a problem, partly because *folklore* is both the raw material and the method of study. In an attempt to define the subject, Marius Barbeau (1884—1969), often referred to as the "father of Canadian folklore", offered the following:

> Whenever a lullaby is sung to a child; whenever a ditty, a riddle, a tongue-twister, or a counting-out rhyme is used in the nursery or at school;
>
> Whenever sayings, proverbs, fables, noodle-stories, folktales, reminiscences of the fireside are retold;
>
> Whenever, out of habit or inclination, the folk indulge in songs and dances, in ancient games, in merry-making, to mark the passing of the year or the usual festivities;
>
> Whenever a mother shows her daughter how to sew, knit[14], spin, weave, embroider, make a coverlet, braid a sash, bake an old-fashioned pie;
>
> Whenever a farmer on the ancestral plot trains his son in the ways long familiar, or shows him how to read the moon and winds to forecast the weather at sowing or harvest time;
>
> Whenever a village craftsman—carpenter, carver, shoemaker, cooper, blacksmith, builder of wooden ships—trains his apprentice in the use of tools, shows him how to cut a mortise and peg a tenon, how to raise a house or a barn, how to string a snowshoe, how to carve a shovel, how to shoe a horse or shear a sheep;
>
> Whenever in many callings the knowledge, experience, wisdom, skill, the habits and practices of the past are handed down by example or spoken word, by the older to the new generations, without reference to book, print, or school-teacher;

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vast collection of folklore dates from the first decade of this century, was strongly influenced by European methodology which he studied while at the Sorbonne in Paris.

13 In a letter to *The Athenaeum*, Aug. 22, 1846, William Thoms suggested that a better term for the study of Popular Antiquities, (once called Classical Antiquities), would be the simple compound, "folk-lore". Since then it has been adopted in many European languages, except Gaelic. Since all of my education has been in the English language, and the writing of this thesis is also in English, I will not attempt to invent a Gaelic equivalent but will use the terms which have already gained currency.

14 Knit is misquoted as knot in E. Fowke's *Folklore of Canada*, p. 2.

> Then we have folklore in its own perennial domain, at work as ever, alive and shifting, always apt to grasp and assimilate new elements on its way...
>
> And the door remains wide open to the comparative study of the folklore harvest taken as a whole and in its branches, for it all forms part of the culture of man from the remote past to the present.[15]

Over the years, none of these components has lost its importance in the study of Folklore, and many of them will receive attention in this thesis. Nevertheless, were it possible for Barbeau to comment upon his definition I believe that he would extend it to an even longer length of sentence, in order to embrace more up-to-date concepts that have emerged.[16] Several of these will be

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15 Quoted in *Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend*, edited by Maria Leach, vol. I p. 398. Barbeau is the only Canadian among more than twenty entries.

16 In her book, *American Folklore Scholarship: A Dialogue of Dissent*, Rosemary L. Zumwalt discusses the history of American (not Canadian) scholarship. In an attempt to follow the paths taken by scholarship since the founding of the American Folklore Society in 1888, she quotes a dialogue [p. 11] between American folklorist, Richard Dorson, author of *The British Folklorists*, and many other folklore books, and Richard Reuss who asked him why he, an American, had undertaken his study of British folklorists. Although the question and the response are irritating on several counts, Dorson's reply *and Zumwalt's assumptions based on it,* are well worth considering: "The answer is that the English folklorists, whose works I stumbled on accidentally in the summer of 1948 on a chance visit to the Folklore Society library... immediately fired my imagination by the verve, the excitement, the intellectual rigor, the scope and sweep of their vast output of books, essays, reviews, and editions..." And while this statement of Dorson's cannot pass without remarking upon the fact that these "English folklorists" that so inspired him included John Francis Campbell of Islay, Hugh Miller, Rev. John G. Campbell, Rev. W. Gregor, Rev. J. Napier, Mrs. Grant of Laggan, and Mrs Grant of Rothiemurchus, to name a number of the Scottish folklorists who have been my own greatest inspiration, my main criticism lies with Zumwalt's use of the information. She totally fails to notice that almost all of Dorson's list are nineteenth century, and then goes on to compare this veritable "hall of fame" with the comparatively meagre offerings in America, glosses over the fact that Dorson's personal discovery was made in 1948, and for the remainder of the book, except the last two pages, she directs extremely strong criticism at American folklore scholarship. While it is useful to view an analysis of any discipline, the naive reader may be left with the impression that America has struggled along while "we in Britain" continue to bask in our reflected glory. I would suggest it is time for British folklorists to stop basking in reflected glory and examine what has happened to our subject over the past forty years. When it comes to the virtues that Dorson goes on to extol, "output... theory... continuity... polemics..." Britain is in danger of being left behind when one compares the contribution of folklorists from other nations, especially America and Canada.

discussed later and applied to aspects of this particular study, as one of my aims is to demonstrate the range of the discipline.

Barbeau's assertion that "it all forms part of the culture of man from the remote past to the present" is entirely in keeping with his own tireless efforts to collect and preserve the folklore of Canada, not only the wealth of his own French-Canadian people, but that of Canada's native peoples and minority groups. It is also in accord with my own views. I believe, however, that in the prevalent political and social climate of Quebec today, Barbeau would have difficulty in convincing the majority of Quebec's population of the importance of this multi-cultural approach to the subject.[17]

At the twenty-fifth General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization held in Paris in November1989, UNESCO issued a document entitled *The Unesco Recommendation for the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore.* It stressed the inherent value and importance of folklore in the cultures of the world, requesting all Member States of UNESCO to review the situation in their own country. Commenting upon the importance of this document and upon what he defines as the "globality of folklore research", Finnish folklorist Lauri Honko appeals for close attention to be paid to its content, and suggests that, by so doing, folklorists can "contribute to the creation of an international awareness of the need to respect and safeguard folklore."[18] The present study aims to comply with UNESCO's recommendations and to contribute to the task of raising international and intercultural awareness.

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17 I will take up this point later. As far as multi-culturalism in Canada is concerned, the government had clear policies which were established in the early 1970s for the protection of the language, literature and folk culture of all ethnic majorities and minorities. (I was invited to be a delegate representing the Scottish Gaelic minority at the First Conference of Multi-culuralism in Ottawa, 1973.) Today, however, the entire issue has lost the political and financial support that it once had.

18 See Lauri Honko "The Unesco Perspective on Folklore"in *Folklore Fellows Network*, No 3, p. 1.

It is not my intention to re-define the discipline,[19] but to affirm the place of this study within its scholarship. As with any discipline, there are many approaches to research and analysis, some of which carry certain risks. In this instance the greatest one is the possibility of attracting labels such as "survivalism" or "romantic nationalism". While I have made a close investigation of both camps it is not my intention to dwell in either one:

> I am interested in folklore because it represents a people's image of themselves. The image may be distorted but at least the distortion comes from the people, not from some outside observer armed with a range of a priori premises. *Folklore as a mirror of culture provides unique raw material for those eager to better understand themselves and others.*[20]

Another of my aims is, rather, to document the folklore so that it might serve as a "mirror of culture", helping to promote better understanding of ourselves—of "themselves and others".

While the study is *about* the Eastern Townshippers of Hebridean descent, "themselves" in Dundes's terms, it is not written *only* for them—otherwise, as far as Quebec is concerned, it may as well be dismissed now as simply another book "pour les Anglais". This study is also for Lewis and Harris people whose kinsfolk were separated from them and never returned; and it is equally for Quebeckers and Québecois, whatever language they speak, whatever farm they farm, whatever woodlot they cut, whatever sugar bush they tap, that they may appreciate the events that led to its creation and the people who carved it out of a wilderness.

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19 This has already been dealt with admirably by many scholars. To mention only a few, see G. L. Gomme, *The Handbook of Folklore*, Sean O'Sullivan, *Handbook of Irish Folklore*, Calum MacLean, *The Highlands*, C. S. Burne, *Handbook of Folklore*, A. Dundes, *The Study of Folklore* and *Essays in Folkloristics*; R. Dorson, *Folklore and Folklife*, J. Brunvand, *An Introduction to American Folklore* (especially his general chapter on the discipline which is applicable to any nation's folklore).

20 Alan Dundes, *Interpreting Folklore*, p. viii, my emphasis, his split infinitive.

As the twentieth century draws to a close, Quebec, and consequently Canada, has seen radical changes in the social make-up of what was once referred to as Lower Canada, with its capital Quebec City. Even the politically unaware are asking questions about the status of Quebec and Canada. The only official language in the province is French, and, while that is certainly the predominant language of the population[21], there are parts of Quebec where this was not always so—far from it, as the area under study will show.[22] In the 1970s an elderly man from the village of Milan was quoted as saying that he was seven years old before he realized that there was more than one language in the world. He had, till that day, never heard a word of French, the language that was to take over every part of the "Scotch" area by the end of the twentieth century; and he had certainly never heard a word of English.[23]

It is regrettable, however, that this language and culture shift has been accompanied by many misconceptions between the ethnic groups who inhabit the area, notably among the group referred to by older Scots and French settlers as "incomers, mainly from Montreal and surrounding areas".[24] While I had already been given this impression by a number of Scots and older French inhabitants during interviews in 1976, during the current research project I discussed the topic at some length with two sets of "incomers", Peter Jort, originally from Montreal, now in Milan, and Paul and Julia Doerfler, originally from "across the line" in New Jersey, and now farming and sugaring on the Big Woods Road, near Nantes. Jort, with his background, his reasons for

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21 The population of Quebec is six million.

22 There are, of course, many ethnic minorities in Quebec, including the eleven thousand Cree Indians who inhabit their ancestral lands of the James Bay area, in the north of the province, an area of comparative size to Germany, and throughout Quebec there are minority groups from a host of European and other nations.

23 *The Clansman News*, 1970. [Regarding the use of the word "Scotch", see footnote 48.

24 Gathered from conversations with numerous informants, including Ellen Legendre and her brother Alphonse, whose family were the first French settlers in Stornoway. The topic was developed through converations with a number of incomers, noteably those referenced in current research (Aug. 1993).

migrating to the Eastern Townships, and present lifestyle represents the most typical of the incomers, a summary of his own story along with his perception of the local socio-dynamics is presented here.

In the late sixties the social atmosphere for young Americans and Canadians during these "flower-power" years was somewhat paradoxical considering the claims of peace and goodwill presented to the world at large. For a start, there was Vietnam, which brought thousands of America's conscientious objectors, better known as "draft-dodgers", into Canada.[25] As a university student during these years, I can testify to the veracity of Jort's impressions of general discontentment with the status quo. His own case, though thoroughly complex in its make-up, was, in the simplest terms, a reflection of our generation. Optimism and hope of creating a new society of better conditions, greater equality and complete freedom had gone astray, as this newly discovered freedom found one of its greatest expressions in the moral choices of the day. For many, the "heady sixties" lured a host of idealists into experimenting with drugs, not only the occasional "joint" of cannabis,[26] but "hard stuff", such as "speed" and LSD. By the early seventies, those that were not hooked were totally disillusioned. The "good life" had gone bad, and there was an urgent need to escape. Many of this group were university or college educated and from professional families, with enough capital to bail out a son or daughter who was caught up in such a life.

When he left Montreal under similar circumstances, Peter Jort, in his late twenties, had no experience of farming other than hearsay of distant relatives in Sweden. Having heard via city property agents that land and houses were cheap in the Eastern Townships, he bought a farm on the edge of Milan. In his favour he had health, strength, youth, determination, a modest amount of

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25 Many of my male co-students in Newfoundland fitted this category, and virtually all of the half-dozen young American males I encountered in Quebec in 1976 had come to avoid the draft.

26 Despite the claims of many incomers to be avoiding the temptations of drugs, in 1976 a surprising number still grew cannabis in the Eastern Townships, usually the "odd row" among their corn (maize) crop.

capital, and a great deal of enthusiasm. As the first of a new generation, Jort was extremely interested in the family who had owned the land: three generations of a Scottish family, the MacDonalds,[27] who, as pioneers, cleared this land which looked across to Megantic Mountain and which enjoys one of the finest views in the region. An English-speaker of Swedish extraction, Jort had very little French when he arrived; today he is completely fluent and seldom has occasion to speak English. For twenty-five years he has closely observed the social, cultural, and political situation that makes up this part of Quebec today. One by one he has watched the Scotch farms change hands, sometimes several times over, and identifies this aspect of quick change-over as one of the factors that leads to an intensity of cultural confusion.

On the subject of the emergence of nationalism and prevalent attitude between ethnic groups today, Jort is quite clear: the oldest Scotch and French families, now in the minority, have a strong impression of their shared past, while "les nouveaux", the incomers, have no idea whatsoever. They arrive in the region as Quebec nationalists, have no reason to seek out the history of the area, assuming that their recently acquired farm or small plot was always occupied by its previous French owners, who, in turn, represent the entire past. They are intensely proud of their French language and culture—and why not? To them "les Anglais" represent an authoritarian, arrogant, superior attitude which is not only an abhorrence to them but has threatened them throughout history. As far as the concept of nationalism is concerned, they have no understanding whatsoever that Scottish is not English, just as Canadian is not American, thus thoroughly confusing the issues of language and culture.[28] Granted they are

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27 Parents and grandparents of Ruth Nicholson with whom I lived during fieldwork in 1992 and 1993.

28 In his address to the Second Canadian Conference on Multiculturalism in Ottawa, 1976, Senator Eugene Forsey emphasises (in a rather overbearing and arrogant manner) that Canadian law was based on *English* law, "note that I say 'English', not 'British' or 'Anglo-Celtic' Scots law ... [which] had virtually no influence on ours." His logic breaks down completely, as does his historical accuracy, when he claims that the political system of Canada is therefore *English* , as he is obviously unaware

closely related, with strands of one woven through the fabric of the other, yet in terms of the countries which share the common language of English—England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, America, Canada, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand—there is a world of difference between them all. On their own doorsteps, Québecois have failed to identify this reality.

This phenomenon is nothing new to the Scots, however, as it happens within their own country, where the population is subjected to British government officials issuing statements that begin with "Here in England...", while speaking of Scotland. It seems we are never done explaining to foreign visitors that "this is Scotland...", and even the highly educated, such as visiting scholars of the calibre of the late Richard Dorson, drop clangers on us more often that we would like (see footnote 16, above). Not surprisingly, the Scot has developed an understanding of minorities, of small nations and of threatened cultures. If only *les Québecois* would stop to listen, or to tune in to a wider set of wavelengths, they might perceive that the Scots have a certain empathy with the Québecois, resenting, as they do, what is often referred to as the "Englishing of Scotland".[29]

While the rise of Quebec nationalism today is often naively connected with General de Gaulle's famous cry in the early 1970s, *"Vive le Québec libre!"* it goes back much further than that. In its simplest terms, at the very heart of the issue is the argument that Quebec was destined to be French ever since explorer and cartographer Jacques Cartier claimed it for France in 1534.[30] More than half a century later, Samuel de Champlain, who spent his first winter there in 1603, was credited with founding Quebec

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of the significance of 1603 or 1707 to Britain, and the emergence of a parliamentary system that was in place long before the Confederation of Canada in 1867. See "Multiculturalism: The Anglo-Celtic View", *Multiculturalism as State Policy*, Conference Report, Proceedings, pp. 61-64.

29 Paul H. Scott discusses this issue in *In Bed With an Elephant.*

30 For a concise summary of Cartier's explorations, see *The Canadian Encyclopedia* , vol. I, p. 293.

in 1608.[31] Subsequent events, such as Champlain's surrender to the English in 1629, and the eventual fall of Quebec to General Wolfe who claimed it for Britain in 1759, have never been resolved. To the Québecois, Québec is French, always was, and always will be. While it is certainly true that French-Canadian culture has a long history in Quebec,[32] taken to its logical conclusion, however, the argument must immediately reclaim not only Quebec but every province of Canada for her native peoples, the Indians and Inuit. In northern Quebec alone, there are eleven thousand Cree Indians whose history goes back over five thousand years, but who now struggle under the authoritarian rule of the white man, the Quebec government, to keep their own language and culture alive in a province where French is the *only* official language. There has been a shift in emphasis in Québec nationalism today, with language at the heart of the issue, a point also made by Lee S. Rotherham when assessing the same situation through the views of the French paper, *l'Esprit*:[33] "The French language, a vehicle of culture, rallying point and basic mark of identity, becomes ... the new crux of attention."[34]

In the 1990s, almost all Peter Jort's friends are French, though few are from families of "original" settlers, but "mostly Montreal

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31 Champlain is known as the "father of New France". Op cit, p. 315-316. The brief historical summary given here is also based on Emily P. Weaver's *A Canadian History*, pp. 10-31 and 97-105.

32 Canadian folklorist, Edith Fowke, observes that in terms of folklore collections in Canada today, "second only to the wealth of native lore is that of French Canadians. Records exist from the time of the early settlements. Marc Lescarbot, a French lawyer, described the life and customs at Port Royal, and various accounts recall L'Ordre du Bon Temps, which Champlain founded in the winter of 1606-7... The *nationaliste* movement in Quebec aimed to preserve French-Canadian culture through literature... such as Philippe-Aubert de Gaspé's *Les anciens canadiens*, and J.C. Taché's *Forestiers et voyagurs*, both published in 1878." See *Canadian Folklore*, p. 10.

33 Lee S. Rotherham, "Québec's Loudhailers: A Conflict of Nationality in the Journal Esprit", *British Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 191-210.

34 Op cit, p. 200. In his article, "Québec's Loudhailers...", Lee S. Rotherham examines the media coverage of this major Quebec issue in France, where one gains the impression that the French themselves do not entirely relate to the case put forward by the Québecois. Rotherham concludes that the view put forward by *l'Esprit* is that "nationalism is a phenomenon for explanation rather than support". Op cit, p.208.

area."[35] He agrees that there is a crying need for better cultural understanding between the various components of the population if we ever hope to dispel some of the tension generated by Quebec nationalism. Ambitious as it may be, one of my foremost aims in documenting the folklore of the Hebridean Scots in Quebec is to make a contribution to the much-needed cause of better understanding.

Having spent many years grappling with terminology and concepts surrounding my discipline, I am thoroughly convinced of the importance of folklore research, methodology and documentation. As Lauri Honko emphasised in his report to the Folklore Fellows, January 1992:

> The task can[not] and should not be left to anthropologists [or other scholars] because they have no knowledge of those aspects of folklore on which we are strong, their attitudes toward material are different (no archives built on data) and at least until recently they have tended to become filters rather than openings to the reality of the other. *A modern folklore document permits the voice of the people to be heard exactly as it was uttered.*[36]

While I do not agree that scholars from other disciplines are completely unaware of the strengths of folklore scholarship, as will be shown in a moment, I would strongly endorse his perception of the "folklore document". As far as the Eastern Townships go, there have been many studies, in a range of disciplines, carried out over several generations. A variety of approaches can be identified, including the scholarly, the journalistic, and the hobby-based or amateur. Undoubtedly they

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35 Compared to a large number of the Scots population who, for years, have made many "return visits" to Scotland, I have encountered very few French Canadians in the area who have actually been to France. The only one in Milan I know of is a neighbour of Ruth Nicholson's who fulfilled a childhood longing by making a visit a few years ago. Ironically, she returned home to Quebec vowing never to set foot on France again, as long as she lived. Ruth reported "Poor Nicole! She hated it. They made fun of her French when she spoke, and when they spoke she could hardly understand them. A good thing she could speak English." It seems clear that Quebec *nationalisme* today has comparatively little to do with France, but everything to do with Quebec and Canada.

36 See Lauri Honko, op cit, p. 5. My square brackets, my emphasis.

all have something to contribute to the area, but, while this study will refer to several of them, it claims to be entirely different from all of them on this point, above all others: throughout the following pages, the voice of the people will be heard *exactly as it was uttered.*

The subject of "Oral/Aural History and Folklore: L'histoire orale et sonore et le folklore" was the central theme of the Second Annual Conference of the Canadian Oral History Association (Société Canadienne d'histoire orale), held in 1975. Participants represented the disciplines of Anthropology, Folklore, History, and Linguistics, and the banquet address was given by Canadian historian, Leslie Harris, Professor of History, vice-president of Memorial University of Newfoundland, and honoured guest of the conference.[37] A noted historian, Harris described his own path to discovering the value of the spoken word as evidence to be used in researching, recording and interpreting the past. After a rigorous formal training in his own discipline, he found that historians had "become overly committed to the notion that traces of the past, whether they be written documents , buildings and monuments, arts and crafts, or coins and tokens, are only acceptable as historical evidence if they represent within themselves an event that has become concrete in physical terms." As a product of a Newfoundland family steeped in generations of tradition, Harris began to question the boundaries of his chosen discipline:

> But is there a real difference between events concretized in stone, or bronze, or in parchment, vellum or paper and events concretized into attitudes, ideas, beliefs, or structures of personal knowledge that may be evoked in conversation? Not that I can see. For any historical trace, i.e., any "document" in the broadest sense of the word, is nothing more than an event that continues to be perceptible in the present and that like all other events forms the terminus of a sequence, which

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37 A complete transcript of Harris's speech is in *Folklore and Oral History*, Papers from the Second Annual Meeting of the Canadian Aural/Oral History Association at St. John's, Newfoundland, Oct. 3-8, 1975 edited by Neil V. Rosenberg. See "Without Strap Nor String", pp. 5-14.

> terminus becomes to the historian a sort of starting point for an inference.[38]

In order to illustrate some of the pitfalls of relying solely on his previously tested and tried methods of research, Harris invited his audience to consider a hypothetical case of the historian seeking evidence in a "typical Newfoundland Outport." For his imaginary model, invented from his lifelong knowledge of Newfoundland, he outlined a number of historical "sequences" which he would propose to study, carefully enumerating his main points, "each in its way vital to an appreciation of the history of that community, and as such... significant in the context of Newfoundland's history." Had the conference been set elsewhere, he might equally have chosen the Parish of Ness in Lewis, or the Eastern Townships in Quebec as an acceptable model, for any of these examples would have a wider significance in the appreciation of the nation. After this careful examination, however, Harris concludes:

> If we are to rely entirely on the written record, *we may well be sadly disappointed.* For possibly five of the seven sequences cited, there will almost certainly be no such record. *And yet, the evidence will exist.*[39]

As an historian, Harris demonstrates insight and sensitivity which is entirely lacking in the most up-to-date historical research of the Eastern Townships, that of historian J.I. Little. After two major books, *Nationalism, Capitalism, and Colonization in Nineteenth-Century Quebec: the Upper St Francis District* (published in 1989) and *Crofters and Habitants: Settler Society, Economy, and Culture in a Quebec Township, 1848-1881*, (published in 1991), and many articles about the Eastern Townships, Little has gained considerable credibility outwith the area he studies, particularly within the wider, indeed world-wide, academic community. It is the second of the books which drew the attention of the Scots of the Eastern Townships, as the pre-publication summary which spoke of Lewis crofters stirred their interest and raised their

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38 Harris, op cit, p. 7-8.

39 Op cit, pp. 9-10, my emphasis.

hopes. When I began fieldwork in 1990, the publication of *Crofters and Habitants* was awaited with eager anticipation.

When it came out, however, the descendants of the Lewis crofters, that is, the people within the boundaries of the community he studies, perceived themselves to be not so much the subjects of his research as the objects. And when they read of themselves in *Crofters and Habitants* they are sadly disappointed. They have no voices, and, apart from a few exceptions which will shortly be mentioned, are condemned to silence by Little, whose evidence in this trial is based on the fact that their forebears did not write down details, or even the barest outline, of what they wore, what they ate, how they worshipped, when they planted or harvested, who they helped, when they sang, why they laughed, how, why, when or even whether they celebrated any occasion of life or death, and, not the least important, how they felt or expressed emotion. Certainly he presents the evidence he found, such as one can consult in official records of merchants, churches, local government, but the reader is still left with the impression that, if it is not written down, then either it did not happen at all, or it happened according to the reconstructed impressions of a twentieth century writer who has not taken time to understand the culture he claims to study. Taking the first item of the above list as an example, "what did they wear?" Little reports that records kept by local merchants indicate a limited stock, "primarily of collars, straw hats, caps, and a few pairs of boots and shoes," but no women's dresses, skirts, men's shirts or trousers. He noted however, that there were large quantities of dyes including venetian red, cochineal, madder... and adds that sulphur, also listed, was "presumably" a yellow dye.[40] Little concludes that the "Scots clothing would not be entirely drab, despite their church's fulminations against the vanity of colours," in the final analysis telling his reader more about his own pre-conceived notions than he does about Hebridean women.[41] There

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40 I recorded elderly residents describing a tonic of sulphur and treacle which places sulphur in the medicine cabinet rather than the dye pot. I have found no reference whatsoever to the use of sulphur in dyeing in any of the texts which are cited in the bibliography or referenced in Chapter 5.

41 J.I. Little, *Crofters and Habitants*, pp. 167-168,

are innumerable examples of this kind of presumptuousness, a few of which will be pointed out later, while one other, concerning social interaction, will suffice here:

Little reports that he found two instances of neighbours helping one another, both French, and both written in the records of the parish priest, the Curé, who noted in 1867 that a group of neighbours got together to do the spring seeding for an injured farmer, and in 1873 to cut wood for a widow. From this evidence he comments that "public charity was managed informally through the curé" and since on "several occasions" it happened to commence on a Sunday, he concludes that "the strict sabbatarian Scots would not have followed the example of their Catholic neighbours." [42] While the French are, by implication, shamefully lacking in initiative, according to Little's evidence, charity itself appears nonexistent among the Scots settlers. Nothing could be further from the truth, as any member of either group will testify, given the chance.[43] Furthermore, as will be seen later, the act of helping a neighbour was not confined within members of one ethnic group; it depended entirely upon need, with the ancient Biblical question of "Who is thy neighbour?" well known to both groups.

Occasionally, Little draws conclusions from his "evidence" which put him in danger of earning a place in the "all horses are animals, therefore all animals are horses" school of philosophy. Notwithstanding, he defends his total reliance on written evidence and his chosen research methods, saying that "...in the absence of descriptive personal documents, any study that focuses on the family must depend largely on routinely generated historical materials which can be analysed statistically." Aside from disagreeing strongly with his attestation, the Scots settlers are worried that statistics do not necessarily tell the truth.[44]

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[42] J.I. Little, *op cit,* pp. 245-246.

[43] See tape transcripts from Russell MacIver, Christie MacArthur, Maryann Morrison, Christie MacKenzie, Muriel Mayhew, Ruth Nicholson, to name the main discussants.

[44] This point is raised in the Conclusions, where language-use is examined in the light of Census records.

A close examination of his text reveals that he occasionally makes use of transcriptions of approximately ten tape-recorded interviews, all excerpted from my recordings quoted in the above-mentioned National Museum project. [45] This is the closest he ever gets to giving his subjects a voice. Unfortunately, the effect of using information which has been gathered directly from local people is entirely lost on his readership who are not informed of the process. Not even in the endnotes does Little explain that these particular quotations he uses did not began life as written words, but were *spoken*. Furthermore, he has a tendency to fit the words into an already formulated theory, creating further occasions for "hurt feelings" and indignation on the part of the Scots, who suggest that he seems to have little real understanding of their lifestyle; his book tells them more about economic historians and census enumerators than the nature of the people in the study.

If the process of documenting the history and traditions of the Hebridean settlers in Quebec seems, at this point, to be a catalogue of despair, let me at once attempt to dispel that impression. Already mentioned is Duncan McLeod's excellent book, *The Milan Story*, and there have also been a number of local histories that include elements of folklore in form of descriptions of local customs, anecdotes about local people, personal reminiscences, such as *History: The Families of Sherman-MacIver with Stories of People and Places on the Eastern Townships*, by Annie Isabel Sherman (1971), *History of Compton County and Sketches of the Eastern Townships, District of St. Francis and Sherbrooke County*, by Leonard S. Channell, (1896, reprinted 1975), *Family Tree and Some Reminiscences of Early Days in Winslow and Whitton,*

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45 They are annotated in the endnotes as "quoted in Bennett-Knight, *Folkways*," followed by the page number. Though I have used only the name Bennett on all my fieldwork and research since 1976, these are, nevertheless, my tapes and transcriptions. While I have no personal need for acknowledgement, I believe my informants should be better acknowledged than they are.

Quebec, by the Rev. M. N. MacDonald (first edition not dated,[46] reprinted 1973), *Pioneers of the Eastern Townships: a Work Containing Official and Reliable Information Respecting the Formation of Settlements: with Incidents in their Early History and Details of Adventures, Perils, and Deliverances*, by Catherine Matilda Day (1863, reprinted 1973), and *History of the Eastern Townships* by the same author (1869), to mention the most popular. As far as literature is concerned there is also the ever-popular work of Eastern Townships poet, or bard, Angus Mackay, who published under the pseudonym of Oscar Dhu, and was best known for his epic poem "Donald Morrison, The Canadian Outlaw: A Tale of the Scottish Pioneers", published in his book of the same name in 1892, and reissued as an "enhanced centennial edition" in 1993 by MacKay's grand-nephew, Thomas A. McKay [sic].[47]

Also in recent years, genealogist Bill Lawson, who is based in the Isle of Harris, turned his research to the Eastern Townships and produced, via the Compton County Historical Museum Society, *A Register of Emigrant Families from the Western Isles of Scotland to the Eastern Townships of Quebec, Canada* (1988). This book has been enormously well received and has not only facilitated research for some families, it has also inspired others, and has become a talking point in almost every "Scotch"[48] household in the Eastern Townships.

Lawson decided to undertake the compilation of the *Register* when he discovered that

> almost every family in Lewis and Harris being researched had a branch in Canada... obviously records of the Island families would be incomplete without information on the destination of these emigrants... there was a place for a Register of all the Hebridean families who could be traced in the Eastern

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46 The Rev. M. N. MacDonald had a letter printed in the *Sherbrooke Daily Record* on Aug. 7, 1949, which would approximately date his interest in the area.

47 This is a facsimile edition, annotated, with biographical and bibliographical notes added.

48 Although "Scotch" tends not to be used in this context in Scotland, (Scottish would be the preferred usage), in the Eastern Townships and in many other parts of Canada and America the word "Scotch" is generally used.

> Townships, with details, where possible, of which village they left from, and at what date.[49]

Lawson's *Register* is also extremely useful in gaining an overall picture of the size of the influx of Hebrideans into the area under study. While emigration records from the mid-nineteenth century give numbers without names, Lawson has identified some 800 families which he groups into approximately 350 inter-related "groups", including 118 from Uig Parish, 99 from Barvas Parish, 52 from Stornoway Parish, 18 from Lochs Parish, seven from Harris, and five from the Island of Grimsay off the south-east coast of North Uist. For his *Register* he has devised a system of references, all pre-fixed with the letter Q, and where possible cross-references families related by marriage. It is not unusual to hear individuals give their Q number "according to Lawson" while discussing their family genealogy. There are certain drawbacks in the book, which Lawson acknowledges, such as inaccuracies or incomplete sections, though from my point of view the main one is that only the first generation of children born to emigrants is included. This means, of course, that for an "outsider" trying to reconstruct family genealogies, it is only of minimal use since most living individuals, even the most elderly, are second, third, or fourth generation. Nevertheless, as long as informants can give their own background, Lawson's book is very worthwhile.[50]

In the general context of the present research, however, lists contained in genealogies are only the beginning. The data presented in lists of names, dates, places, marriages or secondary migrations tell nothing of the lifestyle of the people whose records they represent. Without life-stories, language, personality traits such as wit and humour, and a range of cultural and individual characteristics, they will become faceless names, dry bones, which, with the passing of this last generation, will fade into oblivion.

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49 Bill Lawson, *A Register of Emigrant Families from the Western Isles of Scotland to the Eastern Townships of Quebec, Canada*, p. 1. [Hereafter cited as *Register*.]

50 This subject is raised later, and reference made to an on-going piece of research by a local resident, Evelyn Smith, which takes in subsequent generations and extends to approximately 8,000 families.

Referring to some of the characters he had known during his own three-score years and ten, Duncan McLeod remarked:

> They were real comical, some of these jokers... Well, as far as printing these stories about the characters who lived in this part of the country, it's going to show the people who read the books the type of individuals who lived here, the humour they had, and [so on].

The part played by Duncan McLeod and Muriel Mayhew in initiating this project has already been explained, as has my own conviction that a folklore methodology can, and will, make the sort of contribution to the Eastern Townships that has been called for. Eleventh hour though it be, I do not regard this folklore study as a salvage operation; it aims to be much more:

> The study of folklore is not the study of the past, though it necessarily includes it; rather it is as much the examination of the operations of tradition, from historical development of items, the stability and change they demonstrate, to matters of transmission—of items, of course, but especially of their meaning, of the values they purvey, and the varying degrees of artistic or operational competence which generate not only the items themselves but also their deep content and structure.[51]

In the context of this thesis, Thomas's and Widdowson's term *items* will cover emigration history, community and domestic lifestyle, social and religious structure, material culture and foodways. Discussions of these major categories are supported by examples of personal anecdote, customs and beliefs, poetry, song and traditional narrative. "The values [these items] purvey" to Quebec's Gaelic settlers and their descendants are reflected not only in the strength of transmission from generation to generation but also in the collective sense of urgency to have them documented "while there are still a few of us left". On my brief visit to the Eastern Townships of Quebec in October 1990, described above, I was left in no shadow of a doubt by the persuasive invitation, indeed plea, that was placed in front of me,

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51 Gerald Thomas and John D. W. Widdowson, *Studies in Newfoundland Folklore: Community and Process*, p.xxii.

that such an undertaking would be of enormous value to the people whose study it is.

Methodology

The choice of a "folklore methodology" for this research project does not point to one particular code of practice or method, but leaves many avenues open for exploration.[52] There are several tested and tried "tools of the trade", such as the tape recorder and fieldwork notebook, both fundamental to the folklorist's approach, but there are also many other considerations to take into account. I will now deal with the main issues that determine the plan of this project and the shape that it finally takes. Using the key words underlined in the following list as sub-titles for this section, I will now follow each of these stages:

(a) outline my approach to working in the Eastern Townships and describe my fieldwork set-up which facilitated research;

(b) describe my fieldwork methods , including use of equipment and organization of time;

(c) explain the research procedures using material from the fieldwork;

(d) discuss some of the problems of documentation and the resulting solutions, and explain how, in practical terms, the material is presented here;

(e) outline a key of standardised conventions adopted in order to transfer tape recordings to the printed thesis.

(a) Approach

In 1976, when I accepted a contract with the Canadian Centre for Folk Cultural Studies,[53] a sub-section of the National Museum

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52 There are a number of basic texts which have become standard guides to the field, notably, Kenneth S. Goldstein, *A Guide for Fieldworkers in Folklore*, and Edward D. Ives, *The Tape-Recorded Interview: A Manual for Field Workers in Folklore and Oral History.*

53 Hereafter cited as CCFCS.

of Man[54] in Ottawa, to "research the folkways and religion of the Quebec Hebrideans", my contract stipulated that I should spend at least six weeks conducting fieldwork research and write a report of my findings. Unlike most folklore archives, there was no provision for equipment, although my contract stated that all tapes, transcriptions, and relevant material should be deposited in the CCFCS archives. Taking advice from recording technicians in Ottawa, I purchased a Sony TC110B portable cassette recorder with extension microphone ("top of the range" in its day), which became my main piece of equipment throughout the entire project.[55]

In May 1976, after a short meeting with Head of the CCFCS in Ottawa, Gordon MacLennan, I acquired a map and drove to the Eastern Townships, aiming to find a place to live and a suitable base for fieldwork in the area. In the village of Milan I saw a country store, "McLeod Bros.", so I stopped, called in, explained who I was, why I was there, and asked about places to rent. By the afternoon, thanks to the helpfulness of the store-owner, Duncan McLeod, and to Muriel Mayhew who trusted my voice over the phone, I had moved in to "Aunt Annie's" house,[56] my new home and base for fieldwork. I was to remain in Milan till February 1977, long after my recording project was officially over.

Although I had found more than enough to record and document, my fieldwork extended well beyond the required six weeks, because I felt that it was not nearly long enough to attain my own independent aim: to get to know the people beyond the superficial level which "visitors" are allowed, and to find out what

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54 The Museum of Man is now called the Museum of Civilization.

55 Before beginning the second phase of recordings, I sought advice from Neil MacQueen, technician at the School of Scottish Studies. Although it has been the School's policy to use reel-to-reel tape-recorders (usually Uher) for field recordings, it was not practical for me to bring one to Canada. Neil MacQueen tested the Sony TC110B and found that its quality was comparable to the new, high quality machines.

56 The house will be described in Chapter 3, as it turned out to be an ideal example of "typical" features which characterise the Quebec Hebridean homes.

it was like to become part of a community that appeared to have so many different groups. These I identified to be:

- descendants of the Lewis and Harris settlers who came in the mid-to late-nineteenth century;
- descendants of the French settlers who came in the mid-to late-nineteenth century;
- recent French immigrant families from north of the area, in particular Compté Beauce and the Montreal area;
- recent Canadian and American immigrants, mostly young (mid twenties to forty) from outwith the area, in particular the Montreal and other urban areas, including American "draft dodgers", all of whom had become part of the 60s and 70s "back-to-the-land" movement.

As a Scot, a Gael, an immigrant to Canada, and a member of the younger age group (I was in my late twenties), I had an automatic link with the first and last group. It was, aside from any other learning and living experience, a first-hand lesson in "which group of 'folk' do you belong to?"[57] In the autumn of 1976, I was required to extend my associations to the other two groups, as I enrolled my five-year-old son in the nearest school, which was entirely French. As a parent, I was obliged to take my place among the other parents who were all, without exception, French. Gradually I gained a position in the community which I have no doubt stood me in good stead for my return visits from 1990 to 1993. The more recent visits not only revived my interest, but also allowed me to collect the research material which forms the core of this particular project. I am convinced, however, that had I made my very first visit in 1990, I could not possibly have gained anything more than an extremely superficial view of my subject. Furthermore, had I decided simply to review my research material from 1976 without returning for the second phase—a worthwhile project in itself, especially as there were many items I did not include and would like to have included, to say nothing of the insensitive editing I would have put to rights—

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57 In his article "Who Are the Folk?", Alan Dundes discusses the question of "belonging" to one or more groups, and the common factors which link members of the same group. See A.Dundes, *Interpreting Folklore*, pp. 1-19.

there is no doubt whatsoever that I would have missed some of the most important aspects of the study. As Lauri Honko reminds all folklorists:

> What we are studying is a process of ongoing identity negotiations with rather open sets of symbol transactions. We may have to go back to the field and check whether our result still holds and what our one-time-spotlight analysis actually revealed in the perspective of an ongoing process.[58]

Although I had planned to follow the "house-to-rent" route for my 1990s visits, this did not happen. Despite writing in advance to friends who assured me that my plan "was all taken care of", my forward planning did not result in the success I had imagined. Instead, out of kindness and hospitality, it was arranged on my behalf that I should stay with friends, former neighbours, who "wouldn't hear" of me "having to rent a house." Returning to Quebec was rather like visiting relatives who would be insulted if you stayed elsewhere. Despite initial fears, the revised plans worked splendidly; I was "left in peace" when I needed to be, and had on-site "informants" who shared my research interests and who had good home libraries, and I could experience a closer view of living in a "Scotch" household than I could if I were only visiting day by day. So it was, that in Milan I stayed with Ruth Nicolson and in Lennoxville with Muriel Mayhew.

(b) Fieldwork Methods

Methods of research employed during the two episodes were similar, though not identical. Retaining the Sony TC110B for recording, I added two more pieces of portable technology: a Macintosh Powerbook 140 word-processor, (smaller than an encyclopaedia) and a 35 mm. camera. It is more relevant to the the current project to describe recent fieldwork rather than previous research. Furthermore, recent fieldwork methods are based on the earlier experience, and since I was already familiar with most of the people I planned to interview, I could explain the

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58 Lauri Honko, "Studies on Tradition and Cultural Identity: An Introduction" in *Tradition and Cultural Identity*, p. 9, my emphasis.

main aims of my project, which eventually would be available to them as a book.[59]

As part of my procedure, and with the prior permission of informants, I planned to use the tape recorder, as far as possible, to record the actual words of interviewees. Also in keeping with standard folklore methods, I planned to keep a fieldwork notebook to record each day's activities and to include all of the following:

- notes on my own observations of situations that would otherwise not be recorded, such as informants' reactions of surprise, amusement, sadness, etc.
- notes on places visited, objects seen, such as house and barn types, landscape features;
- reminders of questions to ask;
- reminders of things that needed to be done, such as visits to arrange, telephone calls, and photographs to take;
- personal reminders of things I said I would do for any of my informants (a very important part of my interaction, and, being perpetually busy, I was fearful of forgetting these small, but meaningful gestures, such as responding to "do you think you could find out for me..." etc.);
- and, where appropriate or possible, the words spoken by informants when it was not possible to record.

As an extension of the fieldwork notebook, I planned to keep a detailed list of photos taken, with date, location, and details of each photo. To do this accurately, I travelled with the Powerbook and keyed in each one with a number as I went along, working from the battery whenever necessary. Using this method I could be sure of cataloguing them accurately when they were developed.

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[59] While I am well aware that the thesis and the book will be entirely different, it is important to informants to know that the material entrusted to the researcher will be returned to them and preserved for them. It will also become clear from the following chapters that I recorded much more material than can be used in the thesis.

From the beginning, I realized that keeping strictly to my writing routine would work best if I wrote directly on the word processor. Apart from eliminating my fear of not being able to read hastily written notes in poor handwriting, another advantage would be that I could transfer material without having to type it all again. Based on past experience, I also planned to set a particular time of day for writing fieldwork notes, so that no matter what else was on the agenda, this would not be neglected. [The fieldwork notebook is included as Appendix C]

The Powerbook 140 proved ideal for all the writing, including tape transcriptions and the final thesis. I adopted a routine of starting at 6.30 a.m. to write fieldwork notes for the previous day. (Granted, they were already eight to twelve hours old by that time, but I decided against writing them at night since fatigue never does them justice.) In Milan, where I spent most of my time, I was usually finishing writing just as Ruth appeared to begin her day. Although I had not included it in my original plans, we then had what amounted to a daily conference over breakfast with Ruth and Duncan McLeod who drove from Scotstown each day to join us. Duncan would bring the news and ask questions which often brought up subjects from the night before. Thus the current research project was never out of sight. The renewed interest usually prompted me to return to the Powerbook after breakfast, and, at times looking over my shoulder, Duncan would remind me of what was said. Out of these breakfast sessions grew a fieldwork "method" which was entirely new to me—perhaps it is new to most fieldworkers: that of using the computer to record while the informant speaks.[60] Had I not discovered by chance that many of the older people were actually interested and fascinated to see new technology at work, I might not have tried it. I began, therefore, to use the word-processor where the tape-recorder was not already set up.

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60 I have not come across this in any of the many readings on fieldwork methods and techniques, even the post-computer ones such as Robert A. Georges and Michael Owen Jones, *People Studying People: The Human Element in Fieldwork*, nor have I come across it in any panel discussions on the subject, such those held as part of the American Folklore Society or at the British Folk Studies Forum.

There were two kinds of occasions when it was especially invaluable to be able to do this: the first was when Ruth had visitors who called when I was working. What might have been an interruption worked in my favour, as they generally asked what I was doing, thus opened up conversations that allowed me to ask questions relevant to my topic. Then, without having to distract everyone by setting up another machine, I could operate the technique that I tried out on Duncan—I would ask my question, with hands on keyboard, and as the reply was being spoken I could type it in verbatim, while still holding eye-contact with the speaker, as one would in a normal conversation. (For example, Isabell Beattie's information on the Megantic Outlaw was obtained in this manner, and afterwards she went over it and checked that I had her words correctly. See Appendix C, August 12.) The second type of situation was with informants whose recordings were difficult to transcribe. For example, one man who had had a stroke, and whose speech had been affected, was much easier to follow when I could see lip movement. Although I had recorded him, there were parts of the tape that were impossible to transcribe; with him, the computer method worked extremely well, as I could sit beside him and let him see his own words as they appeared on the screen. He was fascinated, and would correct me if I got it wrong. At the same time, he appeared to derive satisfaction from being involved in this process.[61] Information from these sessions was lodged in my fieldwork notes in italic type-face, prefaced by a short introduction. When transferred into the text at a later stage, such passages are prefixed by an asterisk.

(c) Research procedures

All the tapes which I recorded in 1976 were indexed, most were fully transcribed, and both tapes and transcriptions were

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61 In Dec. 1993 I had a letter from Edward D. Ives intimating that he was revising his book, *The Tape Recorded Interview*, as he had seen many changes in fieldwork methods since he published it in 1974. Since he plans to include new technology and methods I have described to him my recent innovations which are aided by personal computer.

deposited in the Centre for Folk Culture Studies at the Museum of Man at the National Museum. [See Appendix B] Accession numbers, which are prefixed by BEK, have been retained for the thesis, so that the reader can instantly identify material from 1976 fieldwork. The same indexing and transcription procedure was followed for tapes recorded between 1990 and 1993, and while I kept all the original C90- cassettes, I made 7-inch reel-to-reel copies to deposit in the School of Scottish Studies Archives. Because of the difference in length between cassettes and reels, approximately two reels correspond to one cassette. At the time of writing, I do not have a record of the exact point at which the tapes are cut, although I do have accession numbers for all the tapes in the School of Scottish Studies Archives (cited, for example, SA/1990/#, where # is equivalent to the actual tape number for the year). In the thesis I have simply cited the date of the actual recording, and have included a list of original cassettes with equivalent SA numbers in Appendix D. At the end of the entire project, and after submission of the thesis, I will lodge all tape transcripts in the School of Scottish Studies Archives which will automatically take care of this slight problem. (To date, I am unable to do this, as I am continually checking originals for accuracy.)

Thus far, no mention has been made of the library side of research, which, as will be seen from the text and annotation of it, has been an important part of this project. I have relied heavily upon three libraries: The Special Collections of the library at Bishop's University, Lennoxville, Quebec, The Widener Library at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusets, and the Main Library at the University of Edinburgh. In July 1990, thanks to a letter of introduction from Prof. Charles Dunn, and to his generosity in arranging for me to use his office, I spent a week at Harvard University consulting the substantial collection on Quebec. On every visit to Quebec I spent time in the Special Collections room at Bishop's, as this is the most specialized collection dealing with the area in question. In view of this, and also in keeping with my aim of contributing to a better understanding of the area, copies of all my cassette recordings,

transcriptions and a selection of photographs will be deposited in the Special Collections Room at the end of this project. In Edinburgh, the main library at the university has also proved useful for many of the texts I have used. Many of the books cited here were also in the private collections of main informants.[62]

(d) Problems of documentation

Having assembled the basic components of my project, there were many decisions to be made regarding "what to do with what I got". With more than enough material for one thesis, the first decision, therefore, concerned one of definition. Bearing in mind that one of my aims was *to contribute to present and future understanding of this part of Quebec*, (not just to record the past, as my 1976 project did), I chose to deal with the issue of *identity*, so that present and future observers of the area might have a clearer understanding of its deeper meaning. (The entire question of *identity* is dealt with in Chapter 2 where I explain its significance in the context of my work in the Eastern Townships.)

The question of how to present the material is influenced by several issues. I have never been in any doubt that my chosen method would be based upon the premise that all the recorded information—or "texts" as they become when transferred to the page— would, as far as possible, be presented *in context.*[63] To begin with, the widest possible context had to be considered: I would construct an account of the history of the Lewis and Harris emigrations to Quebec in order to establish a firm grounding for the rest of the research. A portrayal of the lifestyle in the New World would then be better understood, and since that was a social situation in which various traditions were transmitted over

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62 My profuse notes from all library consultations remain decipherable to me, but are not included in any appendix.

63 In the history of the discipline there have been regular pleas for the presentation of text within *context*, pioneered by Malinowski in the 1920s (Clyde Kluckhohn,"Bronislaw Malinowski, 1884-1942", *Journal of American Folklore*,, Vol 56, Jul.-Sept., 1943, No. 221, p. 214) and taken up again by Alan Dundes and others in the 1960s. For a fuller discussion see A. Dundes, "Texture, Text, and Context", *Southern Folklore Quarterly*, 28 (1964), pp. 251-265.

several generations, it would also be the context for recording the "texts" presented here. As far as possible, I would try to reflect the atmosphere in which the information was collected: the community, the home, the context of the house-visit or *céilidh*, and the interaction that occurred between all the participants.[64]

For the outsider, or researcher, who "moves in" expressly to observe and record community life and traditions, certain recurring problems exist. There is the question of "past and present", which immediately arises when the first anecdote is told to the company who all share common background knowledge.[65] Since the researcher does not belong to the community, (s)he will have no *shared knowledge* on which to base many of the descriptions, experiences or analyses (s)he wishes to document. Topics of discussion at a local level are generally placed in what Mihály Hoppàl defines as the "cognitive context"; that is, the network of knowledge or "common memory" essential to the local understanding of any "performed text".[66] This manifests itself as a basic, unspoken assumption of the group, who are referred to by Hoppàl (and others) as "performer and participants of the event", where the *event*, in the context of this project, is the *céilidh* or house-visit. Hoppàl observes that:

> ...for the communication to be successful, and for the speaker and listener to understand one another, they must have a common memory; in other words, they must have some set of coincidental information in connection with the past.[67]

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64 Presenting "text without context" does not, as far as I can judge, entirely do justice to the storyteller, his or her community, or to the collector. For example, in *Nothing But Stars: Leaves from the Immigrant Saga,* a National Museum of Man publication edited by Magnus Einarsson, there are eight stories from my 1976 collection in Quebec. Although it fits in with the popular trend in multi-culturalism that Canada embraced in the 1970s, the book does not truly reflect any of the cultures it represents.

65 One of the most frequently used phrases is "but that was a good many years ago..." which then puts the researcher in the position of making comparisons to what (s)he sees in the present. In his introduction to *Whalsay*, Anthony P. Cohen says that he has avoided the temptation of dealing with the "past and present" issue in his discussion. I do not, however, regard this as something to be avoided; on the contrary, it is very much an issue that I am compelled to face.

66 Mihály Hoppál, "Genre and Context in Narrative Event: Approach to Verbal Semiotics" , in *Genre, Structure and Reproduction in Oral Literature*, pp. 107-128.

67 Mihály Hoppál, op cit, p. 117.

In the context of a *céilidh* in the Eastern Townships, the importance of this statement can be clearly demonstrated in the often-discussed case of Donald Morrison, the so-called "Megantic Outlaw". Despite the fact that I have recorded several stories and discussions about him [see Appendix E and Fieldwork notebook, Aug. 5 and 12, 1992], I have never recorded, or even heard, the *complete* story in oral tradition. Local people assume it to be *common knowledge,* and usually superfluous to the focus of the issue chosen for discussion at any one time. Granted, I have never interrupted the discussion to ask any of the participants to tell me the whole story, right from the beginning, so strong was the feeling that "anyone who knows *anything* about the Eastern Townships will already know it."[68] Thus, the outsider who seeks to have a better understanding of such impromptu discussions and to place them in a more meaningful context, may help achieve this (a) by further "out of context" questioning, e.g. such as the morning sessions with Duncan McLeod in which I asked him to back-track recorded conversations and explain some of the details to me and (b) by extensive reading about the area, its history, and its people in order to build up the complex "cognitive context" that is clearly necessary.

Throughout the thesis the actual words of informants are quoted as accurately as possible to ensure that the voices of informants are heard above that of the researcher. The question of accuracy in verbatim transcription is one that has been before me throughout the project, as I have long been aware of the drawbacks of printed text as a reflection of the spoken word.[69] In

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68 There are a number of books which attempt to reconstruct the entire story, each from a different point of view. See bibliographic citations for Henry G. Kidd, Clarke Wallace, and Bernard Epps. For Donald Morrison's genealogy see Bill Lawson, *Register,* p. 24.

69 Limitation of space does not allow me to include any analysis of the lively debate that has gone on among scholars on these issues. To begin with, I have been most influenced by Herbert Halpert's inspiring training in fieldwork methods and analysis during my years as a post-graduate student at Memorial University of Newfoundland (1969-75). In the intervening years I have noted the ground-breaking work of Dell Hymes, especially his "Breakthrough into Performance" in *Folklore Performance and Communication*, and have considered (though not always agreed with)

any conversation, the interaction of speakers is not merely a "set of words" or "dialogue" which can then be represented as a printed "text". It is much more than that, covering the entire dynamics of the situation: eye-contact (or lack of it), a range of facial expressions, gestures, hesitations, emphasis, animation, laughter, emotion, and so on. They are all part of what folklorists have come to label as "performance" and must all be considered by the individual researcher, who must decide to what extent these dynamics affect the work. I have established a fairly simple method, set out in section (e), which combines previously tested ideas (from Ives, Halpert, and my own experience of methodology), and have endeavoured to follow it throughout. Occasionally, for the sake of clarity, I have re-ordered some of the transcriptions, though at no time is the material re-ordered without indication to the reader. While most of the voices that are heard come across as "solo" at the moment of delivery, there are several instances where I have decided to quote entire conversations, because I have felt that the *event* and the dynamics of the conversations are every bit as important as the information I sought to elicit. This too is intimated wherever it occurs.

(e) Key of standardised conventions used

- The main text is in New York fount, 12 point, one-and-a half spaced, flush left, ragged right.

- Quotations from books are New York fount, 10 point, indented, single spaced, and justified.

- Quotations from tape recordings are in New York fount, 10 point, indented left, ragged right.

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the proposed methods of Elizabeth C. Fine in *The Folklore Text: From Performance to Print.* Other major influences are Richard Bauman (especially his introduction to *Towards a New Perspective in Folklore*) and Dennis Tedlock's "On the Translation of Style in Oral Narrative" in Bauman's book. The range of material has been most ably summed up in J. Jeoffrey Patton's unpublished M. Phil. thesis, "Writing Ourselves into our Texts: Dialogics in Folklore and Ethnography" The University of Sheffield, 1991.

• Words that are emphasised in speech are in italics.

e.g.

"No, not *that* one."

•Words that are emphasised in a markedly loud tone are in bold italics.

e.g.

"The next thing we heard was ***Bang!***

• Where the meaning of a quotation is unclear because contextual information has been supplied elsewhere in the conversation, I have added words within square brackets.

e.g.

"And it [the harvest] had to be in by the end of September."

• Where I have asked a question to elicit further information, and have decided against reproducing the entire conversation, I have included the key words from my question within square brackets with dotted underline.

e.g.

> We went to the mill every fall [by horse and sleigh], yes, and sometimes we'd even have to stay overnight.

• An indication of contextual information required to clarify the tape transcription is based upon the system of bracketed and underlined text devised by Edward D. (Sandy) Ives.

e.g.

> I will attempt to explain all extraneous noises [clock strikes], account for all breaks [tape turned off for five minutes while he goes for the photograph album], identify all photos, [looking at number 12], and add any information that will make the transcription more meaningful [As he said this, his wife looked in from the kitchen door behind his chair, and was shaking her head repeatedly, to show that she disagreed with her husband's remark.][70]

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70 This example is based on Ives's constructed example, op cit p. 92.

• Words quoted from my fieldwork notebook are prefixed by an asterisk.

e.g.

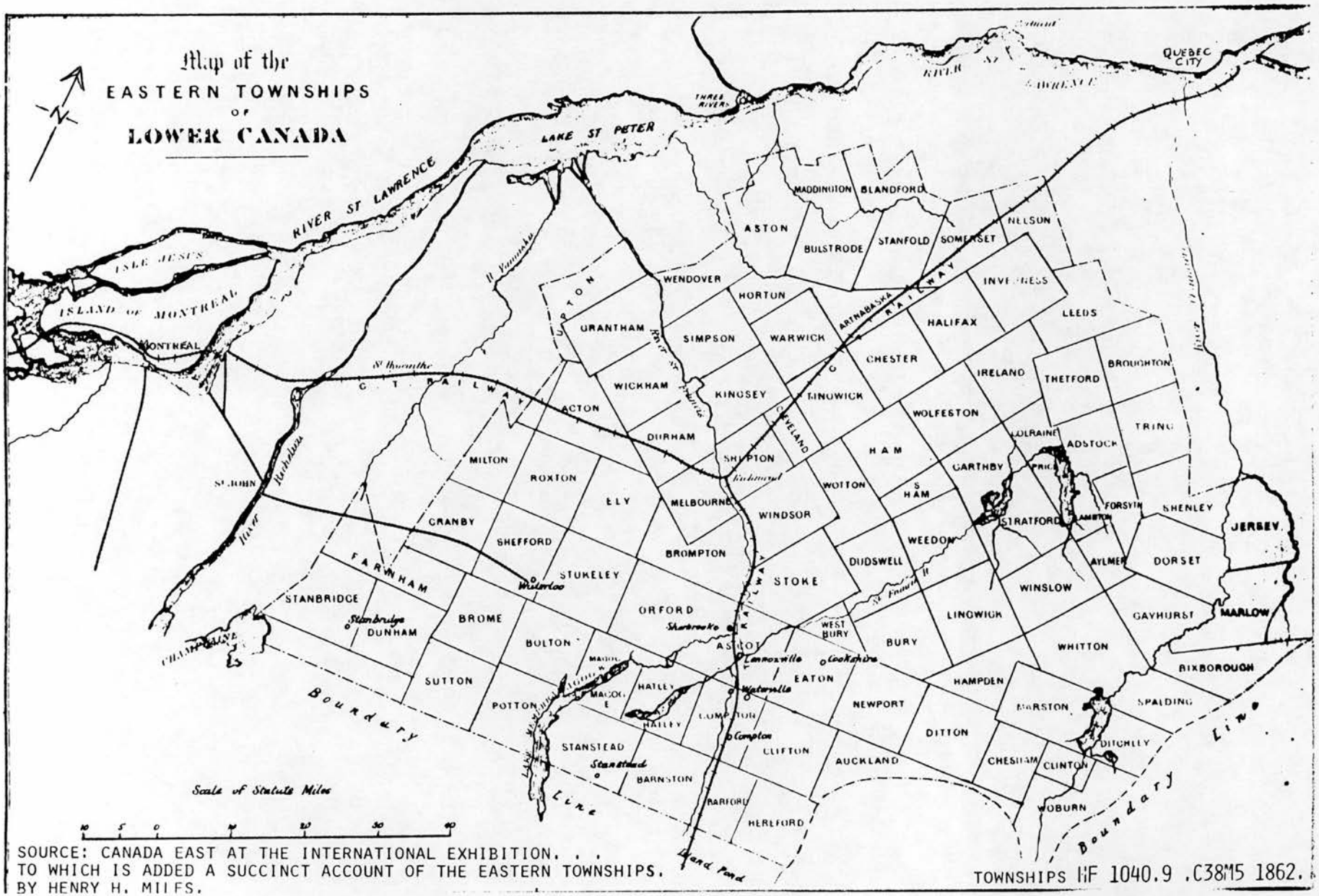
> *We used to go to Stornoway to the communions every June and October, and we'd stay overnight with relatives or friends.

• To indicate that a word or phrase has not been understood within a tape transcription, square brackets and question-marks are used.

e.g.

He used to say that every time [--?] went there, he'd come home with ?Oliver [?all of us? spoken while tapping his pipe, so words are difficult to make out.]

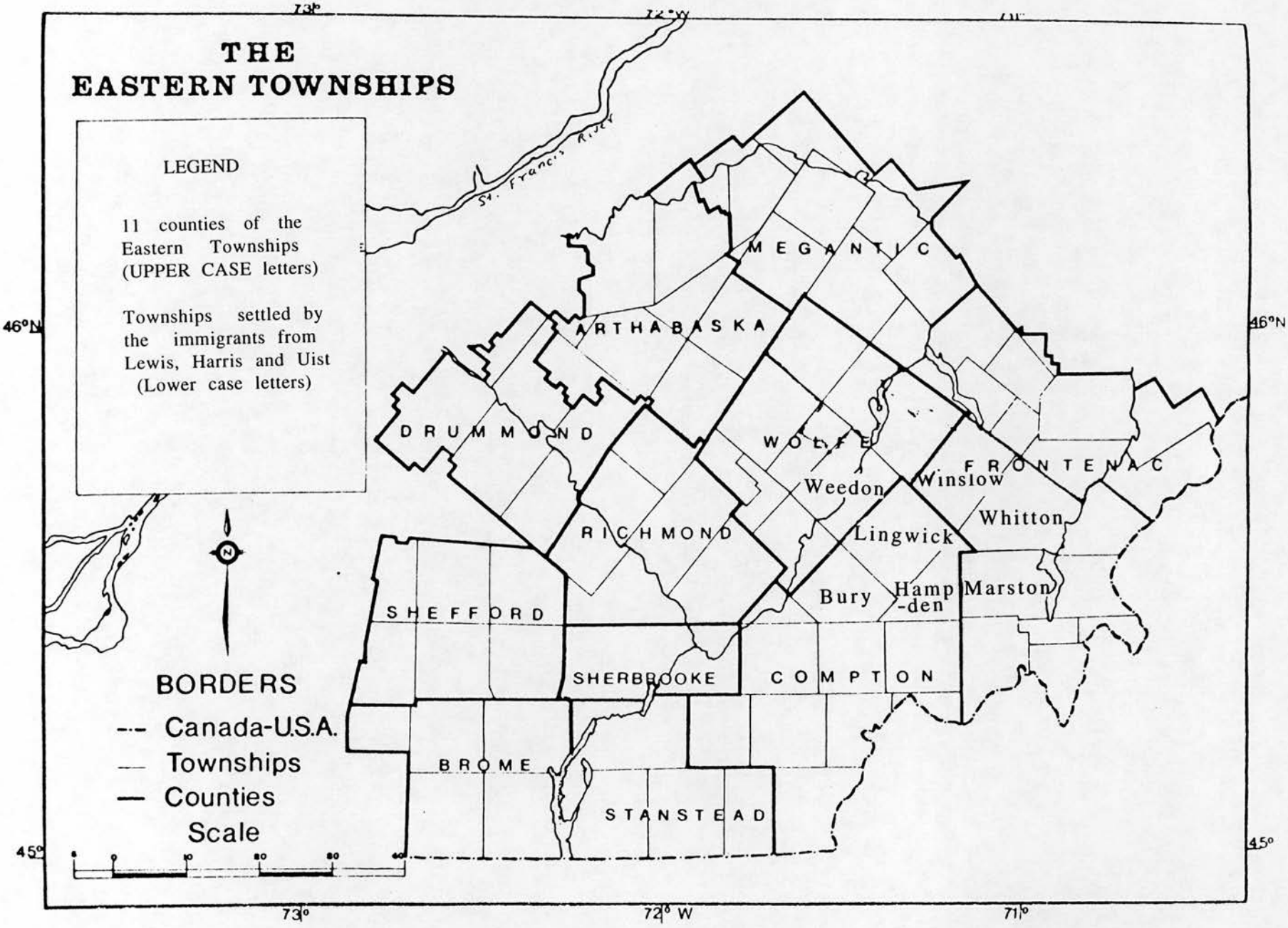
MAP 1



SOURCE: CANADA EAST AT THE INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION. . . TO WHICH IS ADDED A SUCCINCT ACCOUNT OF THE EASTERN TOWNSHIPS. BY HENRY H. MILES.

TOWNSHIPS HF 1040.9 .C38M5 1862.

MAP 2


THE
EASTERN TOWNSHIPS
LEGEND
11 counties of the Eastern Townships (UPPER CASE letters)
Townships settled by the immigrants from Lewis, Harris and Uist (Lower case letters)
St. Francis River
MEGANTIC
ARTHABASKA
DRUMMOND
WOLFE
FRONTENAC
Weedon
Winslow
Whitton
RICHMOND
Lingwick
Bury
Hamp-den
Marston
SHEFFORD
SHERBROOKE
COMPTON
BROME
STANSTEAD
BORDERS
Canada-U.S.A.
Townships
Counties
Scale
46°N
45°
73°
72° W
71°

MAP 3



LAND GRANTS

An example of a survey map dividing the land into "lots".

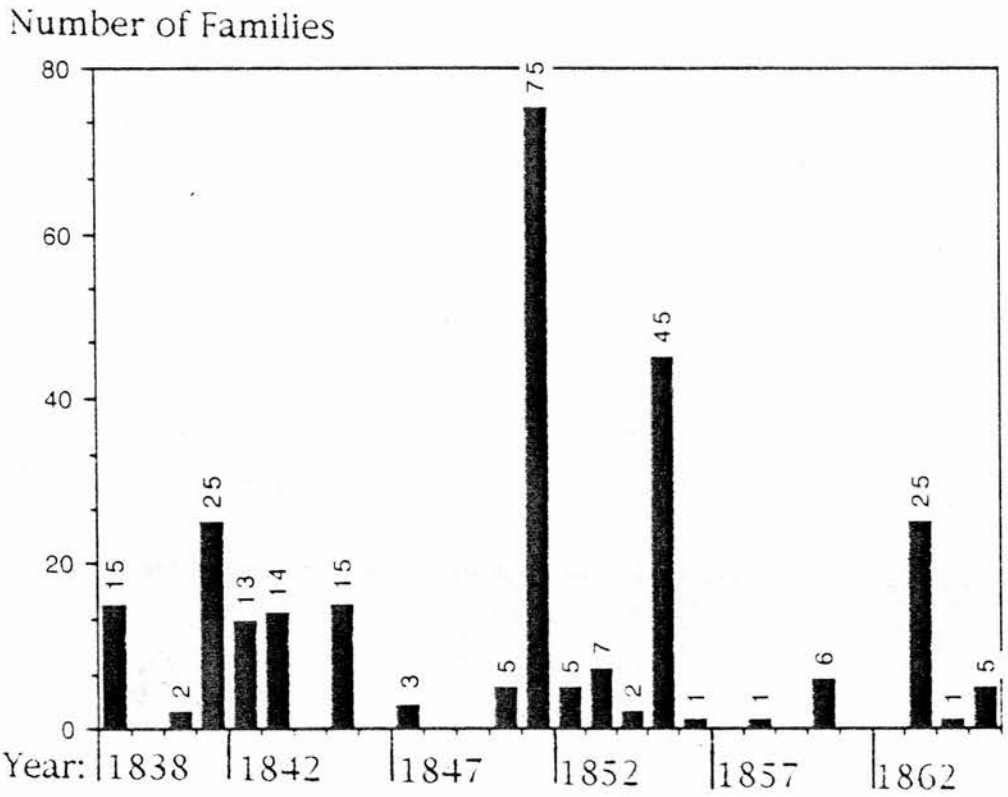
The Township of Marston adjoins Whitton to the north. The village of Marsboro grew up at the north end of Lake Megantic.
This map shows the lots that had been taken up in 1862.

Stornoway
Springhill
(Nantes)
Ness
Megantic
Lake Megantic
Marsboro
Milan
Dell
Gould
Galson
Red Mountain
Tolsta
Scotstown
NEW HAMPSHIRE
VERMONT
Sherbrooke
Lennoxville

MAP 4

TABLE 1

Number of Hebridean immigrant families to the Eastern Townships, by year.



CHAPTER I

CANADA, LAND OF OPPORTUNITY

A Background to Emigration

The landing of the famous ship, the *Hector,* at Pictou, Nova Scotia, in 1773, has almost become symbolic of Highland emigration to Canada.[1] The idea of emigration as a solution to difficult living conditions was not new to Scotland, however, as the first Scots sailed for New York in 1732. The years in between were, to say the very least, unsettled, with turmoil and political upheaval[2] and a complexity of issues which eventually led to mass emigration throughout the Highlands.[3] The vast majority of these early emigrants were destined to settle in North Carolina, but following the American War of Independence in 1776, immigration of Scottish Highlanders into the South was actively discouraged, and Canada became the destination of heavily laden emigrant ships.

The year of the *Hector's* sailing was significant to the Isle of Lewis, for it was in 1773 that the Island felt the effects of the first major wave of emigration, when over eight hundred people are reported to have set sail for the New World.[4] Many, in those days,

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[1] For a well referenced summary of earlier Highland emigration, see D. Campbell and R.A. MacLean, *Beyond the Atlantic Roar: A Study of the Nova Scotia Scots,* pp. 7—36. See also G. Patterson's *History of Pictou County* which has two versions of the passenger list compiled from memory in old age by two emigrants on the "Hector" (pp. 450—456). Although Donald MacKay's book, *Scotland Farewell: The People of the Hector* gives a journalist's perspective, his text is, nevertheless, based on a range of historical research, including early Nova Scotian histories such as Patterson's (above). MacKay's book, which has a popular readership, contributes to the collective memory of this episode in emigration history, assuring Nova Scotians that the "Hector" will retain its importance in Canadian history. Its strength is in the descriptions of the ship, the conditions on board, and the reported episodes of the voyage.

[2] Bibliographic notes and references on this topic appear in Appendix A as they are too lengthy to fit into one footnote.

[3] See also the writing of J.M. Bumsted, G. Donaldson, J. Hunter, J. Prebble, and others.

[4] See the *Edinburgh Courant,* July, 1773, which reports 830 people left the Isle of Lewis.

chose to emigrate, as they saw it as an opportunity to rid themselves of the increasingly tyrannical effects of the Acts of Sederunt which, after 1746, sanctioned the landowner's rights over his property, regardless of the effect on the livelihood of his tenants. Some emigrants, especially among the young men, simply regarded it as an opportunity for adventure. In view of the harsh evictions that were to follow, no doubt most of them were soundly convinced they had made the right choice. In his article, "Highland Emigration", W.C.A. Ross suggests that "broadly speaking, in the eighteenth century people *go* from the Highlands, in the nineteenth, *they are sent.*"[5] As far as emigration to Quebec is concerned, this was the case for the majority of emigrants, as will be seen shortly.

By the turn of the nineteenth century there was steady traffic of emigrant ships between Scotland and Canada. The River Clyde saw most of the departures, with Glasgow and Greenock the most popular ports of embarkation, though three ships are recorded to have sailed from the town of Stornoway to Nova Scotia in 1803.[6] Many others followed the same route from a number of west coast ports, and for over thirty years people from the Outer Hebrides joined the passenger lists of emigrant ships, mostly to Cape Breton. During this period, however, many departed without any choice in the matter, having fallen victim to the ever-increasing policy of eviction adopted by, or on behalf of, many of the landowners.[7]

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5 W.C.A. Ross, "Highland Emigration", *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, May 1934, p. 155. [My emphasis.]

6 For a concise, well-referenced summary of emigration to Nova Scotia, see Charles W. Dunn, *Highland Settler: A Portrait of the Scottish Gael in Nova Scotia,* pp. 11—23, [hereafter cited *Highland Settler.*] See also G. Donaldson, *The Scots Overseas*, pp. 57—80, which includes a discussion of ports of embarkation on the west coast of Scotland, especially the Clyde, and the Inner and Outer Hebrides.

7 In *The Making of the Crofting Community,* James Hunter discusses the complex (and at times confusing) issues surrounding emigration, including the effects of the propaganda of land agents, the range of attitudes and policies adopted by landowners, and the response of the tacksmen and tenants. There is no "typical" case for the Highlands and Islands, as each area has its own sets of conditions and results. Hunter's thoroughly referenced account, pp. 15—88, clarifies many of the causes and effects of poverty, land shortage, landlordism, and emigration.

From the mid-1700s to the early 1820s the kelp industry had been a very lucrative source of income to landowners, albeit at the expense of subjecting tenants to miserable, unhealthy conditions created by long hours of inhaling the noxious smoke from the burning, to say nothing of the effects of enduring perpetually cold and wet feet. Its rapid decline in the late 1820s, and eventual collapse in 1836, put pressure on island landowners to find alternative sources of income, and as a result, they began to clear land to make way for large, profitable sheep farms. Tenants were under perpetual threat of eviction, and lived a precarious existence. Not even faithful payment of rent could guarantee immunity against notoriously unscrupulous tacksmen, many of whom are reported to have employed cruel and aggressive measures to gain their own greedy ends.[8] Reports from that era contained in the Seaforth Muniments, and other accounts, give a stark and savage picture of the situation that faced the poor tenants.[9] If the records of the evictions make gruelling reading (and they certainly do), then reality must have been unbearably hard.

Poverty and deprivation already characterised life when the year 1837 brought famine to add to the hardships. Again, emigration offered a solution, and the next year, 1838, sixteen families sailed for Quebec. Over seventy people formed this group of emigrants which began a Quebec-Hebrides link that was to endure for over a century and a half, and still remains to this day.[10] On the Hebridean side, the vast majority were from the Isle of Lewis,[11] with a very small number from Harris and fewer

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8 See Donald MacDonald, *Lewis: A History of the Island,* pp. 159—164 for individual examples of such tacksmen in Lewis, and a summary of the dreadful results of their actions.

9 Hunter, op cit.

10 See Bill Lawson, *Register*, p. iv, with supporting names of families listed throughout the book; also, see my graph of emigration based on Lawson's lists.

11 For the purpose of this thesis, most of the historical references refer to Lewis, with a few general ones taking in Harris and Uist. I have not included any specific references to Harris and Uist as very few people emigrated from these islands. Some were, however, related to Lewis families who had gone out ahead of them.

still from North Uist; on the Quebec side they all settled in the area known as the Eastern Townships.

By far the most significant episode in the history of Hebridean emigration to Quebec is the Potato Famine of 1845-50. The disease and resulting failure of the potato crop in 1845, accompanied by impoverished grain and fishing harvests, heralded a five year struggle, the results of which affected the destiny of a considerable number of Lewis people. Once again, emigration to the New World became the solution—the *only* choice for those who wanted to survive. Commenting upon the effects of the famine throughout the Highlands, Michael Lynch states "It was, by any measure, Clearance on a huge scale ... carried through with a mixture of brutality and conspicuous philanthropy."[12]

It is at this point that the story begins for most Eastern Townshippers of Outer Hebridean descent, although it goes without saying that the history of their ancestral home goes back much further than 1850, and is chequered by disasters that could arguably claim more lasting effects than the Potato Famine. Nevertheless, it is a fact of human nature that one is affected forever by trauma that directly hits the family, and the poverty and starvation of a great-grandparent is, for the Quebec-Gaels, the most memorable factor to have affected their fate.

Donald MacDonald's *Lewis: A History of the Island* deals with the pre-history, the Norse invasions, the shift to Scottish sovereignty with its accompanying complexities, and every stage of development to the present day. Among Eastern-Townshippers of Lewis descent, the book is looked upon as a handbook to the "Old Country", as it is the best known of many books about the Outer Hebrides.[13] The author had a personal link with Quebec,

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12 M. Lynch, *Scotland: A New History*, p. 372 (See Appendix A).

13 Although particular attention is given to the work cited, this is by no means the only one deserving of mention. It is, rather, the one book which, so far as I can ascertain, serves to remind descendants of the way of life they had already heard about from "the old people"; as such, it may influence the views about Lewis history which are held by people of the Eastern Townships. There are a number of noteworthy books which are relevant to the history and traditions of the Isles of Lewis and Harris. For a

and is warmly remembered by those who met him and corresponded with him. Christie MacKenzie who was born in 1898 and was a contemporary of his, remarked upon what she considered to be an outstanding contrast between the educational opportunities afforded to those who emigrated and those who remained in Lewis, citing Donald MacDonald's family as her example. She was proud that her kinsman should be so learned and eloquent, " agus sgrìobh e *History of Scotland"* [and he wrote the History of Scotland.][14] His *Lewis: A History of the Island*, has become the key reference book to keep in touch with the way of life in the twentieth century, and as such, the real interest begins on page fifty, with the sixth chapter, "The People".[15]

Long forgotten are the trials, tribulations and even tortures of the early landlords, the MacLeods and the MacKenzies. These names have managed to shed any disgrace or outrage that could be attributed to them from the fourteenth to mid-eighteenth centuries. In modern times they are honourable names and proudly borne on both sides of the Atlantic.[16] A certain ambivalence creeps in, however, with the name of Sir James

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general discussion of Scotland's Highland Clearances and the relevance to Canada see Alexander MacKenzie, *The History of the Highland Clearances*, J.M. Bumsted, *The People's Clearance: Highland Emigration to British North America 1770—1815*, and also *The Scots in Canada*. For an insight into land distribution, crofting and related matters, see James Hunter, *The Making of the Crofting Community*, and, for an overview of historical and traditional aspects of the Long Island, see Dr Donald MacDonald of Gisla, *Tales and Traditions of the Lews,* and D. MacKinlay, *The Island of Lewis and its Fishermen Crofters.* Earlier works, such as the writing of M. Martin and J.L. Buchanan are cited in the bibliography.

14 From a conversation recorded in Sherbrooke, Nov. 13, 1990. Christie, whose family originated in Tolsta, Isle of Lewis, and her husband John, b. 1892, became acquainted with Donald MacDonald when he was researching his second book, *The Tolsta Townships*, published in 1984. He wrote several letters to their family.

15 Book "owners" (as opposed to "readers") of Donald MacDonald's *Lewis: A History of the Island* are fairly numerous, and most acknowledge "dipping into it" from time to time. I have not, however, come across any who paid such close attention to his early history section as to wish to comment upon it. Muriel Mayhew, for example, frequently re-reads sections of her copy, but apart from an initial reading when it was first published, she is not drawn to the early history as it has no real bearing on the Lewis she knows or the people she has met there.

16 For a detailed genealogy of the MacLeods, see MacDonald of Gisla, *Tales and Traditions of the Lews,* fold-out insert.

Matheson (though by comparison to his predecessors, the MacLeod and MacKenzie landlords, he was a paragon of virtue), for it was during his ownership that the Potato Famine occurred, the turning point in history, as far as Quebec is concerned. There is an occasional acknowledgement of the fact that he was reported to have helped some of the emigrants pay for the passage from Scotland to Quebec, but beyond that, relatively little seems to be known about him in the Eastern Townships.

Because of his signficance in the history and traditions of this area, it seems appropriate to offer the following brief summary of James Matheson's involvement with the Isle of Lewis.[17] Born and brought up in Sutherland, James Matheson entered the world of trade and commerce as a young man in London. He travelled to India and then to China as a tea and opium merchant where he amassed a considerable fortune. In 1842 Matheson returned to Scotland an extremely wealthy man, and in 1844 he bought the Isle of Lewis for the sum of £190,000 from the widow of the Earl of Seaforth, the last of the MacKenzie landlords.

It seems clear that Matheson aimed to raise the standard of living on the island, which, at that time, was very low. Aside from the lack of material goods, the population at that time was also struggling to emerge from the tension generated by the Disruption of the Church of Scotland.[18] Donald MacDonald suggests that Matheson "could not have bought Lewis at a more unfortunate time".[19] His plans for improvements (many, it must be noted, were ultimately for his own comfort rather than that of his tenants) were scarcely under way when the potato crop failed and the crofting population had little or no means of sustaining their families. The plight was common to the entire area of the Highlands and Islands, and, in order to alleviate the situation, the

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17 See also D. MacDonald, *Lewis,* Dr D. MacDonald, *Tales and Traditions of the Lews,* and J. Hunter, op cit for further details.

18 In 1843 a group of ministers left the established church to form the Free Church of Scotland. Inevitably many families and communities were divided over the issues that led to the Disruption, mainly on doctrinal grounds, though also on class lines, and thus an element of bitterness and unrest lingered for many years.

19 D. MacDonald, op.cit., p. 39.

Highland Relief Board was established. For three years Matheson's factor avoided applying to the Board for aid, as he set up an intensive programme of road-making and land improving, which gave paid employment, and therefore a means of support, to the tenants. He set up schemes which offered credit on seed potatoes to be paid as a supplement of rent (after harvest) or in cash, or (the only option open during these years of failed crops) to be paid for in labour.

After three years under this scheme, the factor retired and was replaced by a much stricter individual, J. Munro MacKenzie, who changed the system of labour and relief. Lewis became included in the allocation of oatmeal by the Highland Relief Board, but the food did not by any means reach the population as "direct aid". Under the supervision of MacKenzie it was issued in exchange for labour, thus affording Matheson's estate further improvements paid for by the hunger of crofting families. Ironically, it was for his efforts during the years of the famine that a baronetcy was conferred upon James Matheson.

By 1851 funding for the Highland Relief Board had dried up and the Government was asked to step in to help avoid catastrophe by organizing emigration to the Colonies. With a policy for the settlement of Upper Canada already in place, the Canadian Government were developing a similar policy to extend to Lower Canada with its capital in Quebec City [Map 1]. In preparation for this new wave of immigrants, government pamphlets were printed and distributed in Europe to encourage emigration. For example, in 1835 A.C. Buchanan, the chief Government emigration agent in Quebec, issued a pamphlet that included the following information:

> There is nothing more important to emigrants, on arrival at Quebec, than correct information on the leading points connected with their future pursuits. Many have suffered much for want of caution, and by listening to opinions of interested, designing characters, who frequently offer their advice unsolicited... on all occasions when you stand in need of advice, apply only to the Government agents, who will give every information required, *gratis*.
>
> Emigrants are informed that they may remain on board ship 48 hours after arrival...*They should avoid drinking the*

> *water of the river St. Lawrence, which has a strong tendency to produce bowel complaints....*
>
> Emigrants who wish to settle in Lower Canada or to obtain employment, are informed that many desirable situations are to be met with. Wild lands may be obtained by purchase from the Commissioners of Crown Lands in various townships in the province, and the British American Land Company are making extensive preparations for selling lands and farms in the Eastern Townships to emigrants.[20]

This area of Lower Canada referred to as 'The Eastern Townships' borders the America states of Vermont and New Hampshire.[21] Prominent among land speculators was The British American Land Company, founded in 1833—34 by a group of Montreal and London businessmen, and modelled after the Canada Company[22] which had promoted the settlement of Upper Canada. From the British Government the Company purchased

> nearly 1,000,000 acres in the counties of Shefford, Stanstead, and Sherbrooke...in the Eastern Townships of Lower Canada, [comprising] a tract of country, lying inland, on the south side of the St. Lawrence, between 45° and 46 1/2° north latitude, and 71° and 73° west longitude. This tract containing

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20 Excerpted from Appendix B of C.P. Traill, *Backwoods*, pp. 273—274 (1989 edition). This appendix contains copies of her collection of papers and pamphlets relating to emigration, a copy of the American Passengers Act, and excerpts of the prospectus of the Canada Company and athe British American Land Company. Pamphlets such as Buchanan's, above, give evidence of the nature of the useful advice that emigrants were given. There is nothing to suggest that the advice was, nevertheless, limited, and quite inadequate for the range of conditions that they met. During this stage of settlement came a large number of English settlers who were able to afford land under the terms offered. To this day, they are acknowledged by their own descendants and the settlers of neighbouring areas to have gained by far the best farmland to be had in the Eastern Townships. See also Belden & Co, *Illustrated Atlas of the Eastern Townships and South Western Quebec, 1881* The subject of land settlement is discussed later.

21 A more detailed description of the Townships will be given in Chapter 3.

22 O. D. Skelton's book,*The Life and Times of Sir Alexander Galt*, gives the complete history of the Land Companies mentioned here. The Canada Company, founded in 1824 by John Galt, the Scottish novelist, had agents in Edinburgh, Glasgow and other towns in England and Ireland [see G. Donaldson, *The Scots Overseas,* p. 94] . Their business was to advertise Canada to prospective emigrants. [op cit, p. 93.] The Company was incorporated by royal charter and Act of Parliament in 1826; the lands for sale bordered Lake Huron and Lake Ontario, with the largest tract of land being the township of Guelph. Extracts from the Company's prospectus are printed in Catherine Parr Traill, *The Backwoods of Canada, being letters from the Wife of an Emigrant Officer, illustrative of the Domestic Economy of British America*, Appendix B. [Hereafter cited C.P.Traill, *Backwoods.*] John Galt then became involved with the British American Land Company, as did his son, Alexander.

> between five and six million acres, is divided into eight counties, and these are again sub-divided into about one hundred townships.[23]

There is an obvious difference between the size of the "tract of country" purchased by the British American Land Co. and the acreage of the entire area. This is because much of the land was already settled and townships established in the late eighteenth century; descriptions of these early settlements, along with ink drawings of very impressive houses, farms, schools, churches, mills, factories etc. were published in Belden's *Illustrated Atlas of the Eastern Townships and South Western Quebec, 1881*, and give an invaluable picture of the range of conditions which existed in the Eastern Townships from the 1790s to the 1880s. The issue of land ownership appears to have been extremely complex, however, and it is quite clear from Belden's comments that land speculation was rife. His use of phrases such as "fell into the hands of the B.A. Land Co." indicate that not all parties were comfortable with the highly competitive and lucrative practices that were the order of the day.[24]

Depending on the location of the land, the British American Land Company set down terms for its disposal. Acting as emigration agents, their policy was to bring in British immigrants, and their prospectus highlighted advantages which were designed to appeal to would-be settlers:

> By agreement between His Majesty's Government and the Company, upwards of £50,000 of the purchase-money paid by the latter are to be expended by them in public works and improvements, such as high roads, bridges, canals, school-houses, market-houses, churches, and parsonage-houses. This is an extremely important arrangement, and must prove highly beneficial to settlers...
>
> The expenditure of the large sum above mentioned, will offer at the same time an opportunity of employment to honest and industrious labourers, immediately on arrival...[25]

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23 From the Prospectus of the British American Land Company which was among the collected papers of Catherine Parr Traill and is printed in *Backwoods*, Appendix B, 1989 edn., pp. 287—289.

24 Belden & Co, *Illustrated Atlas of the Eastern Townships and South Western Quebec, 1881*, pp. 12—14.

25 Prospectus, see above reference.

With a modest down-payment and an instalment system to pay off the balance, it was an attractive proposition, provided emigrants had the capital for the down-payment. Naturally, the more fertile land west of the town of Sherbrooke was quickly taken up by those who could afford it, and prosperous farms were established mainly by English-speaking settlers.[26]

Land speculation, by its very definition, is accompanied by certain risks, and by 1839 the British American Land Company was £72,000 in debt, having been unable to meet their own repayments for the St. Francis Tract in the Eastern Townships. Lengthy negotiations between the Company and the Government resulted in 1841 in an agreement that 500,000 acres should be given back to the Crown in order to cancel the outstanding debt. On the surface, this may seem harsh, but in fact the British American Land Company, who were to continue in their capacity as emigration agents, managed to keep the finest land, while the rougher, stony land reverted to the Crown.[27] That same year the Canadian Government passed the Land Act of 1841 which allowed free grants of fifty acres to be made to any British male subject. (Later, the land grant was increased to one hundred acres.) According to the the British Government *Papers Relative to Emigration to Canada*, thirty-four families left Stornoway in 1841.[28]

Government publicity for emigration was efficiently in place when the Highland Relief Board could no longer provide food to save the Highlands and Islands from the devastating effects of the

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26 According to Belden, English, Irish and "Scotch" came, and since he also states that they were all English-speaking, his statement confirms the tradition that a proportion of Scottish settlers were from the Lowlands. Op. cit. p. 13. All the Hebridean settlers were Gaelic-speakers, a large proportion of which could not speak any English. The word "Scotch" later came to denote any settler of Scottish background, Highland or Lowland, and since it is still the popular term used in the Eastern Townships and in many parts of Canada, it will also be used in this thesis where appropriate.

27 The complexities of the dealings of the British American Land Company are dealt with by O.D. Skelton, op cit, and Helen I. Cowan, *British Emigration to British North America.*

28 See British Government *Papers Relative to Emigration to Canada,* Vol. 31, 1843, p. 19.

famine. Encouraged by the assurance that land grants from the Canadian Government would be freely available to emigrants, and no doubt affected by the Poor Law of 1844 which held the landlord responsible for the welfare of the poor, Sir James Matheson was strongly in favour of the government's renewed measures to organize emigration. In order to facilitate the move, he offered considerable assistance to his tenants: he would pay the ocean passage of destitute families to Upper or Lower Canada, Ontario or Quebec; he would forfeit arrears of rent; he would buy their remaining livestock at a fair price; and would supply clothing to those in need. Between 1851 and 1855, over 1,770[29] people are reported to have emigrated under Matheson's scheme, which, to the onlooker, may seem exceedingly benevolent.[30] The crofters were not, in fact, entirely free to choose their fate, as Matheson's factor, Munro MacKenzie had a considerable say in the matter. T. M. Devine describes the situation in Lewis as producing "the most remarkable instance of opposition" to Highland emigration. On the basis of MacKenzie's manuscript diary of 1851, Devine comments:

> Matheson's chamberlain, John Munro MacKenzie, surveyed the population in 1851 and selected c. 2,500 for emigration assistance. Only seventeen percent of the total agreed to accept. The fact, however, that over 2,200 were eventually 'emigrated' by the estate demonstrates how landlord strategy and coercion could sufficiently change attitudes even among those who were resolutely opposed to going.31

In order to "change their attitudes", MacKenzie served eviction notices on those who were two years in arrears of rent and who were unwilling to emigrate. It was also intimated to these same

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29 MacDonald states 1,772 as the number, Hunter 1,771, T.M. Devine reports 2,200, and the number quoted by Helen I. Cowan in *British Emigration to British North America*, p. 213 is also at variance with these. Further research might produce a more accurate figure, but since the focus of my dissertation is the oral traditions of the descendants of these emigrants, I have given an approximation.

30 Genealogist Bill Lawson has researched the genealogy of a considerable number of emigrants from Lewis, and as a result of this work has compiled *A Register of Emigrant Families from the Western Isles of Scotland to the Eastern Townships of Quebec, Canada,* published by the Compton County Historical Museum Society, Eaton Corner, Quebec, 1988.

31 T.M. Devine, "Landlordism and Highland Emigration" in *Scottish Emigration and Scottish Scoiety*, p. 96.

individuals that they would be prohibited from cutting peat and need not expect any further assistance in the form of oatmeal or seed if they insisted on remaining in Lewis.[32] Needless to say, emigration became their "choice".

In his book *The Making of the Crofting Community,* James Hunter writes that Matheson's "treatment of these emigrants was, by the standards of the time, decidedly generous—a model to other proprietors according to immigration officials in Quebec."[33] Generosity, however, is only relevant to means. The sum involved in transporting almost eighteen hundred people across the Atlantic is recorded as £11,855, less than £7 per passenger.[34] During the previous five years, Matheson had already spent nearly three times that amount on meal and seed for the crofters (though we cannot ignore the fact that he received £33,000 worth of labour in return); he had also spent over £25,000 on roads and bridges (albeit leading to larger farms, shooting lodges and manses), and vast sums on other "public" ventures.[35] On a more personal level, his expenditure included £100,495 for the building of the castle, and £19,289 for shooting lodges at Morsgail and Uig.[36] Considering the facts and figures, the benevolent Sir James (a hard-headed businessman even in a famine) scarcely appears to have suffered significant financial hardship during these desperate years which took such a toll on his tenant crofters.

The plight of the emigrant, an all too familiar scene in European history, was their lot. They left behind their beloved homeland, family, friends and a life of poverty, and brought with them a few meagre possessions (usually the contents of one wooden trunk) and a great deal of hope and faith. There are no traditions of joy

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32 See T.M. Devine, *The Great Highland Famine: Hunger, Emigration and the Scottish Highlands in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 213—18.

33 Hunter, op. cit., p. 80.

34 The sum is quoted by Dr D. MacDonald, *Tales and Traditions of the Lews*, p. 277, and the calculation is mine, based on the approximate number of emigrants, mentioned above.

35 Drawing from various sources, Donald MacDonald enumerates (without comment) the items of expenditure, leaving his reader in no doubt that an exposure of the facts and figures speaks for itself. I have selected only a few of the items as an example of the dealings of the proprietor of Lewis.

36 Dr D. MacDonald, *Tales and Traditions of the Lews*, pp. 277—278.

attached to the emigrants' farewell; nothing but the sorrow of parting is echoed throughout their stories and songs. Yet there is generally a note of optimism to be heard from those whose descendants survived the experience.[37] While it would have been impossible for the first emigrants to imagine what was ahead of them—hardships that tested the utmost limits of endurance, and ultimately a freedom of which they had only dreamed—many of their descendants rationalize the trauma by concluding that most of the emigrants set out believing it was for the best. For them, the struggle and suppression of Hebridean crofting and landlordism was over; for those who remained it was to continue until well into the twentieth century, and some would affirm that it continues to this day.

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37 There is little physical evidence in Canada today to serve as a reminder of emigration, other than small exhibitions in various museums where objects such as an emigrant's trunk, or examples of meagre possessions are displayed. Twentieth century progress has obliterated the sort of scenes that would have met the emigrants who landed in Canada, and one can only imagine sights such as quarantine ships with yellow flags to signal disease. In my quest to find out more about the experience of emigrants from Scotland to America, I visited the Museum of Emigration at Ellis Island, New York, which is the actual site of arrival for the greatest number of European immigrants in the nineteenth and early to mid twentieth century. The buildings have been restored to their previous standards, and in the exhibitions, Scotland is equally represented among the many other nations. While most European immigrants aimed to settle in America, it was also a route into Canada, as the port could remain open all year round, while the St. Lawrence seaway is frozen for four or five months of the winter. Government agents advised emigrants "who prefer going into Canada by way of New York" that it would involve additional expense and was subject to American customs rules, "but to those who can afford it, New York is the most comfortable and expeditious way of proceeding..." Today, visitors who step ashore to follow the paths of the newly-landed immigrant are immediately faced with an enormous heap of wooden and cane trunks and an acute feeling of confusion. Immediately one sympathizes with the immigrant's fear of the unknown. Despite the fact that Ellis Island offered considerably more comfortable accommodation and conditions than many of the other ports of disembarkation (where, for example, some actually died of cold as they had to camp), one cannot but be struck by the starkness of the conditions, the tension of bureaucracy, and the sadness of the plight.

From the Outer Hebrides to Quebec

Chì duine acrach fad uaithe.
[A hungry person can see a good distance.]

In their collective memories, most families have retained only brief references to the actual emigration. There are, so far as I can ascertain, very few written accounts, and those that do exist give only sparse details, such as a letter that survives from a MacIver family who emigrated from Lewis in 1841. In her book, *History of the Families of Sherman-MacIver*, Isobel A. Sherman refers to the letter which records that the Atlantic passage took seventy days.

Most Quebeckers of Hebridean descent know approximately when their forebears emigrated, as the following selection of excerpts shows.[38] They are largely concerned with events that occurred after their forebears settled. Typical of family recollections about this era were those of Christie MacArthur who was born in Milan, Quebec, in 1888. Her father, Alexander MacDonald, was one of the first settlers:

> My father was born in Scotland... on the Isle of Lewis... Well, my father, I think he was fifteen years [old] when he came to Canada ...he was herding cattle, that's about all I heard. [laughs] Sheep or cattle, I don't know....[Did he ever say what made him leave?] I couldn't say, but they all came about that same time—but I think they were encouraged to leave...Well, they were kind of forced to leave... [BEK 14:A][39]

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38 Virtually all the elderly people, and many of the younger generation, know the year that their people came to Canada. With ever-increasing interest in genealogy, and especially since the work of Bill Lawson and the availability of his book (op cit), questions of genealogy arise in everyday conversation. In addition to Lawson's professional research, a local woman, Evelyn [Mrs Raymond] Smith (née MacLeod) has developed a sophisticated genealogy database using a system of software from the Mormon genealogy research programme at Utah. On a "powerbook" computer, she is using the Utah programme to record approximately 8,000 names of Hebridean extraction. With current research on a scale such as this, it is not surprising that so many elderly people have a revival of interest in emigration. Although I have recorded many references to the topic, this thesis only reproduces a typical selection of accounts, several of which were recorded in 1976 before the Lawson and Smith research started. A list of my recordings is contained in Appendix B.

39 I recorded Christie MacArthur in Megantic Hospital in 1976.

Although the 1850s are recalled by most families as the time of greatest emigration from Lewis to Quebec, some memories go back to the two previous decades. Duncan McLeod, whose grandfather built the first store in Milan in 1877, lived there all his life until he recently sold up and moved to Scotstown. A retired merchant, he is known throughout the district as a keen historian, a keeper of countless newspaper articles, features, clippings and books relevant to the history of the area. Based on his vast print collection and his own local knowlege, he published *The Milan Story* in 1977.[40] His family history in Quebec goes back to the early 1840s:

> Well, I had a great-grandfather, Alasdair, who came from— he came here from Ness but I believe he was a native of Back. And Murdo, another great-[grandfather], another MacLeod, not the same family, I don't think , he was a native of Back too. Angus MacDonald, my grandmother's father, was from Uig and his father, William, was known as the builder of roads, [he was called "Uilleam a' rathad"] and he built the road, and it's still visible. It runs from Miavaig ferry to the Uigan church. I have a picture of the road[41]....My grandfather, [Duncan L. McLeod, son of Alistair], was the youngest in the family, and he was born in Canada in 1848.[42]

When asked if he had "any idea what made the people come out", Duncan replied:

> No, I don't. It was just to better their chance for their families. There were other people coming out and they decided [to do the same]—my great-grandfather Alasdair MacLeod] was a dominie... a teacher. Anyway he was known as a dominie. [He came in] 1841...There was Alistair, Malcolm, and Christina[43] in the family, and my [great- great-] grandfather, Murdo, came out with Alistair, and I believe Malcolm too, and he died that fall... And there's a Port Alistair

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40 The book was privately printed in Sherbrooke and was quickly sold out. The author is currently updating the manuscript and intends to produce a revised edition.

41 Donald MacDonald states that roadmaking started in Lewis in 1791, and though the work involved was not generally popular, it was a means of earning extra cash. See *Lewis,* p. 53.

42 This paragraph does not coincide exactly with the tape as Duncan corrected it, July 1994.

43 Christina came out twenty-five years later, in 1866; she had been married to John MacKenzie [Iain an Taillear] in Lewis, then after she was widowed she emigrated with two of her children. Noted from Duncan, July 1994.

> on the coast of Lewis, up in the Ness area which is named after him.[44]

In 1990, at the age of ninety-three, Christie MacKenzie (née Murray) gave the following account in Gaelic, typical of many of her generation:

> Thàinig iad à *Scotland*....rugadh m'athair ann a' Tolsta a Thuath....cha robh e ach ceithir là a dh'aois. Thàinig m'athair ann a' *eighteen fifty-two*, agus thàinig mo mhàthair ann a' *eighteen fifty-six*..
>
> *[They came from Scotland...My father, he was born in North Tolsta [Isle of Lewis] ...he was only four days old [when he left]. My father came over in 1852 and my mother in 1856.]* [Nov. 13, 1990]

Christie's husband, John, aged ninety-nine continued:

> My father and my uncle Allan came, it took them about three weeks until they landed in Quebec City. That's a hundred miles from here, and they drove from there, I don't know if it was ox teams in those days or if it was horses. And they settled down in the woods, cleared a piece of land, built a home....They had to clear the land and cut down the woods and build a log cabin. Get the lumber sawed...1852, somewhere around there.

The considerably shorter time taken for the MacKenzies' voyage compared with the MacIvers in 1841 suggests that they were among the first to take advantage of steamships which were introduced in the 1850s. According to the National Museum of Navigation, the average passage from Liverpool to Quebec by sail was forty-two days, compared to twelve days by steamship.[45] Conditions were seldom "average" and stormy weather often prolonged the time at sea.

The legendary "babies were even born on the boat" story is confirmed by this account, recorded in 1991, from Alex MacIver, Christie and Johnny MacKenzie's son-in-law:

> My grandfather was born on the way across—my grandfather, in 1851. And there was three born here afterwards... *"Duine gun dùthaich"*, they used to say—a man without a country. [Sept. 24, 1991]

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44 Recorded Sept. 27, 1991; transcription re-arranged here.

45 National Maritime Museum, *The Great Migration: Crossing the Atlantic Under Sail*, p. 8.

Duncan McLeod also recalled that his "grandfather's youngest sister, Christie, was born on board ship on the St. Lawrence River, as the ship approached Quebec in 1841. It was said of her that she was born on neither land nor sea, but on the St. Lawrence River."[46]

Muriel Mayhew (née MacDonald) of Milan who retains links with Lewis via her mother who emigrated fifty-six years later, also had family who emigrated in the mid-nineteenth century:

> My Canadian grandmother—that grandmother was three months old when they came over—Annie MacDonald, her people were from Bernera....[47] They came over in 1851...her mother was a MacLeod and her father was Neil MacDonald from Bernera—Breaclete, Bernera....The boat that they came over on, the "Barlow", was three months—what did I say? Three months coming across, so she must have been six months [old] when she got here. She was only three months old when they left [Lewis].[48] The people were very sad at leaving, and they used to write poems, songs, I don't know where these songs are today or where they could be found, on leaving Lewis.[49]

The reluctance to leave is a theme that survives to this day, even when descendants acknowledge that the emigration of their forebears was eventually for the best. Muriel Mayhew re-told a story she had heard from her family which indicates that there was a keen awareness that emigration was a common fate in

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46 While Duncan was reading the manuscript proofs he was reminded of this by Alex's story; July 1994,

47 This part was recorded in Nov. 1990. The remainder of this quotation is from a recording I made in 1976

48 Part of the three months was taken up by the journey from their home in Lewis to the next village where they had to wait for the recovery of one of the intending emigrants who was ill. Then there was the journey to Liverpool, the main port from which the trans-Atlantic vessel sailed. (Duncan McLeod tells of a Lewis family, Grahams, who sailed from Belfast.)

49 A considerable number of songs of emigration and nostalgia for Lewis are still popular in Scotland today. Some of the songs composed in Quebec will be discussed later; several songs survive in printed form, in Duncan McLeod's collection. See also, M. Bennett, "Gaelic Song in Eastern Canada: Twentieth Century Reflections", in *Canadian Folklore canadien*, 1992, pp. 21—34, and "Gaelic Songs in Quebec" in the proceedings of the conference of the Association of Scottish Literary Studies at Aberdeen, Aug. 26 - 29, 1993, forthcoming 1994.

many parts of the Highlands and Islands where circumstances were even worse than they had been in Lewis:

> I remember—this isn't Lewis, but my cousin Mina MacDonald, she was a MacLeod because my great-grandmother was a MacLeod, told me that the boats would come to take them—this is the time of the Highland Clearances, I suppose, and the people would be forced to go on and they'd be crying, and felt so bad, and this old man was put in the boat, and there was a man who ferried them onto the large boat. And at that time tobacco was at a premium and very few people even saw it. And this man had a pipe and he asked this man, this guard on the boat who made sure that none of them escaped, if he would light his pipe for him; well, he was on the windward side and he couldn't light his pipe. So that was a request not to be turned down by anyone, the only chance to puff at a pipe in those days. So he went to the other side of the boat, and when he went to the other side of the boat to light the pipe, this ferryman smuggled the old man off the boat and hid him at the bottom of the boat and took him off, and when the guard came back of course he didn't realize anybody was missing... And he didn't have to leave. [50]

The fact that the old man outwitted the establishment is also a vital part of the story, as it reflects a "native wit" and intelligence that people like to connect with their Scottish ancestors. It is not only in oral tradition that reports of Scottish characteristics survive. Many of the emigration agents stated that the hardiness of the Hebrideans was a desirable feature, fitting them for the hardships endured by steerage passengers on rough Atlantic crossings.[51]

The carrying of emigrants westwards was only one side of the shipping industry, as most of the ships were also involved in the timber trade.[52] As such, they were designed to suit both purposes, although after 1835 all ships had to comply with the "American Passengers' Act".[53] In many of them all the passengers

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50 The style of this narrative prose may seem stilted, giving the reader no sense of fluency and in will be discussed in a later chapter on Narrative.

51 See C.W. Dunn, *Highland Settler,* pp.19—23.

52 There was an embargo on timber from the Baltic countries, thus Canada was all the more important.

53 Standards were set by which ship owners required to provide for the comfort, safety and health of passengers. Specifications of minimum height between decks and bunks, minimum requirements of food and water. and maximum numbers of passengers allowed on board were defined by the "American Passengers' Act". All ships were required to display an

went steerage, with accommodation set up on temporary decks that could be easily dismantled and removed when the passengers disembarked. The ships were then loaded with timber in Quebec[54] and a profitable return journey made.[55] Some of the ship-owners are reported to have regarded a cargo of emigrants as suitable ballast for the outward journey of the timber trade.

Despite the "improved" conditions brought about by the Act, there was no control over the hazards of the weather, or over the effects of disease once it managed to take hold in the crowded conditions below deck. The reality of the hardships suffered on board some of the emigrant ships was brought home to Catherine Parr Traill when, after a relatively luxurious voyage and a beautiful sail up the St. Lawrence, they landed in Quebec. She wrote home:

> *August 12.*—We reached Gros Isle [sic] yesterday evening. It is a beautiful, rocky island, covered with groves of beech, birch, ash and fir-trees. There are several vessels lying at anchor close to the shore; one bears the melancholy symbol of disease, the yellow flag; she is a passenger-ship, and has the small-pox and measles among her crew. When any infectious complaint appears on board, the yellow flag is hoisted, and the invalids conveyed to the cholera-hospital or wooden building that has been erected... It is surrounded with palisadoes [sic] and a guard of soldiers.[56]

Although, in her excitement at landing, she becomes slightly irritated by the annoyance of quarantine, and the indignation of procedures such as fumigation of bedding, she writes later of the effects of disease, such as the distressing cases of cholera where in one family eleven people died, and in another, seventeen, leaving only a seven-year-old child to face life in the New World.[57] Surviving the Atlantic crossing may have been a great relief after

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abstract for passengers to inspect, a copy of which is in Appendix B, III, of C.P. Traill's *Backwoods*, pp. 280—282 (1989 edn).

54 Usually referred to as "lumber" in Canada.

55 The Photo Archives of Canada has a photographic record of late nineteenth century ships loading timber at Quebec. One striking example is published by the National Maritime Museum in *The Great Migration: Crossing the Atlantic Under Sail*, p. 12.

56 C.P. Traill, op cit, Letter II, p. 19.

57 Op cit, p. 36. She notes the fact that nuns took him in, as benevolent societies, such as those connected with the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches were set up to care for orphans.

a difficult voyage, but the threat of disease still remained even after quarantine and a journey on land to the final destination.[58] In 1968, former director of the National Maritime Museum in London, Basil Greenhill, wrote that "the statistics speak for themselves... In 1847, the worst year, 17,500, 16 per cent of all who emigrated, died either on passage or on arrival."[59]

So far as I can gather, there are no accounts from oral tradition about the returning timber ships—merely fading reports handed down from parents, grandparents and great-grandparents that the ocean crossing generally took six or eight weeks, the conditions on board ship were pretty spartan, often the sea was rough, the passengers seasick, and everyone was thankful to see land again.[60] Furthermore, I have not encountered any diaries of an actual voyage from Lewis or Harris; [61] in view of the circumstances in which they left, it is most likely that the very thought of writing an account of their misery was probably the furthest thing from the minds of the weary emigrants. There remains one piece of written evidence, in the form of a monument erected on the former quarantine island, Grosse Isle, situated in

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58 Traill herself became violently ill several weeks later and describes the doctor's treatment of her: "remedies applied were bleeding, a potion of opium, blue pills, and some salts..." Op cit p. 43.

59 *The Great Migration,* p. 7.

60 Charles W. Dunn reports several vivid examples of the emigrants' hardships, such as outbreaks of typhus, cholera, smallpox and dysentery on board ship, resulting in high rates of mortality. See Dunn, *Highland Settler,* pp. 11—23. There are also reports of quarantining, see C.P. Traill, *Backwoods*, pp. 19—43. For a detailed study of ocean crossings, see also Edwin C. Guillet, *The Great Migration: The Atlanic Crossing by Sailing Ships Since 1770.*

61 An interesting account hand-written in a notebook was sent to the School of Scottish Studies and published in *Tocher.* Although the ship was travelling to Australia and some of the conditions were due to excessive heat, it is quite likely that the daily events on board ship were fairly similar. See *Tocher, 42,* and also *Towards Quebec: Two mid-19th Century Emigrants Journals*, edited by Ann Gifford. In his book, *Scotland Farewell,* Donald MacKay refers to a young man from Loch Broom who kept a diary on board the "Hector" in 1773 and the fact that observations written in his notebook formed the basis for some of G. Patterson's *History of Pictou County.* See MacKay, pp. 93—94. The actual notebook has been lost, or "mislaid by a printer", MacKay suggests. See also the reference to Gaelic-speaking passengers on board ship in "Account of a Voyage from Aberdeen to Quebec by William Shand, 1834" in *From Aberdeen to Ottawa,* Appendix 2, pp. 113—116.

the St. Lawrence river, near Quebec City. It is a permanent reminder of the "5,294 persons who ... found in America but a grave."

In response to a letter which I wrote to the *Sherbrooke Record* in 1976 asking for information about emigration from the Outer Hebrides to Quebec, I received one reply from Cora McKillop Mimmaugh, the great-grand-daughter of an emigrant.[62] Although she was not from the Isle of Lewis or Harris, her familiy's experience was, nevertheless, typical of nineteenth century emigrants:

> My ancestors, who came over in 1829, were not from the [Outer] Hebrides but from the Isle of Arran.
>
> They were practically driven from the rented land by the Duke of Hamilton who owned the island. So they gladly accepted the offer of free land in Canada[63].... a land agent in Quebec met them and gave such a glowing account of this district that they were persuaded to come here. The ship they sailed in, the *Caledonia*, took 2 months to make the journey.[64] They suffered hardships a-plenty coming over, including sea sickness. They went to St. Nicholas (15 miles south of Quebec City) by barge and then hired French Canadian teamsters to transport their belongings to the part of Megantic County they were destined for, 50 miles away.[65]
>
> Severe hardships were suffered here the first winter as they had no idea of how cold a winter in Quebec could be, so were nearly frozen to death in their hastily built houses. In fact they would have starved to death had it not been for the kindness of the U.E. [United Empire] Loyalists who had settled in Maple Grove a few years previous.
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> They all spoke Gaelic—some not even understanding English.

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62 This information is excerpted from the letter sent to me by Mrs. Cora McKillop Mimnaugh of Inverness, Quebec, dated December 1976. Some of her information is based on her intimate knowledge of the book, *The Annals of Megantic*, compiled and published in 1902 by one of her relatives, Dugald McKenzie McKillop who left Quebec in 1883 and began writing a series of essays about his own experience of emigration and those of his family and kinsfolk. This collection eventually became McKillop's invaluable book which has been reprinted in 1962, 1966, and 1981, largely through the efforts of Mrs Mimnaugh. [Hereafter cited as *Annals.*]

63 The Duke of Hamilton, who wanted to make a big sheep farm from the land occupied by his tenants, made an offer to each family, and to each son over 21, of 100 acres of land to *own* in Canada in exchange for vacating his rented land. Twelve families (86 people) left Arran at the Duke's expense in 1929. See *Annals*, p. 9.

64 The fare was £4. *Annals*, p. 9.

65 A team consisted of a single horse and cart hired to the emigrants at $5. a cartload of passengers. *Annals*, p. 9.

> ...I am a great grand-daughter of Mrs. John McKillop (widow) who came out with her family in 1829.

Emigration agents painted a fine picture of Canada and issued pamphlets intended to inform interested parties of the advantages of new country. To attract the Gaelic population, some of these were printed in Gaelic, such as *Ceann-Iuil an Fhir-Imrich do dh'America mu Thuath*, published in 1841.[66] Selected facts were generally enumerated, such as the description of the Eastern Townships as having an abundance of water in lakes, rivers and springs which would be good for both crops and water power; abundance of hardwood, which, after clearing, yielded fertile soil and an immediate cash return for the wood ashes; plenty of good grazing, and proximity to American markets. As the early histories of the Eastern Townships can confirm, it was perfectly true to state that churches, schools, colleges, mills and factories existed in that part of Canada, but selective truths gave intending settlers no idea of the vastness of the country. Immigrants had no concept of the fact that these amenities were as accessible to the land allocated to them as the University of Edinburgh might be to a person on St. Kilda. Economy with the facts was built into the techniques of emigration agents.

Nevertheless, the idea of land ownership must have seemed like Utopia to the impoverished tenant crofters of Lewis and Harris. Muriel Mayhew gave a general picture of the arrival of the earliest settlers:

> They arrived in Quebec [City, seep Map 1]. And they came up the St. Francis River partly by boat, and then they came by horse cart. There were people who transported them. Then they came to Lennoxville, and from Lennoxville they had to walk a good part of the way on a blazed trail.[67] There was one man left an axe, left his axe in Lennoxville, he was a carpenter, and his wife walked all the way back to Lennoxville from Gould to get it, [over forty miles, see Map 4]. And the only way they brought in provisions in the

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66 A review of *Ceann-Iuil an Fhir-Imrich do dh'America mu Thuath* [Guide for the Emigrant to North America] written by Rob MacDougall, appears in *Cuairtear nan Gleann*, Sept. 1841, p. 205. [There is also a copy of the pamphlet in the library of the University of Edinburgh.]

67 Blazed trails were tracks cut through the thick forest, along routes that were marked by "blazes" cut into the barks of the trees.

> beginning was on blazed trails; carried flour on their back...From the British American Land Company they had been given over in Scotland various pictures which they believed and when they came here they were allotted sections of land by the British American Land Company, and they had to go to that land. And some of them had started for Ontario, but then they met other relatives or friends who were coming here, so rather than going on they came here. They settled first along the Scotch Road[68] up in Bury, [then] eastwards from there, into Gould, and from Gould to Stornoway...[BEK 1]

There are many issues that appear to have caused confusion among the immigrants, especially since they were relying on competing agents to advise them. By way of encouragement, however, intending settlers were informed that there would be a house on each plot of land, ready for a family to move in. Naturally, expectations were based on information, and emigrants were filled with hope. The contrast between the propaganda and the reality of the situation is a frequent subject for anecdotes of emigrants and their descendants. Even for the more affluent, such as Catherine Parr Traill who emigrated in 1832 (in relative luxury) with her British Army Officer husband, the difference between what she read or was told and what she actually encountered was striking. In her book *"The Backwoods of Canada" being letters from the Wife of an Emigrant Officer, illustrative of the Domestic Economy of British America*, she recalls her conversation on the transatlantic crossing with an elderly gentleman "who had been many years in the country." He laughed when she said she'd heard *and read* of houses in Canada being built in a day: "Yes, yes," he replied, "travellers find no difficulty in putting up a house in twelve or twenty-four hours, and so the log walls can be raised in that time or even less; but the house is not completed when the outer walls are up, as your husband will find to his cost." Mrs Traill protested "But all the works on emigration that I have read...give a fair and flattering picture of a settler's life..."

> "Never mind books," said my companion, "use your own reason... Never tell me of what is said in books, written very frequently by tarry-at-home travellers. Give me the facts.

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[68]Scotch Road was so-named because a number of Scots settlers had obtained land in this section. Names of places will be discussed in Chapter 3.

> One honest, candid emigrant's experience is worth all that has been written on the subject..."[69]

Published in 1836, the main aim of Catherine Parr Traill's book was to record the woman's point of view to the wives and daughters of emigrants (mostly from her own upper middle class background). It is highly unlikely that any poor victim of the potato famine ever saw a page of it, yet experiences she records and her impressions of the new land have much in common with that of all emigrants. As far as the promise of ready-made houses was concerned, the reality of the situation is still recalled with considerable indignation a century and a half later than Mrs Traill's record.

Eighty-one year old Russell MacIver whose "great-grandfather came from a place called Loch Garvaig"[70] in Lewis, "around 1850 or '52," often heard his people talk of the family's first years:

> Well, I don't really know if they had to buy that land or not, because in some places there was supposed to be a small house built there for them, and it wasn't much...Oh, they [the emigration agents] used to tell them a lot of stories, especially about the houses they have ready for them. When my mother came over she was one year old; that was around '75, I guess, 1875 or so. They were told 'what a nice house it was,' and there was no floor in it, and there was no glass in the windows, and you could pretty near walk out through the cracks—but it was a house! That passed [for a house], you know! [Just four walls and a roof?] Yeah. The companies that put them houses up of course they got paid so much for a house, but they were supposed to have been a lot better than that. I never saw that house, but I saw the first log house they made. And then after that they had a good house. [September 16, 1991]

Having struggled to make a living on a smallholding of three or four acres, a land grant of fifty or a hundred acres seemed like a vast area to be allocated to an immigrant family. Familiar only with the treeless Island of Lewis or the rocky Island of Harris, both with a predominance of peat, they anticipated making a living on soil that was rich and fertile surrounded by woods which were teeming with wildlife. Little did they realize that this fertile

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69 C.P. Traill, *Backwoods,* p. 57.

70 Russell pronounces the name as spelled here, then translates it as "Sandy Lake." He is referring to Loch Ganmhaig.

soil was covered with a forest so wild and dense that the branches of one tree tangled with the next, scarcely allowing light through its branches far less man or beast. Most of the people (apart from a few carpenters) had never used an axe, and their only knowledge of trees had been gained on their journey from Stornoway or Tarbert to their port of embarkation. Duncan McLeod of Milan commented that "they were told all they had to do was tap a tree and they'd get sugar, the first ones that came over."[71] Nobody explained what "tap a tree" meant, nor that this wonderful sugar was only obtained after painstaking work—every forty gallons of sap collected from the trees yielded only one gallon of syrup, and only then could the process of making sugar begin. Some of the emigration agencies had at least provided settlers with a large syrup kettle, which several of the emigrants presumed was to be used for dyeing wool, while others, having heard it was for syrup, must have been very puzzled during the trans-atlantic voyage.

The very first emigrants were quite unprepared for the extremes of the Quebec climate—the biting cold of -30 degree temperatures in winter (to say nothing of the wind-chill factor), and the searing heat or humidity in summer; and none could have imagined that much of the "wildlife" they had been told about was in the form of plagues of mosquitoes and blackflies—torments completely unknown in Scotland.[72] There must have been many bitter disappointments in those early days, but once they had arrived in Quebec there was no going back. They had to

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71 Duncan McLeod accompanied me to record Russell, Sept. 16, 1991.

72 True, we have midges and clegs in the Old Country, but as a new immigrant to Canada in 1968 I will never forget my own first experience of mosquito or blackfly in the Newfoundland bush. There seemed to be merciless swarms of them, and they not only left angry weals when they bit, but the blackfly bites bled, and both itched "like crazy" and kept me awake for nights on end. Worse was to watch my two year-old with streams of blood trickling down his neck because "the flies are bad." It is often suggested to newcomers that the reaction among the unaccustomed is often worse than for North Americans who have grown up with these insects and seem to have developed a certain immunity. I have not lived long enough to discover the time taken to develop such an immunity. See also Roberta Buchanan's brief discussion on the question of immunity in "'Country Ways and Fashions': Lydia Campbell's *Sketches of Labrador Life*—A Study in Folklore and Literature", endnote 33, pp. 305—306.

face up to the hardships, accept the land that was allocated, and throw every effort they could into making it more habitable. "There are very few countries where 'milk and honey flow' without considerable squeezing, scratching, and many heartaches."[73]

Allocation of Land

There is no scarcity of topographical and survey maps and lists of land grants for the Province of Quebec, with the earliest significant to the study of the Eastern Townships dating to the second half of the eighteenth century.[74] Early topographical maps show additional details that may otherwise be forgotten, such as the Putnam and Gray *Map of the District of St Francis, Canada East* published by the Crown Land Department in1863 (based on surveys from 1763 to the 1860s) which, along the road through Marston, states *"Road made by Americans in the year 1792 ."*[75] Aside from confirming the age of that road, the note also denies any claim that it might have been built by the Land Companies when they moved in.[76] The *List of lands granted by the Crown in the province of Quebec from 1763 to 3st December 1890*, printed by order of the Legislature of Quebec in 1891, records details from this considerable time span and can be readily consulted.

In 1842 The British American Land Company produced a map drawn from the actual survey by their Principal Land Surveyor, A. Wells. As land was purchased (or later granted by the Crown), the "lots" were registered and the map grids were filled in accordingly, and updated as years went by. [Map 3] The actual process of land allocation, however, seems to have been one that

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73 From the autobiography of John J. Mullowney, who settled in Milan, Quebec at the age of eight in the 1887. See *America Gives a Chance*, p. 11.

74 All maps were consulted at the archives of the John Bassett Memorial Library at Bishop's University.

75 The names of the American surveyors are also noted.

76 As Duncan McLeod points out, it would scarcely have been a "road" in those days, but more like a track.

was shrouded in mystery as far as the new immigrants were concerned. By today's standards the secrecy that seems to have been attached to the process is somewhat akin to that of the modern car salesman who is reputed to snap shut his price book the moment a customer looks interested. Not surprisingly, the oral traditions that survive concerning the procedure are those which were most meaningful to the Hebridean immigrants. Bill Young explained:

> I'll tell you how they made it [the land grants]. They formed up in a...line. First they drew lots—not for the land—they drew lots to see who'd take the place in this procession. And number one was the first, and number two was second, on down to the end of the line. And they started from a surveyor's point, outside one of the township lines, or something. They had those marked, I suppose—they were military maps. And the number one man would start, and he would take his axe and he'd mark a tree. And they'd sing, what was it, the Twenty-third Psalm in Gaelic. And they'd sing that over so many times, and they'd keep time walking through the woods. And when that ended, the number one man would make a mark on a tree, and that was his. That square that they'd... he'd walk the frontage and back, and two sides were the same as the distance they walked.
>
> And then the second man would take his place and he'd walk and they'd sing. And so it was got that way. [BEK 3:B]

It is unlikely that the actual measurement was made in this way, as survey maps show that "lots" had already been surveyed and measured. More probably, the British American Land Company agents knew that these immigrants were Gaelic-speaking Presbyterians who upheld their Calvinistic faith and looked upon the Bible as the very centre of their lives. Furthermore, they came from a tradition where every aspect of work could be accompanied by singing. Although they may have "sung the survey" with a choice psalm (*Is e Dia féin a's buachaill dhomh*, "The Lord's My Shepherd"), it did not mean, as they soon realized, that they were each receiving a choice piece of land. Who would dare question the land agent or the Provider of the "pastures green" or "quiet waters" when voices were raised in praise? Many a family must have felt quite deceived by the contrast between the picture that had originally been painted for them and the one that met their eyes in Quebec:

> Kenny Smith told us they used to sing the survey. Now, that didn't distract these agents from picking the best areas and

> taking it for themselves. Well, the poor settlers got what was left. And for digging a road through their settlements, grubbing it out, like, they were supposed to be paid in oatmeal and potatoes. Nobody ever told them potatoes didn't keep in the wintertime. So, there are instances of families living the entire winter on what little game they could get—and oatmeal. And others living for months on potatoes alone. And starvation did catch up to them, some of them.
>
> But that's the situation they faced. There was no help for it; they survived all winter....And, you see, they weren't accustomed to this country. They didn't even know how to handle an axe. And they were helped a lot by the French Canadian early settlers who put them wise to all these ways. And there's where they had the co-operation amongst the two of them! They had to co-operate to survive! And, eh, they certainly weren't equipped... but the fact that they stuck it out and ... they burned the land in order to clear it—they didn't cut down the forest. [BEK 3:B]

Quebec still has vast tracts of forest today, and though there are huge areas of second and third growth timbers, there are innumerable locations where the observer can stand and gaze at the density of the first growth, overawed at the daunting task that must have faced the first settlers who cleared the farmland.

For over a century and a half of Canadian history there has circulated a popularly held notion that Scottish Gaels who emigrated, either by choice or by enforced circumstances, settled in places that were very much like their homeland. Even in 1992, a third generation Scots-Canadian whose people all came from the Isle of Lewis remarked that "of course Lewis is very much like Quebec." She had never seen the land of her forebears, and, surprisingly, the fact that her mother had visited it several times had done nothing to dispell this long-held assumption. Nothing could be further from the truth: if one was set the task of finding two lands of the most extreme topographical and climatic contrasts, the Isles of Lewis and Harris (the Long Island) in the Outer Hebrides and the Eastern Townships of Quebec could scarcely fit better.[77]

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[77] In his book *Songs Remembered in Exile*, p. 38, John Lorne Campbell notes this same phenomenon among Nova Scotians of Outer Hebridean descent.

The First Homesteaders

The insects have been a sad annoyance to us...
for these pests are numerous.
[Catherine Parr Traill, 1833]

Russell MacIver, whose family from Balallan, Lewis, settled in Victoria, eight miles from Scotstown, described their experience:

> Well, when they started that was all trees— forest...I guess they'd have to tear it apart; I don't think they'd even have saws at that time, just axes... And all the best of timber was burnt, just burnt... And the stumps, they'd tear up around the stumps and put a few potatoes or a little grain around. Well, after a while the stumps would rot and then they could clear more land. They must have had an awful time.

Virtually every family who settled had a parallel experience to relate. A few miles away in Milan, the MacDonalds, grandparents of Christie MacArthur, were typical of new settlers clearing land:

> They had to cut lumber down to make ashes; it was the ashes they were selling.[78] It was to Stornoway ... [that] was the first place, and they had a store, where they had the necessities, and they used to bring that [the ashes] in there, and they would sell it. And I remember when I asked my mother what they were making she thought then they were making soda of those ashes. [BEK 14:A]

Russell referred to the product as "lye" and confirmed it was "potash—it used to go to Stornoway, I think, or Cookshire."[79] From these depots the wood ashes were transported to another location where they were made into potash by percolating water through them and evaporating the solution. (Most of the older generation made use of this knowledge on a much smaller scale, in the making of soap which will be described later.)

According to Catherine Parr Traill who watched, with certain trepidation, and then participated in the first clearing of timber

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78 In his book, *Crofters and habitants,* J.I. Little is mistaken in his impression (gained from parish records) that there is "no record of ashes sold for lye..." See p. 148. Although written records may not record this fact, I have, nevertheless, recorded a number of informants, including the Legendres, a French family in Stornoway, confirming that the ashes were sold for lye.

79 Recorded Sept. 16, 1992.

from their land in Ontario in the early 1830s, there was a certain excitement and pleasure attached to the process. Helped by a team of oxen, the men piled up the timbers:

> [And] a magnificent sight it was to see such a conflagration all round us. I was a little nervous at first on account of the nearness of some of the log-heaps to the house, but care is always taken to fire them with the wind blowing in a direction away from the building. Accidents have sometimes happened, but they are rarer occurrences than might be expected... Fiery columns, the bases of which are hidden by the dense smoke wreaths, are to be seen in every direction sending up showers of sparks that are whirled about like rockets and fire-wheels in the wind... The fire will sometimes continue unextinguished for days.
>
> After the burning is over, the brands are collected and drawn together again to be reburnt; and strange as it may appear to you, there is no work that is more interesting and exciting than that of tending the log-heaps, rousing up the dying flames, and supplying the fires with fresh fuel.[80]

In Traill's day, the ashes were not sold, but were "scattered abroad". The situation in the Eastern Townships probably reverted to this, as there was a drastic decline in the potash market in later years. The settlers then began to save the biggest lumber for railroad ties, which they sold in the 1870s and 80s while the railroad was under construction.

Christie MacArthur could remember a time during her youth when land-clearing was a major concern of second generation immigrants. By the time she was born in 1888, they had cleared several fields, but it was an on-going process which often lasted for decades. The entire family was expected to work at the various chores, and, although education was a high priority among the Scots, parents could scarcely afford to allow their children, especially the boys, to continue at school once they were physically strong enough to make a considerable contribution to the family work force: "As soon as they were able to work they kept them at home—to plough, or harrow, or fix stones, or cut wood... do something." [BEK 14:A]

With the large timber removed from the land, the next task

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80 C.P. Traill, *Backwoods*, p. 158—159 (1989 edn.).

was to remove the huge roots and stumps that were left. Usually it was easier to get rid of the stumps after they had been left to rot for a few years and the land worked round about them. Whatever the settlers decided to do, the stumps and roots were stubborn objects to remove. Bill Young of Lennoxville described it this way:

> The first few years it didn't bother them. They planted around them... And then, they burned some, but the stump-puller, whether it came into this area or not in any great strength, I couldn't tell you. But parts of Ontario they made a stump-puller... [BEK 3:B]

Some of the older men who had heard of "stump-pullers" confirmed that they were not known to the Hebridean settlers in the Eastern Townships. As Russell MacIver commented:

> To get the stumps out? Oh, after they rotted enough, you know, I suppose they could hitch the oxen and pull some out....[stump-pullers back in those days?] No, I never heard they did... I'm sure they wouldn't have them then.... At first, oxen and a dump cart. That was pretty fast getting around with one of them if you wanted to go somewhere! [Laughs] [Sept. 16, 1992.]

Just as they had done on their treeless crofts in the Old Country, neighbours helped one another on countless occasions, and quickly learned to adapt to their new surroundings, trees and all:

> Just brute strength, because they had bees, eh? They got together and pulled stumps, and raised barns, and they held *ceilidhs* afterwards. [Bill Young, BEK 3:B]

No matter what the work was—clearing land, pulling stumps, felling timber, burning brush, building cabins and barns, making syrup, spinning, quilting—if it could be done communally to lighten the load, then the homesteaders held "bees". This practice, common throughout Canada, was described by Catherine Parr Traill in the early 1830s as "highly useful, and almost indispensable to new settlers in the remote townships."[81] As far as the "ceilidh afterwards" was concerned, that too seems to have been a universal feature, not necessarily under that name, as

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[81] Op cit, p. 121.

Traill's description of "raising the walls of a house in one day" suggests..

> [Afterwards there was] plenty of Canadian nectar (whiskey), the honey that our *bees* are solaced with. Some huge joints of salt pork, a peck of potatoes, with rice pudding, and a loaf as big as an enormous Cheshire cheese, formed the feast that was to regale them during the raising.[82]

Neighbourliness was essential, and whether the stumps remained in the ground or not, each family had to plant their land as soon as possible in order to grow their food. In the first few years ploughing was, of course, impossible,[83] but they did cultivate the land using the implement familiar to them in Lewis, as Christie MacArthur described:

> They used to have a... an iron hoe, a *craman*—something like a hoe, but it wouldn't be so wide, just as wide as your hand.[84]... And they used to plant potatoes there first. [BEK 14:A]

The earliest days were no doubt the most difficult for the new settlers who had to work enormously hard just to survive. The first year must have been their most difficult, as they were not only ill-equipped for the tasks of land clearing but they also had to adjust to a drastic change in climate. They discovered they would have to endure almost eight months of winter,[85] a spring so short that it seems to be over in a matter of days, and a summer that has weeks of unbearable heat and humidity, sapping every ounce of energy just when it is most needed to meet the greatest demands of work. At the same time there were the infestations of

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82 Op cit, p. 135.

83 In a letter home in Aug. 1833, Catherine Parr Traill said that the plough "was seldom used before the third or fourth year." Op cit. p. 158 (1989 edn.)

84 Donald MacDonald refers to a variety of hoes which were used after the introduction of the potato, including the *croman*, which "had a short handle, with a long narrow blade like the sole of a lady's shoe and was mainly used for lifting potatoes." *Lewis*, p. 72. For a description women using the croman, see also Osgood H. MacKenzie, op cit., pp. 150—151.

85 My own introduction to this was in 1976 when the first snow-fall was on October 10th. In a matter of days it was feet deep, and we did not see the ground again till the following May. At the beginning of June that same year I watched the last of the previous winter snow melt in low-lying hollows, then in a matter of days the temperature rocketed into the 80s. There is no part of the year that remotely resembles our "snowdrops and daffodils" time.

blackfly and mosquito to add to their misery. Bill Young told how they used to cope with this problem:

> Well, they made smudge fires. They made a fire outside at night that would put out a heavy smoke, or else they'd build it right in the cabin....They'd make a fire, and they'd just put green grass on top of it, or spruce boughs. Green, anything green creates a stench. And sit as close to that as you could.[86] [BEK 3:B]

Only the clear, crisp air of autumn, with its brilliant maple reds mingled with glorious golds of the birch, afforded several weeks of living conditions which, by comparison, were comfortable. Families did the best they could to keep warm in their draughty shacks through the first winter. They eked out whatever supply of oatmeal or potatoes they had with whatever wildlife they could catch, some of them barely surviving. Bill Young continued:

> Contrary to the public idea, there was very little game in those days in the woods, because you take a section of woods that's all tree growth—there's no grazing for deer or animals of that type. So you're just not going to get anything! You might be lucky to get a few fish. Lake Megantic used to supply them with a certain amount of fish, but the woods didn't teem with game like they have it in these books. The woods around here didn't teem with anything except just blackflies and mosquitoes! It wasn't until the land started getting cleared and the meadows were opening up that the deer started coming in for grazing. You can't expect a deer to climb a tree and eat the leaves off it, can you? And these were hardships, and they raised their families, and they were cheated out of their land and they were cheated by the lumber dealers, and, you know—but they made it! [BEK 3:B]

A first-hand account written by David Kennedy, who, as an infant, emigrated with his parents from Ayrshire to Ontario in 1829, tells of experiences which are very similar to those in the Eastern Townships. In his book, *Pioneer Days*, he recalls that even after they had been settled for a few years, their diet was still very limited:

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86 This was a common method of dealing with blackfly and mosquito; I recorded both Scots and French families in Newfoundland describing the same system, and adding to it that they would have to keep the smudge fire going all night just so they could sleep without waking up "bitten to death". [Fieldwork recordings in the archives of Memorial University of Newfoundland; see, for example, the Cormier tapes.]

> I can remember well seeing my mother putting potatoes into cold water to draw the frost out of them before being cooked, and then we had neither meat, milk nor butter to eat with them. The labour of clearing the first acres of unbroken land was all performed by the settlers when they subsisted entirely upon potatoes as a diet, baked and boiled time about, by way of change or variety, with sometimes a dish of greens made from cow cabbage or the tops of young turnips, were added in season. All this may seem strange when I tell you that the forests abounded with various kinds of game, and the creeks were full of speckled trout, yet it rarely happened that the settlers succeeded in capturing any deer. But the Indians that came up... in the fall of the year would kill deer by the dozen, and it was at such times that the settlers, if they had any money at all, could get a cheap supply of venison from the Indians. I can yet remember, although my father was a sportsman in the old country, yet he would never venture into the woods to shoot deer for fear of getting lost or of being attacked by the wolves or bears. So timid were the people that they would not venture outside of the house after dark, for in the evening the deer would come around the house in droves to get away from the wolves, which could be heard howling in every direction, and my father, who had a good rifle would quietly open a window sufficiently to get the point of his rifle out, and then shoot at a deer, and if it was wounded it would only run a short distance, when it would be caught and devoured by the wolves in a few minutes, so that nothing of it would be seen but the blood stained snow, so that my father's efforts to obtain a supply of venison were worse than useless, yet the deer were very plentiful.[87]

As soon as they had cleared part of the forest, however, the settlers found, to their relief, that the situation was much improved as far as wildlife was concerned. According to Mrs. Christie MacKenzie, born in 1897 and raised in Milan in the section locally known as "the Yard", the profusion of wild life was such that the the first settler, a MacKay from Lewis, named the area accordingly:

> The fellow that moved in there first [was Angus Mackay—he started clearing the land] .. and it was just swarming with deer; he was right in the middle of the woods you know, and he used to call it the "Deer Yard"—'Yard *na Féidh*',[88] But then, of course, that name] is years gone afterwards... It was from his son that my father bought his lot, where Walter's house is there now. And by that time they had dropped the word 'deer',

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87 David Kennedy's *Pioneer Days,* pp. 131-132.

88 According to John Shaw (Nov. 1994), the word "yard" is used in Nova Scotia to describe a clearing in the forest that is stamped down by deer coming in to graze on new greenery during the snowy winter.

> and it was just the 'Yard'. So that has followed it ever since[89]... It was pretty well cleaned off when my father was settled there.... And there was very few people that had guns. A lot of the deer in them days had been killed with bows and arrows because they were so thick there, you know. It was nothing to go out and see one. [BEK 16:B]

Mrs. MacKenzie herself had never seen anyone hunt with a bow and arrow, though she knew from family tradition that "the first ones that were settled there did—Kenneth MacKay and Angus MacKay." She did not know, however, if the Scots settlers had archery skills when they emigrated or if they learned them in Quebec. Russell MacIver remarked that "when they first came over they couldn't afford guns, so they'd have bows and arrows." [Sept. 16,1992.] A century and half later it is sometimes suggested that either the French-Canadians or the Indians taught the 'Scotch'[90] how to hunt with bows and arrows. While there may be some truth in this, strange as it may seem to expatriate Scots today, there is ample evidence to suggest that Scottish emigrants may have been skilled in archery in before they left Scotland. As far as the Highlands and Islands are concerned, there are numerous accounts, both from oral tradition and in print. For example, in 1695, Martin Martin observed in the Isle of Lewis that "the inhabitants are very dextrous in the exercises of swimming and archery,"[91] and in 1901 Dr R.C. MacLagan of Argyleshire published accounts of children learning the relevant skills and accompanying activities of archery in preparation for adulthood.[92]

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89 When I recorded Mrs MacKenzie in 1976 the area had gravel roads and there were no roadsigns to indicate back-roads such as the one leading to the 'Yard'. In the late 1980s the community council erected roadsigns in the entire area, and the site is now marked by its new sign, *Chemin de la Yard.*

90 As noted in the Introduction, the word "Scotch" is common usage in the Eastern Townships, and also in other parts of North America. Since it is the term used locally, it will also be used throughout this thesis.

91 Martin Martin. *A Description of the Western Isles of Scotland circa 1695,* 1716 edn., p. 14. [Hereafter cited as *Description.*]

92 Robert Craig MacLagan, *Games and Diversions of Argyllshire,* pp. 44—45. My own uncles in Skye tell of making bows and arrows in their youth, up to the 1930s, and while they did not have to use them to hunt, as rifles were in use for small game, it was not beyond their scope to take aim at rabbits. As far as Scots weaponry is concerned, bows and arrows were the normal weapons used by Scot mercenaries in the Thirty Years' War. Even today,

Dealing with this kind of wildlife in the early days was a welcome task for the settlers who valued every good thing the land offered. Gradually they began to see the fruit of their labours; the first harvest gave encouragement as well as sustenance, and basic improvements made their homes more comfortable. Although life was not easy for them, they began to realize that the new country, despite its wildness and physical hardships, nonetheless offered a more hopeful way of life than the one they had left behind. Very quickly they saw improvements all around them. Together they carved out new farms, new communities, and life became much more comfortable. The physically demanding tasks of felling enormous first-growth timbers and then squaring logs with a broad-axe became the subject of "settler stories" among a people who had never seen an axe, far less swung one with accuracy. They derived not only greater comfort from their efforts of house- and barn-raising, but also a sense of pride which has carried on through generations to the present day. Pictures of grandfather with his broad-axe are prized, and stories are told about timbers felled and squared by the finest craftsmanship.

In 1992, when I asked eighty-one year-old Russell MacIver if he could remember any of the older generation who were skilled with the broad-axe, or if he had ever seen a barn-raising bee, it all came back to him:

> I saw one—my Uncle Neil MacDonald. He put one up in Balallan here; I was pretty young. I saw them then, they had a bee to put the barn up. There was quite a few men there too... Gosh, I wouldn't know, but the whole neighbourhood, maybe twenty, thirty men....Oh, [the barn was] fairly big. They'd have the stable, and the hay-mow on top of the stable, and then the bay on the other side... Oh yes, [all the lumber was cut, and] everything was all ready and fitted and everything. Just put it up and into place. And the ones that made those fittings, they knew what they were doing! They was all ready to put the wooden pin in.

Edinburgh has an annual celebration of the ancient art, when the Royal Company of Archers display their archery skills each June in the Meadows.

His friend, Duncan McLeod agreed that there were "no nails then. We had a barn, the barn at Milan, just across the road from the store, was made that way." Both men recalled that no matter whether the neighbours were Scotch or French, everybody lent a hand. Russell continued:

> I remember one year there was a French fellow, he used to live where MacIver lived first when he came over, and he came around one day and he asked my father "You come tomorrow, help lift big barn?" [Laughs]. That was a big one, high—can you remember it? And they had a bridge going away up into it...Oh, [it was] about a mile further on... Oh yeah, everybody would help. My father was pretty good at that. It didn't matter how high, he'd walk on the ridges or anywhere, never bothered him. Of course there's a lot of people could do that.

The planning and cutting may have taken months, but when the big day came, there was no holding back. These men demonstrated a work efficiency level that would probably be the envy of every modern building site foreman:

> Well they'd put the frame up in one day. Then of course they'd have a lot of fitting after that—board it and put the stalls in, but it wouldn't take so many men or such hard lifts. [And] the roof, yeah, they'd have to lift that too, the same as the rest; have to have [?the top of?] it come to a peak. And they'd put like steps, like, going up to the, and some of them would cut their own clapboards; they'd be, oh, about three feet long, maybe that wide [8 inches], put them on. Our cow-barn, that had the kind of roof that had clapboards. My father, no, my *grandfather* split them out of cedar. They didn't have a saw to do it there. They had chisels, hammers... Oh, they had a broad axe. And some were pretty good with that, just as smooth as that [and while he spoke, Russell drew his hand over the formica top of his kitchen table.]... Oh, they had pretty poor tools at first... they might have brought some [from the old country].

Although Russell and Duncan spoke as though it was almost natural for the men to know how to take part in a barn-raising, it is quite likely that the first settlers had to learn this kind of team work. In his autobiography, David Kennedy recalled how one man, a young, established farmer, taught a group of new settlers at the first barn-raising bee to be held among them. What he describes leaves no doubt as to the skill, strict discipline and co-

operation of the men, to say nothing of the strengh of the team.[93] Kennedy also recorded that they brought a few tools with them from Scotland, "hammers and chisels, but not a saw."[94]

How Are Things Back Home?

While most of the immigrants settled between 1851 and 1855, emigration from the Isles of Lewis, Harris and North Uist continued until after the First World War. According to emigration records, from the year 1856 there was a continuous trickle of new arrivals to the Townships, with a marked upswing of immigrants around 1863 and 1873. [Table 1][95]

During the closing decades of the nineteenth century, various departments of the Government of Canada produced further publications aiming to give confidence to those who had a mind to emigrate. These included a third edition of *The Eastern Townships: Information for Intending Settlers*, issued by the Department of Agriculture in 1881, and *The Settler's Guide, or the Homesteader's Handy Helper* by the Department of the Interior in 1896. A century later, however, I have come across no mention in oral tradition of such publications having influenced subsequent emigrants.

Fortunately those who had already settled in Quebec managed to adapt to the hardships of the harsh winter, and even to the summer's dreaded infestations. In the spirit of optimism and determination to succeed, they quickly adjusted to the initial shock of arriving in such a wild, wooded place with not a field or cottage in sight. Settled in their rapidly improving surroundings,

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93 David Kennedy, *Pioneer Days*, pp. 102-104.

94 *Pioneer Days*, p. 17. Carl Mayhew confirms this in his *History of Canterbury*, p. 25.

95 I have based this table on a count of all the families listed in Bill Lawson's *Register of Emigrant Families from the Western Isles of Scotland to the Eastern Townships of Quebec, Canada.* There are several discrepancies between the year cited by Lawson and that given by my informants; for this reason, I suggest that the upswing was "*around* 1863 and 1873".

they nevertheless longed to have some of their own family beside them, where they could see a realistic opportunity of land ownership for all who were willing to work. Some began to send letters of encouragement to relatives still struggling to make a living on a small croft. Despite the hardships of emigration, they lived in a land of hope and comparative plenty. Referring to the first of his family to settle in Quebec, John MacKenzie remarked "I never heard him saying that he wanted to go back—I know that." [BEK 16:A]

After the emigration "bulge" of the early 1850s, there was a steady flow throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century. There can be little doubt that most of those who came within twenty or thirty years of the first settlers did so at the bidding of kinsfolk who were convinced of the benefits of life in Quebec. Two such examples were cousins Roderick E. Morrison and Maryann Morrison, who, as children, came with their families from Geocrab in Harris. At the age of nearly a hundred and one, Maryann (who lived to be more than a hundred and seven) looked back over the century and recalled the circumstances surrounding the emigration of their families. Although I scarcely expected in 1976 to meet anyone who had first-hand experience of a nineteenth century emigration, I was privileged to record Maryann, whose memory went back almost another century to include that of her grandparents on Harris.

Born in Geocrab in 1875, Maryann recalled the way of life that was prevalent during her childhood. Like all the crofting families in those days, they lived in a small thatched cottage, a *taigh dubh,*[96] with the family housed in one end and the cattle in the other:

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96 In 1876 , Scottish archaeologist, Arthur Mitchell, sometimes referred to as "the father of Scottish ethnology" delivered The Rhind Lectures on Archaeology, a series of six, which explored the topic "Early Man". All were based on his own fieldwork, mostly in Shetland and in the Outer Hebrides. His third lecture, "The Black Houses and the Beehive Houses of the Hebrides" describes black houses in Lewis, the common abode of all the crofters, as Maryann confirmed. Mitchell visited black houses and described in detail what he saw. Published in 1880 as chapter 3 of his book, *The Past in the Present,* Mitchell's classic description of the blackhouse gives a sketch (woodcut) of the building, a floor plan (though it is, on first

> Well, it wasn't a house made [with a slated roof, but with] straw on the top. And put down with tarpaulins on top [of the thatch] and ropes around that tarpaulin so it wouldn't move with the wind. They had little windows in them and they had... no stoves [like we had in Quebec, but], just the fire in the middle of the house; there's smoke going up and down and out and wherever it wants to go. No wonder my eyes is bad! But it didn't hurt then.
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> Cows was over there and we were over here. As you come in, to go to see me, you'd go by like a little place—platform, you know, like a walk—that was going into the cattle and then going into our place.[There was a stone wall between the part where the people lived and where the animals were kept, and] you could go down there and milk them, and you could tie them and keep them in when you wanted to keep them.
>
> It was a good house, you know; there was no water coming through it or anything. And there was windows on it, and there was... we come in on that door and the cattle was going to their own place, and we weren't [uncomfortable]... We had two big beds with high posts; [box-beds] that's the beds we had. [BEK 18:B]

In his book, *Crofters and Habitants,* J.I. Little describes the blackhouses with "no eves or windows..." giving the impression of darkest stone-age dwellers,[97] and apparently missing the point that the design of these buildings was designed to cope with the weather, and the architectural principles involved are quite sound. While it is true that by today's standards material wealth was negligible and housing impoverished, Little seems to have no understanding of the actual conditions, or of the fact that, outwith the oppressive hardships of famine and landlordism, many Hebridean crofters still express a contentment with the way of life of their forebears. In vivid contrast to their deprivation of material goods, the occupants of these homes were in possession of a cultural richesse that made them among the wealthiest people in Europe—poetry, song, music, tales, legends were what they

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sight, slightly confusing, as it is not the same floor plan as the house above), and a detailed description of black houses with explanations of the functions of the features he observed. See pp. 48—54. Despite Mitchell's disturbingly condescending tone which characterized the entire book, and his tendency to judge the values of the people he observes by his own upper-middle-class Edinburgh standards, his work still stands as a model for ethnologists today. All six lectures in *The Past in the Present* are relevant to this study. See also the description of a blackhouse in Harris in the 1850s by Osgood H. MacKenzie in *A Hundred Years in the Highlands*, pp. 85—86, and A. Fenton, *The Island Blackhouse* which features the Isle of Lewis.

97 Op cit, p, 16.

valued most highly, and the setting in which they nurtured these gifts was not, as Little suggests, one of perpetual discomfort.[98] In sharp contrast to Little's "outside" view, American folklorist, Margaret Fay Shaw, who lived in a thatched house in South Uist from 1929 to 1935, quickly became accustomed to the peat smoke, and delighted in the songs and stories which she heard and recorded.[99] Commenting on the fire in the middle of the floor she noted that "the pleasant thing about such a fire was that there was room to gather round it in the true sense."[100]

Furnishings in the Morrisons' house in Harris consisted of basic necessities. Apart from the box-beds, one for Maryann's parents, and one for herself and her sister who was two years older (relative luxury compared to the shared facilities of large families), they had a table, a few chairs, a spinning wheel, and a loom. Maryann was not surprised to hear that this situation was widespread in all crofting communities in the Hebrides in her day, but was very surprised to learn that it continued to be so until well into this century. [101] As far as their small allocation of land was concerned, however, it was of the poorest kind—rocky,

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98 It is essential for modern observers (and especially scholars) to set aside their twentieth century values with their glossy magazine appeal, and to consider the facts. Ideally one might ask people who lived in a blackhouse how they viewed it; there are also numerous recordings of opinions expressed. To help my own students abandon preconceived notions, I advise them all to spend a day in the blackhouse on the grounds of the Highland Folk Museum at Kingussie. In a class of students from New York state, for example, all admitted to being favourably impressed by the warmth and comfort beside the peat-fire, and found it "much more appealing, warmer and cosier" than they had imagined.

99 Margaret Fay Shaw published her invaluable collection *Folksongs and Folklore of South Uist* in 1955. She describes the differences between the *taigh dubh* and the later style with gable end chimneys. See p. 17.

100 Op cit, p. 4.

101 When I told Maryann that my own grandparents were born in Skye in 1881 and 1884 in such a house, she identified immediately with their generation. She was surprised, however, to hear that my mother, born in 1919, was also born in a thatched house, the only difference being that they had dispensed with the fire in the middle of the floor in favour of a chimney at the gable end. Maryann had imagined greater progress to have taken place in the Old Country. Most surprising to her was the fact that in the 1960s, during my teenage years there were still a few of these houses occupied in Skye, and on the Isle of Lewis almost the entire village of Gearanan consisted of thatched houses occupied by crofting families.

unproductive and difficult to the point that they could scarcely subsist:

> They were poor; they didn't get but a little plot, you know, to work on.[102] We had a cow and a calf, and all the potatoes we wanted, but that was all. No government money there! Not a thing.

With no prospect of things improving, it became evident that they would do best by following Maryann's uncle and family who had already emigrated. Although she was too young to understand the set-up or the involvement of emigration agents, she recalled that

> It was a lady from Glasgow that sent the immigrants over; not us, but a lot of them. And when we were over here for—oh, quite a few years, she sent my husband—father—a letter telling him that he'd have to pay for his passage, you know, when he immigrated over to Canada. [BEK 17:A]

For some time before their emigration, Maryann's family were involved with this "lady from Glasgow" (possibly an agent for the British American Land Company) who was arranging for several families to emigrate to North America. Her elder sister was one of a number of local people who were employed by this woman in a small cottage industry:

> This lady was giving yarn to poor people—and [they were expected to] make it [into knitted goods] and send it back to her— that was all... I know my sister was knitting socks for this lady, you know, and the socks were going back to Glasgow, to be examined, you know, and my sister was paid for the socks she was making. I don't know what she was doing with the socks.[103] [BEK 17:A]

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102 J.I. Little's description of Hebridean crofting with potatoes "grown on lazybeds on the beaches" (sic) is very misleading. Apart from the fact that this is virtually impossible (the sea would wash them away at the first tide) the image he portrays shows no understanding whatsoever of lazybed cultivation. Donald MacDonald describes the "inappropriately" named lazy-beds and the intensive labour involved; see *Lewis*, p. 68.

103 In her article, "An Old Scottish Handicraft Industry", I. F. Grant discusses the nineteenth century demand for home-knitted socks by merchants who gave out wool to women, usually widows, single women or women who were too old to work outdoors. On average they could knit two and a half pairs a week, to supplement "what little pittance" they had. See *Scottish Historical Review*, Vol. 18, pp. 277—289.

Exactly what part this played in their emigration is not clear. One can only guess, but perhaps the knitted goods were being sold to make funds to help cover the expenses of those who sailed across the Atlantic in this emigration scheme. Whatever the case, the two Morrison families set sail for Quebec in1888 when Maryann was about twelve years of age. Their aim was to join her uncle and his family who had already set up a homestead some years earlier.

Although their voyage had taken place eighty-eight years before our conversation, Maryann's memory of sailing from Tarbert, Harris, to Glasgow, and from there to Quebec was very clear. This composite account in her own words tells of their voyage:

> We sailed from Tarbert on a little boat—a little steamer from Tarbert to Glasgow, and from Glasgow on a one called the *Siberia*. There was lots of immigrants coming over with us. In our family there was my mother, father, sister, and myself, and my grandfather, and my auntie, and she had three children. Her husband was dead, but she come with us. And my grandfather came with my father because his wife died when the children was young and he stayed with my father and mother. So he followed them over to Canada.
>
> [On the boat] my aunt, my sister slept on the upper, like two bunks. And my grandfather had to go to another section of the boat where there was old people like himself. But he would come down and see us every day, you know. You had freedom in the boat to go where you pleased, to see your people. The weather coming over—oh, we had one bad day on a Sunday, one bad day.

Though Maryann said little of the consequences of bad weather, it was clearly an unforgettable experience. In 1992, a hundred and four years after the Morrisons emigrated, Maryann's son, Angus, retold the story of his people:

> Bha feodhainn aca, dh'fhàs iad tinn, bha iad cho fad air an eathair. Thug iad trì no ceithear a sheachduinean tighinn a nall... is nuair a *landadh* iad ann a Cuibeac cha robh duine ann a Cuibeac a dh'aithnicheadh iad. Thàinig iad bho [Bhaile] Cuibeac gu Megantic air an trèan, 's thàinig iad bhon an trèan ann a Megantic 's bha daoine an sin a dh'aithnicheadh iad, 's chaidh iad a dh'fhuireach comhla riutha... [Aonghas Moireastan]...Se... bràthair mo sheanar... Nuair a thàinig iad a nall se *log cabin* anns a robh iad a' fuireach. [Aug. 8, 1992]
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> *[There were some of them became ill, they were so long in the vessel. They took three or four weeks coming over... and*

> *when they were landed in Quebec there was nobody there they knew. They came from the [town of] Quebec to Megantic on the train, and they came off the train in Megantic, and there were people there they knew [meeting them], and they went to stay with them...[Angus Morrison, he was my grandfather's brother... When they came across it was a log cabin they were living in.]*

Although Angus's estimation of the duration of the voyage is closer to that taken by his great-uncle, it probably matters little; as a young boy hearing their story, he could well imagine how they must have felt with nobody in this strange land to meet them. The group who came out in 1888, were, according to Maryann, twelve days at sea. When the *Siberia* landed in Levis, Quebec, Maryann and her family disembarked, and from there continued their journey to Marsboro which was to be their home:

> We got there on a train—to Megantic, not to Marsboro. There wasn't even a car or anything then. We came from Levis, Quebec, to Lake Megantic...And from there my uncle met us with a horse and a big cart, and we all jumped into the cart and went to my uncle's house. He had a big family himself, but we had just... my father had just two girls. [BEK 17:B]

There was also her grandfather, who was well remembered as part of their emigration story. Naturally, none of the present generation ever met him, but they had family photographs to remind them [see Plate 3]. Angus's wife, Mary, whose family are French, told of the circumstances that led to the old man's emigration:

> When they came here his wife had just died, and he wanted to come with them. They said "Wouldn't you rather stay here in Scotland and be buried near your wife?" And he said "No," he said, "I want to go with you." [Angus's] mother's father was over a hundred years old when he died. [Aug. 8, 1992]

The Morrison homestead was in a part of Marsboro that was, and still is, well off the beaten track. Angus and Mary took me there on a visit, and even on a beautiful day in summer it was hard to imagine how the first settlers ever found it. "In the olden days this was the end of the road, there was three families up here; we were in *Cruvag*." For Maryann it was to become her home for more than half a century.

When the new immigrants arrived, the two families lived together until Maryann's father, Samuel, with the help of relatives and neighbours, built their first Quebec home, their own log cabin. It was situated on a neighbouring lot of land which Sam Morrison had obtained through a land grant. Although it was a sizeable piece of land, and they actually *owned* it, they faced the same arduous tasks of land-clearing as had the earlier Hebridean settlers. But for Maryann's mother, not the least hardship to bear was the homesickness she felt for Harris:

> It was a very poor place when we came, you know. Everybody was so poor, poor, poor. If we left Harris poor, it wasn't quite so bad here. But it was bad enough. But my father took up a farm, and one Sunday after we come over, he went out to the field and set up under a big tree, and my mother with him. And she was crying for her people all the time—nothing but her people, her people. And when my father set down, and her, under the tree—we were not with them; I don't know where we were, I and my sister was out somewhere—but they sit under a tree and my father look in his purse to see if he had money enough to take them back. The old lady that took us over, she wouldn't take us back. And... my goodness, that's a long time ago! Anyway my father took out his purse and see how much money he had, and if he had enough money to take them back, we were going back. But, no, he didn't have money enough, just enough for the passage. But now he said to my mother: "When we get there..."—he had a boat, and a calf, and a cow when we left—well he sold that; and sheep; and lambs. "But when I get to Harris again, we can't live there. We have no boat; we have no cattle; we have nothing to do." So he decided to stay in Canada—which was better for them and for us. So that's the way I stayed in Canada, when... if my father had decided he had money enough to go over... he had just enough for the passage, but nothing when he'd get over there. [BEK 17:A]

Although Maryann had no idea of how much the ocean passage had cost, she did know that they were expected to pay back the money which had been spent on them when "the lady from Glasgow" brought them over. With what money Samuel Morrison had, however, he decided to make the best of their situation by improving their homestead in Marsboro and buying cows for the land he had obtained:

> Well, he bought cows with the land... but he didn't pay anything for the land. This old lady, after years—you know the one that sent us— she sent us a letter and tell my father it was time for him to pay for this passage, that he had to Canada. And one of [them] wrote back to the lady and told her: "You should be ashamed to send any people to such a place as this.

> There's no place here for anybody, any better than in Harris." We never heard any more about it. She never called after that, but she did mean that we'd pay it back... but we didn't. No, there wasn't no money; it wasn't like the way things are today. Everybody has a car, everybody has... [BEK 17:A]

Although still lacking in material wealth, the newcomers appreciated the closeness and support of family and friends. A consistent and recurring theme among the reminiscences of early settlers is the outstanding community spirit: the willingness to help each other, the ability to work together, and the efficiency of community efforts such as logging bees, barn-raisings, and house building. With the help of family and neighbours, the Morrisons' log cabin, featuring one large room on the ground level and three rooms upstairs in the loft, was soon built of stripped logs.[104] Even the children could help, as Maryann recalled:

> After the cabin is finished and you're going to live in it, they get moss in the woods, and they put it in the cracks, you know, all over. It was made very comfortable. We had a big, big stove, you know. [BEK 17:A]

Maryann's family were happy to move into their new house, taking with them what few belongings they had brought over on the voyage from Harris:

> A wheel, a loom, and a [pair of wool] cards and... well that was all... only *cisteachan* —they called them "chests" then. We had a lot of clothes coming over, [for bedding and for wearing, packed in the chests]. But we had plenty of blankets [that my mother wove in Harris] coming over which was very good for [the cold in Quebec]—heavy, rough—you'd have to sleep with

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104 Writing in the 1880s, Dugald McKenzie McKillop notes that the first log houses built by the Scots settlers (from Arran) in Megantic County were of round logs, approximately 18 x 18 feet, divided in two with bark partitions and, and the "children were occupied in peeling bark." See *Annals of Megantic County*, p. 27. Buildings of stripped logs generally had saddle-notched corners, whereas the log houses built later were of square-logs cut by broad-axe, and had half-dovetailed corners. A few examples of the latter remain, such as the remains of the MacRae house in Gould. Interestingly, the previous method of construction, of stripped logs, was the choice of the most recent log-house builder, grand-daughter of the first MacRaes, Miriam MacRae Holland, whose house was built in the late 1970s. She used stripped logs, employed the traditional saddle-notch corner technique, and carried out most of the work herself. [Plate 15] For a general discussion on types of log building in North America, see H. Glassie, *Pattern in the Material Folk Culture of the Eastern United States*, pp. 48—124.

> one of them, without no sheets like we have now. Just the big blankets over you.[105] We didn't mind that. [BEK 17:A]

All that was left to do when they moved in was to furnish their new abode:

> Well, when we went to our own house we didn't even have a chair to sit on. But there was nice neighbours around us and they come with a chair [for] us. But we managed very well after that. [BEK 17:A]

Content to have settled in Marsboro, the Morrison family formed part of the Hebridean community which, in those days, and for many years afterwards, was entirely Gaelic-speaking. She considered it fortunate to have sailed across the Atlantic with her cousin Roderick and his family, for eventually Maryann and Roderick married. Once again Maryann reflected on their childhood voyage, and with some pleasure recalled that "we met on the boat." For the children and adolescents it had been an adventure, though for some of them it must have been infinitely more traumatic, as they did not have the security of a loving family to surround them:

> We had... do you know what's "home children"? "Home children"—some orphanage that has lots of children, and they gave them out for adoption, you know. We had a string in the boat we came on, between the immigrants and that gang. But they'd have to stay on their own line of the—they had a rope between, and they had to stay on that side, and we had to stay on the other side. So the immigrants and the "Home children" [were on the same crossing]...They were out for adoption here—lots of people was taking them from Homes. But we never had any of them. [BEK 17:B]

The "Home children" Maryann spoke of, or "Home boys" as most of them were, came from orphanages in the British Isles and were part of a "juvenile emigration" scheme that operated from c. 1870 to 1930, with a few agencies operating as late as the 1950s. As

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105 Blankets without sheets was common practice in the Highlands until well after the Second World War. As a child in the late 1950s I can recall my grandfather on Skye preferring to sleep under wool blankets. Since everyone else in the family had sheets, I asked him about it, and he told me that sheets make you cold when you get into bed on winter nights. Considering the unheated bedrooms of a croft house, ironically colder than the box-bed of the older thatched cottage, I would agree that his reason for rejecting the modern trend made sound sense.

far as the Eastern Townships are concerned, the "Home Boys" were mostly English, and were all destined to live on farms with Scottish families. They were "spoken for", taken in, and were to become part of the family, working in exchange for their keep and (some say) a small allowance. The resettlement scheme offered them the opportunity of having a healthier and happier life among the Scots settlers who, to this day, speak warmly of the "Home Boys" and the families who cared for them. In several instances boys were legally adopted, and though they may have changed their name from an English one to an unmistakeably Scottish one, local people always seem to refer to them as "Home Boys", even well into old age.[106] From all accounts, no hardships they faced in Quebec offered any comparison to the poor and cruel conditions they left behind.

That, however, is only part of the story. The subject of juvenile emigration has attracted much attention over the years, with some of the issues involved coming under close scrutiny in recent years. For example, there are questions still being raised as to the moral standards applied by those involved in the network of organizations responsible for making the decisions. A number of studies have examined the records of British orphanages, and have exposed some staggering statistics.[107] During the sixty-year peak period, approximately 100,000 unaccompanied children, ages five to fourteen, were emigrated to Canada via the services of about fifty British agencies.[108] The network was highly organized and involved a number of orphanages all over Britain, with Dr Barnado's Homes leading the way as the biggest juvenile emigration agency in the country.[109] In Scotland, well-known

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106 For example, in 1992, octogenarian, Russell MacIver, referred to one of his contemporaries in Scotstown as a "Home Boy" as did Muriel Mayhew in Lennoxville, when referring to a local man who had made an important contribution to her neighbourhood. Similarly, in South Uist, boys who were adopted into crofting families were known as "Homers".

107 Some of these important studies are cited shortly, and are also in the bibliography.

108 These figures are based on a sumary of the reports in *The Home Children: Their Personal Stories*, edited by Phyllis Harrison.

109 Believing it was "for the best", Dr Barnardo developed his own programme and became the biggest emigration agency, sending 33 per cent of the entire number of child emigrants to Canada, between 1882 and his death in 1905.

orphanages such as the Quarrier's Home at Bridge of Weir, near Glasgow, and the Aberlour Orphanage were involved. In her article, "The Juvenile Immigrant: Halfway to Heaven or Hell on Earth", Marjory Harper confirms Maryann Morrison's observation of 1888:

> The children were sent across the Atlantic in 'protected parties', which were usually allocated a separate section of the ship's steerage. On several occasions William Quarrier accompanied his charges on the voyage and supervised their subsequent distribution...[110]

The personal experience of one of the Home-Boys who emigrated to the Eastern Townships around the same time as Maryann is told in the autobiography of John J. Mullowney, *America Gives a Chance*.[111] Born in Liverpool in 1878, his story may be typical: eight children in the family, father a drunkard, mother died, he and his siblings were put in an orphanage, treated well, educated with enthusiastic talks on lumbering, farming, and were given "a rainbow tinted view of Canada and its climate." A few months later the nine-year-old and his eleven-year-old brother were off on their adventure to the "land flowing with milk and honey."[112] The voyage was "spent mostly below deck" but "whenever weather permitted we enjoyed deck games." On arrival they were sent to a Receiving Home, allocated foster parents, sent by train to Milan where he had to leave his brother ("I cried and cried"), and taken on by carter to "widow MacDonald in Winslow". She took one look at him and refused to have him; the carter, Murdo MacLeod, and his wife Mary at Spring Hill took him in. The family

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110 Marjory Harper, "The Juvenile Immigrant: Halfway to heaven or Hell on Earth" in *the Immigrant Experience*, pp. 165—183. A number of publications show photos, such as Gillian Wagner's major study on the subject, *Children of the Empire*, which also exposes some of the more shocking aspects of the "trade". See also A. G. Scholes, *Education for Empire Settlement: a Study of Juvenile Migration*, and H. L. Malchow, *Population Pressures: Emigration and Government in Late Nineteenth-Century Britain*, pp. 55—63.

111 I am grateful to Duncan McLeod for showing me this book, as it is not cited in the general studies on the subject.

112 The studies cited above make it very clear that the orphanages screened children for their suitability. Any child suffering from signs of ill-health, malnutrition, feeble-mindedness, physical or mental defect of any kind, or any child judged to be dishonest or disturbed was not considered to be a suitable candidate for emigration. It was not unusual, therefore, for families to be divided.

had two small children, and everyone spoke only Gaelic, which he mastered very quickly. At school, after proving himself "in the usual manner" (a playground fight) he was more or less accepted. In contrast to all the "studies" on the subject, John Mullowney's story is told with personal warmth and, perhaps surprisingly, not a single word of criticism. The impact is striking, and for the purposes of this study his observations of life with the "Scotch" are invaluable.[113]

Though his initial circumstances were much more traumatic than those of the Morrisons, John Mullowney joined a household that had already been established—the MacLeods' two room cabin. As an adult, he looked back on his humble beginnings in Spring Hill as being the place where he got "a chance in life" that he would never have had in Liverpool. In much the same way, the Morrison family looked upon Marsboro as giving them "a chance". Although they were well aware that the land they got was "not exactly the best land" in the Townships, and in spite of his memories of land-clearing that seemed to go on forever—"Oh boy, the big stones! I could take you around and show you stone piles that you wouldn't believe"—Angus Morrison is thoroughly convinced that emigration was the best decision his grandfather could ever have made.

Just before he retired in 1976, Angus and Mary Morrison took a holiday in Scotland and made the first return visit to Harris since their family set sail in 1888. Naturally they went to Geocrab, where they stood on the site of the Morrisons' ancestral home. No sentimental, tear-filled eyes were reported by this fluent Gaelic-speaking Canadian; indeed his reaction was quite the reverse:

> Harris! Geocrab—have you ever seen it? ...I'm telling you a sheep couldn't make a living there! [August 7, 1992]

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113 As a young man, Mullowney moved "across the line" to follow educational opportunities, and eventually became president of a medical college in the U.S.A.

CHAPTER 2

A NEW LAND, A NEW IDENTITY

Stories of emigration are an important part of Canada's past, and, by extension, retain importance in the present. On a national level, they attempt to explain *why* groups or individuals came to Canada, and, by so doing, these stories help to validate the place of the immigrant in the new land. On a regional and community level, the same stories reinforce common bonds between people who share such an experience, and they may also reach out to establish new links with other immigrant groups and/or individuals, regardless of their country of origin. On a local and domestic level, stories of emigration play an important part in perpetuating images of the homeland, of kinship ties, and of the lifestyle and values that laid the foundation of a new way of life in the New World.[1]

Norwegian scholar, Olav Bø,[2] affirms the value attached to "knowing about the past"[3] and suggests that family traditions, such as those that record "the first member of the family who actually cleared the ground for the family farm", serve to "strengthen family solidarity" and, as far as the present is concerned, these traditions are "perhaps the strongest sign of identity."[4] Stories of emigration from the Outer Hebrides to the Eastern Townships generally incorporate the naming of a family member, along the lines of "he was the first one of our family to

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1 The concept of "life-style" (as a "pattern of activity" which characterises the whole way of living) is discussed at length by Jørgen Selmer in "'Cultural Groups' and the Study of Life-Styles and Cultural Identity" in *Tradition and Cultural Identity*, [pp. 47-75], particularly pp. 54-60.

2 Olav Bø has been involved in the Nordic Institute of Folklore project on tradition and identity. In his paper, "The Role Played by Tradition in a Local Community Today and Earlier" in *Tradition and Cultural Identity*, pp.143-157, he discusses aspects of his part of the project which relate to the subjects of tradition and identity. The NIF project has many interesting parallels to aspects of this project, and I have found it both inspiring and reassuring to encounter research which explores the issues surrounding my own research interest in the Eastern Townships.

3 Op cit, p. 146.

4 Op cit, p. 148.

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settle..."[5] Thus, traditions about the past become a "living force"[6] which shapes the present and influences the future.

In the New World, descendants of immigrants keep alive a picture of Old World identity which is constructed partly from written accounts in popular books[7] and journals,[8] partly from stereotypical images of the mother county and her people,[9] and partly from descriptions of individuals and their specific characteristics. While it may be an incomplete picture, and on closer examination may also be quite inaccurate, it serves the purpose of those who retain it. Although Scottish people are sometimes fond of satirizing the American or Canadian more-Scottish-than-the-Scots image, Ian Olson reminds us to look at our own perception of Scotland and Scottishness. While addressing a German audience on aspects of identity, Olson suggests:

> In many ways Scotland, like Bohemia, ceased to exist in the earlier years of the seventeenth century, and by the eighteenth found itself part of an overwhelming empire. For like Bohemia, Scotland exists as a country of the mind, a powerful concept that has more meaning and existence than many a "real" country in the world today.[10]

Regardless of the Eastern Townshipper's identity with Scotland, the mother-land or "country of the mind", more importantly, there is a keen awareness of a fresh and different identity in the New

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5 This is a reconstuction based on stories from Duncan McLeod, Christie MacArthur, Christie and John MacKenzie, Russell MacIver, Angus Morrison, Alex MacIver, and others. If an "average statement" can be said to exist, then this is the form it might take.

6 Olav Bø, op cit, p. 146.

7 For example, the two books which have been credited as sources of information about "the Old Country" are Donald MacDonald's *Lewis*, and Sir Walter Scott's *Tales of a Grandfather.*

8 Subscriptions to *The Scots Magazine,* and *The Stornoway Gazette.* have been in circulation for many years, passed on from one family to the next, with little concern about how "out-of-date" it might be.

9 Relatives in Scotland send calendars each year representing a complete range of landscape scenes, such as the *Scotsman Calendar* and *Scots Pictorial.* Other images that appear, are Scottie dogs, heather, tartan, bagpipes, and "eat and drink" images of haggis and neeps, shortbread and whisky. The range is vast, and the images all reinforce stereotypical views of Scotland.

10 Ian A. Olson, "Scottish Contemporary Music and Song: An Introduction" in *Scotland: Literature, Culture, Politics*, p. 140.

World. Since those who share this identity have an intimate knowledge of it, they are in the best position to project it. Identity can, and does, operate at different levels, as it is founded on a range of factors, such as those based on "ethnic origin", or on the common experience of emigration, or on the shared experience of settling in the new land, or on any combination of these components. It is highly complex, and often indicated by very subtle clues which act as *symbols* in the system. Nevertheless, this study will attempt to examine *identity* as it is presented by, and observed in, the lifestyle of the Hebridean settlers of the Eastern Townships.[11]

For most, if not all, of this century, folklorists have come to regard the subjects of their studies as "informants": we seek out "informants" to ask them about their traditions, to comment on their lifestyle, and so on. In a study such as this, however, where it is important for the individuals involved to share their views, and even choose what they wish to project—it is, after all, *their identity* that is being studied—I would also favour the term "partners in research" which was introduced by Finnish folklorist, Lauri Honko, when he was studying a similar set of issues:[12]

> Describing group identities means selecting symbols and metaphors [that are not only meaningful to the researcher, but also reflect the choice] *made by members of the group to be studied... The goal is to describe identity as a system where conscious and unconscious features act in an integral way.*[13]

As one means of attaining the goal of describing *identity*, this study will document the lifestyle which emerged in the Eastern Townships, as seen through the eyes of the descendants of the first settlers. On the surface it may initially resemble a collection of descriptions of the "pioneer days" or "early days" but the

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11 Closely related to this concept is the sense of "belonging" as discussed by anthropologists Anthony J. Cohen and others in *Belonging: Identity and Social Organisation in British Rural Cultures.* "It is this feeling of local distinctiveness which [they] have tried to capture..." [p. 1] in the group of essays edited by Cohen.

12 Lauri Honko, "Studies on Tradition and Cultural Identity: An Introduction" in *Tradition and Cultural Identity*, pp. 7-26.

13 Op cit, p. 8, my italics. [My square brackets summarize Honko's statement.]

components of this "collection" will be viewed as *symbols of identity* and discussed accordingly.

American folklorist, Alan Dundes, cautions folklorists against regarding their collections as merely a number of items neatly, or otherwise, classified, with superficial labels. As an example, he cites joke collections, and suggests that it is not the joke that the folklorist is interested in, but the *symbolic meaning* conveyed through the various channels of communication.[14] I would suggest, however, that there is a value in both; whether the *item* happens to be jokes, songs, recipes, stories or whatever, it is essential to maintain a keen interest in the collection, which can then be considered in terms of *symbolic meaning*. Books on these subjects are popular because recipe collections make interesting recipe books, just as joke books are entertaining as joke books, and so on; if we ignore this aspect as folklorists, we might err in the opposite direction only to be confronted, and rightly so, by Hamish Henderson's cautionary note: "The collector-folklorist should never, in the heat of the chase, forget his humanist role,"[15] and one of our humanistic roles must surely be to respect the values of our partners in research. In this study I will attempt to maintain a balance so that the "collection" will retain its intrinsic value, while the *symbolic meanings* will emerge in terms of *identity*.

The concept of *identity* covers a broad sweep of ideas and can be viewed from many angles. In recent years the term *ethnic* has gained currency to describe minorities,[16] thus any immigrant

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14 Alan Dundes has raised this issue in several books and articles. See *Interpreting Folklore*, *The Study of Folklore*, *Essays in Folkloristics*. this particular example is from his paper "Defining Identity Through Folklore", *Symposium on Identity, Personal and Socio-cultural,* Uppsala, Aug. 23-28, 1982.

15 Hamish Henderson, preface to Kenneth S. Goldstein's *A Guide for Field Workers in Folklore*, p. x.

16 Although the term had been in use in Canada for many years, it became much more widely used during the discussions on multiculturalism which began at government level in 1974. In his address to the 1976 conference, Nathan Keyfitz, began by discussing the term *ethnic* as applied in Canada. See "How the Descendants of English Speakers See the Speakers of Other Languages and Their Descendants", *Multiculturalism as State Policy*,

group which retains identifiable characteristics, such as language or costume, which point to the mother country, becomes known as an ethnic minority.[17] As far as the Eastern Townshippers of Hebridean descent are concerned, it scarcely seems appropriate to use the term *ethnic* to describe the people, since they have been Canadian for several generations. Occasionally it may be applicable to certain items of food or dress, but for most of this study, *ethnic identity* is not entirely apt.[18]

In seeking a methodology for observing *identity* through tradition, it has been particularly useful to look at other research projects concerned with this issue. Two important conferences, *The Symposium on Identity, Personal and Socio-Cultural* (Uppsala, 1982), and *The American-Hungarian Conference on Culture, Tradition and Identity* (Indiana, 1984) brought together a number of international scholars who presented papers on their work;[19] some have already been cited above. In his introduction to *Tradition and Cultural Identity*, Lauri Honko suggests that folklore studies on the subject of *group identity* have hitherto been sparse because folklorists have tended to focus more on the identity of an individual, whose traditions are collected, annotated, studied, and subsequently take their place as a contribution to the culture whose traditions they are. I would suggest that this in itself is not bad practice; it is one of many

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Conference Report, Second Canadian Conference on Multiculturalism, Ottawa, Feb. 13-15, 1976, Proceedings, pp. 65-79.

17 My summary, not Keyfitz's, op cit. George De Vos discusses in considerable detail the issues surrounding minority groups in "Ethnic Identity and Minority status: Some Psychocultural Considerations" in *Identity: Personal and Socio-Cultural.*

18 I have, for the purpose of my discussion, avoided engaging in the Canadian "ethnic debate" which seems to be peppered with "ethnic slurs". For example, in his address to the Second Canadian Conference on Multiculturalism in Ottawa, 1976, Howard Palmer reminded delagates that Anglo-Canadians have displayed many prejudices towards ethnic minorities, and cited instances of class, race, colour and religious prejudice towards immigrants. See "Reluctant Hosts: Anglo-Canadian Views of Multiculturalism in the Twentieth Century", *Multiculturalism as State Policy*, Conference Report, Proceedings, pp. 81-118, and expecially his bibliographic citations in his notes, pp. 111-118.

19 Conference procedings have been published and are cited here: the former edited by Anita Jacobsson-Widding, Uppsala, 1983, and the latter by Lauri Honko, as a publication of the Nordic Institute of Folklore (No.20), 1988.

possible approaches to scholarship, and has undoubtedly paved the way for further investigation into tradition, culture and identity. [20] It is along those paths that my own research has led me to investigate the wider implication of *identity*.

Based on research into the traditions of a small area of Sweden, Dalecarlia, to which a certain "Swedish national identity" is attributed, Göran Rosander[21] suggests that there are different levels of *spatial* or *territorial* identities.[22] For example, people identify with the native country, the local region,[23] the home town, the immediate locality and the family home and land.[24] While there are some parallels between the Rosander model and the present study, there are aspects which clearly differ; for example, Eastern Townshippers have two native countries with which they can identify, Canada and Scotland. In the final analysis of this scheme, it seems clear that territory alone does not sustain *identity*. There must be other indications, and, as

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20 For example, feature articles that have appeared in *Tocher*, such as those on Stanley Robertson, the Stewarts of Blairgowrie, or Willie Scott (to mention but a few) have been invaluable not only for the traditions which are recorded but as an insight into the identity of both the individual and the community. So also has the work of Edward D. Ives (see bibliography) inspired folklorists to focus closely on one subject, say, Larry Gorman or Joe Scott, in order to discover the world in which they operated. Also, my own study of the Gaels in Newfoundland, *The Last Stronghold*, is a collection of traditions seen through the eyes of one man, Allan MacArthur, and by extension explores the wider contexts of community and identity. While Dundes (cited above) is justified in appealing for more analysis in folklore studies, he would be mistaken to suggest that folklorists who publish "collections" are blinkered to the extended value of their collections, or the *symbolic meanings* in them. See *Interpreting Folklore*. This is not to say, however, that his own psychoanalytic approach is necessarily the only one to take. See "Projection in Folklore: A Plea for Psychoanalytic Semiotics" in *Interpreting Folklore*, pp. 33-60.

21 G. Rosander, "The 'Nationalisation' of Dalecarlia" in *Tradition and Cultural Identity*, pp. 93-142.

22 Op cit, p. 94.

23 John MacInnes discusses aspects of this in "The Gaelic Perception of the Lowlands" in *Gaelic and Scotland: Alba agus a' Ghàidhlig*, pp. 89-100.

24 This hierachy will be recognized as a familiar concept in the "geographic development" of children. The main difference is that in early childhood the developmental direction is from home outwards, towards the most advanced concept of nation within continent, the World, the Universe. [Paraphrased from a number of readings and lectures on the Psychology of Education; this comparison comes purely from my interest, as a teacher, in the conceptual development of early childhood; no citations are given in the bibliography.]

Rosander observes, when acknowledging the deficiencies in relying upon *spatial* concepts to define *identity*, "Rather it is a question of *fellowship,* rooted above all in history."[25]

This statement comes much closer to the truth. Hopefully it will already be clear from the last chapter that the descendants of Hebridean immigrants to the Eastern Townships have a unity, a fellowship and an *identity* which is undoubtedly rooted in their history. By extension, those factors become part of the current situation which this study investigates. Rosander's observations are equally applicable:

> The important thing is that people are united in a positive feeling for their local region in general, for its natural attractions and for the individual selection of cultural elements associated with it. This leads to a more active learning of local legends, local history and topography, etc. However, there usually exists a certain common core in the elements selected, a number of central themes. These are important—they have a *symbolic value.* In the course of conversation people defend them, up to a certain point. *And it is considered desirable that they [the symbolic values] go on living, which is why it becomes important to see that they are handed on.* Their content is communicated via socialization... daily conversation... celebrations... and by means of many different kinds of symbols.[26]

During the course of fieldwork there was ample evidence of widespread interest in all aspects of local tradition and folklore. As expected, certain individuals excelled at communicating the aspects of tradition which interested them most, such as songs, local legends, emigration stories, memorates, customs, medical lore, and so on. There is certainly no shortage of material in active circulation, and no lack of enthusiasm to communicate it, not only to the interviewer who comes armed with a battalion of questions, but to each other, in a spontaneous, natural setting, such as one finds at a house visit, or *céilidh,* as it is called. As far

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25 Op cit, p, 95.

26 It is clear from Rosander's discussion that there are many more means of communicating *symbolic values* in Dalecarlia, the region in question, than there are in the Eastern Townships, e.g. folk schools, folk festivals, sports (with reference to "our team") etc. Nevertheless, the principles involved are the same (with "our church" retaining a similar point of reference). Op cit, pp. 95-96, my emphasis and square brackets.

as possible I have tried to set fieldwork collection in the more natural context, although there are also direct interviews specifically aimed at eliciting information on a chosen topic.

When studying culture and tradition with a view to underlining *identity* (as this project aims to do), Lauri Honko observes that:

> these traditions may refer to language, geographical location, music, dance, costume, architecture, history, myth, ritual, [legend, song, medical lore, food], etc. The selection of items may look peculiar, [unrelated to one another?] but it is not to be judged by external form or by content only, *because each thing and each behaviour stands for more than itself; it has symbolic meaning*. The identity group is united by meaning and emotion, which pervade the symbols selected to represent its sense of cohesion and togetherness.[27]

As Honko implies, the question of choice arises, and clearly, it will not be possible to use all of the material collected during fieldwork for analysis in this particular study. What I will be seeking from it is, in Honko's terms, "the right indications of identity."[28] At the same time, preconceived views of Hebridean *identity* must be carefully set to the side, and all stereotypical notions of Scottish *identity* must also be discounted. This exercise is essential, in order to prevent deciding on the results before I have examined the data. In other words, it would be all too easy—even tempting—to select examples of songs, stories, customs, recipes, house-decoration, furniture, etc. which would fit perfectly a "Lewis *identity*" that has already been observed, and then "observe" a Quebec version of the same. No matter how many of these examples exist, this would give an entirely false image of the *identity* we seek to portray.

Some of the problems of presenting an accurate representation of *identity* are discussed at length by Hermann Bausinger. In a paper entitled "Senseless Identity", presented to the 1982

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27 Lauri Honko, "Studies on Tradition and Cultural Identity: An Introduction" in *Tradition and Cultural Identity*, p. 11. [My square brackets, my emphasis.]

28 Op cit, p. 22.

Symposium at Uppsala,[29] Hermann Bausinger examines the nature of *identity* in a post-modern society, and argues that for most people it is a "rather shallow concept... something that can be played with." He singles out *stages* in the historical development of the concept, starting with what people recognize as *cultural affiliation* and progressing towards the *role of folklore in cultural identity.*

In order to understand Bausinger's argument better, I have attempted to place these ideas in an imagined context, beginning at their most simple level of operation. Thus, I have selected two examples which, in terms of my own experience, might fit Bausinger's perception. I would, therefore, understand *cultural affiliation* to operate in situations such as: "my mother's people are Highland, as opposed to Lowland, and when asked to express their identity in Scotland, they will do so by employing such terms of reference as *Highland,* or *Gael*". I would understand the second "label", *role of folklore in cultural identity*, to apply in specific examples such as: "in keeping with the customs of the Gaels, my mother always sang Gaelic lullabies to her children and grandchildren; thus her folklore expresses her cultural identity."

Bausinger then suggests that the *role of folklore* in any culture can change, and in terms of *identity* he sees these changes as a three-step historical progression:

> In the first stage folklore is a ritual process in a local frame; one can speak of customs. Customs in their rather invariable, unchangeable form contribute to the firm identity of people: in general nobody has a chance to escape the obligations of custom.
>
> In the second stage, society is much more heterogeneous, but it is made homogeneous by ideologies. Folklore comes forth, now as a means of homogenization. Its typical appearance is what in German is called *Fest*, feast, less obligatory and less controlled than customs were, but good occasions for the spreading of religious or political [or nationalist] ideas.
>
> The third stage and latest development: folklore presented in festivals (in the more special sense of the word), an aesthetic presentation making use of particular traditions offered to a diffuse and dispersed public audience. They can

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29 Published in *Identity: Personal and Socio-Cultural*, edited by Anita Jacobsson-Widding.

> identify themselves with these offer[ings]s and they often do, but this is just a contribution to a transient and floating identity.[30]

Bausinger's ideas seem logical and relatively easy to apply to any folklore collection, such as the fairly extensive one which has been the result of fieldwork for the current study.[31] As far as selecting examples of folklore to fit Bausinger's three stages is concerned, it would be quite straightforward (a) to classify and analyse the material and (b) to select items that fit neatly into his "postmodern" concept of *identity* (described above). To do so, I would propose the following model:

STAGE 1:

> Customs, on such occasions as birth, marriage, death; the acknowledgment of supernatural phenomena such as ghosts, phantom noises and premonitions; the celebration of Christmas, New Year, Hallowe'en, All Saint's Day, Candlemas Day and wide range of religious observances.

STAGE 2:

> Feasts, such as "Old Home Week", the Scotstown Fair, the Cookshire Fair, the Oddfellows' Social, the Ladies' Aid tea, the Box Socials, the Leap Year Dance, or any other event which, through the efforts of local organizations is celebrated or remembered as being characteristic of the activities of this "typically Scottish" society.

STAGE 3:

> Festivals, such as the annual St. Andrew's Night, the Burns Supper, the Scotstown Céilidh Week incorporating The Kirking of the Tartan[32] and the Annual Church Picnic[33], all

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[30] H. Bausinger, "Senseless Identity", *Identity, Personal and Socio-cultural,* pp. 9-10. [I have retained Bausinger's mixed use of singular and plural. The original has "offers" which I understand to mean "offerings".]

[31] Since only a fraction of the material recorded can be dealt with in this thesis, I have included two "Index sheets", one from 1976 and one from 1992, to illustrate the range of material that was encountered in any one session. (I will be including most of this material in a book based on my fieldwork, while the issues that arise from the collection will be dealt with in the thesis.) It should be remembered that most of these recordings were controlled by the interviewer, and in my capacity as a folklore fieldworker, I was entirely at liberty to choose the questions to ask. [See Appendix B, Sample of a tape index.]

[32] This colourful ceremony, encountered at Highland Games and "Scottish events" all over the United States and Canada, which is usually declared to

> of which are highly organized events open to a much wider section of the population. All are carefully programmed to incorporate manifestations of Scottishness, such as a welcoming sign *Ceud Mile Fàilte*,[34] the wearing of tartan, the playing of bagpipes, the singing of Gaelic songs,[35] and the singing and playing (on bagpipes) of "Amazing Grace"[36].

I would suggest, however, that to use any of Bausinger's three stages as an indication of *cultural identity* would result in the appearance of what he himself acknowledges as "false identity".[37] In the first place, his suggestion that "in general nobody has a chance to escape the obligations of custom" is no longer true of the Eastern Townships and is increasingly becoming less true in the

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"date back to Culloden... where so many tartans fell...." actually dates only to the 1950s. It was devised by Larry Long, one of the founding members of the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games in North Carolina, and has spread like wildfire all over North America. I have received letters of enquiry at the School of Scottish Studies asking how soon after Culloden "the tartan was first kirked".

33 See Fieldwork notebook, July 26, 1992.

34 Although the sign could be seen to break the law in Quebec, it appears every year outside the picnic area of the Scotstown Church Picnic. It is well-known among all residents that Quebec's "language police" are at liberty to have it instantly removed. So far, it has escaped public notice.

35 At the 1992 Scotstown Ceilidh week, a Gaelic singer was brought in from Nova Scotia to perform at events. Considering the effort and expense of "making sure there's a Gaelic singer" this could scarcely be regarded as an "ordinary" situation. Ten years ago this would not have been necessary as there were still a number of individuals who could take on the role of singer; some have died, and the rest are over seventy and consider themselves too old.

36 A modern version of this song, or hymn, is generally sung at all gatherings, both inside and outside of church. At large festive events it is also played on the bagpipes, and is accepted now as being entirely in keeping with the portrayal of ethnicity which these events promote. There is no apparent awareness that the current popularity dates only to 1971 when the American singer, Judy Collins, had a hit record with it, and its Scottishness was affirmed once and for all by the "hit" recording by the Pipes and Drums of the Scots Guards. The words were composed by the Rev. John Newton, an Anglican clergyman, in the 18th century. The composer of the melody is unknown, though there are strong similarities to the Scottish psalm tune "Martyrdom", which possibly gives rise to the notion that "Amazing Grace" is a traditional Scottish hymn.

37 Another example which demonstrates Bausinger's idea of "false identity" is a study of gypsy identity by Finnish scholar Tuula Kopsa-Schön in the article, "The Gypsy Identity and Tradition in Cultural Interaction". Kopsa-Schön proposes that so many stereotypical features have been attributed to gypsies that they have taken on "imagined characteristics" and have acted them out, thus affirming the public image of the gypsy and creating a kind of "synthetic performance of tradition". See *Tradition and Cultural Identity,* pp. 175-194.

Outer Hebrides. For example, until recently, all funerals were conducted along the lines of traditional customs, but this is now changing as modern undertakers take over most of the business. The type of identity that can be recognized at "feasts" and "festivals" can be temporarily assumed, and then discarded as easily as changing out of a national costume, removing a tartan scarf, or unpinning a plastic badge. While the above model, outlined according to Bausinger's system, might deal systematically with all the folklore genres collected, it would not, however, address the question of *cultural identity* which is a primary concern in this study.

The question now arises "What do we mean by culture?"[38] On a national and international level, we are surrounded by reminders that *culture* is highly regarded, and deemed to be universally desirable, yet the concept is seldom defined. Perhaps, as in the case of love, if we have to ask what it is, we may never recognize it in any case. In his introduction to *Scotland: A Concise Cultural History,* Paul Scott invites his readers to consider, even discover, Scotland's contribution to European culture, thus *world* culture, and to sharpen their focus on their images of *culture* itself. Citing several examples from the impressive range represented in the book, Scott observes:

> This is a very diverse culture with great strengths in many fields, from engineering to folk song, or from philosophy to dance.[39]

On the one hand, it would be perfectly true to suggest that, in comparison to the mother country, the smaller and distant offshoot known as the Eastern Townships can boast no James Watt, no Robert Burns or Donnchadh Bàn, no David Hume, and no Dancie Reid. On the other hand, it would be dishonourable not to

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38 In his essay, "Belonging: the experience of culture", Anthony J. Cohen summarizes several decades of debate among anthropologists, op cit, pp. 3-4 and 15-16, and somewhat reassuringly concludes that even the comments from prominent participants were "not very helpful" to those seeking an accurate definition. Cohen himself states (p. 16) that "culture is a field of meaning..." which he applies to his own study. I will now explore what I perceive to be applicable within the field of the present study.

39 Paul H. Scott, *Scotland: A Concise Cultural History*, p. 10.

record the lesser-known facts: Following Paul Scott's model, there was Dòmhnuill A' Mhuilleir, whose extraordinary skills as a millwright were of crucial importance to the Eastern Townships; there were Murchadh Buidhe and Angus MacKay whose songs expressed the tender love for an infant, the pain of parting, and man's inhumanity to man; and there were the fireside philosophers and the village-hall dancers whose names are remembered only in local anecdotes. Though seldom acknowledged, and completely lacking in world fame, these were among the "cultural greats" of the Eastern Townships.

In terms of local tradition, culture is simply taken for granted, for it somehow eludes definition. While considering the concept as it applies to his research in Sweden, Göran Rosander proposes:

> If culture is understood as the collective tradition, of both an abstract and concrete kind, that a community possesses, then it is built upon the events and ideas enacted and formulated in the environment in question.[40]

Clearly there is a collective tradition which is shared by most members of the group who, consciously and unconsciously, demonstrate aspects of it throughout their daily lives. Ulla Brück, who discusses the cultural factors that appear to govern local, ethnic and national identity, considers also the characteristics of group identity,[41] and in so doing, reaches the following conclusion:

> From the cultural viewpoint we prove or show our identity in thousands of much more subtle ways. In the course of every contact or interplay with other individuals we send out signals, conscious or unconscious, that are either received and acknowledged, thereby confirming our identity, or are not received and therefore indicate our alien status.[42]

Brück's comments reach the very heart of the issue. Applied to the descendants of the Eastern Townships' Hebridean immigrants, it is "in the course of every contact or interplay with other individuals [that they] send out signals, conscious or

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40 Göran Rosander, "The 'Nationalisation' of Dalecarlia" in *Tradition and Cultural Identity*, p. 93.

41 Ulla Brück, "Identity, Local Community and Local Identity" in *Tradition and Cultural Identity*, pp. 77-92.

42 Op cit, p. 81

unconscious..." The voices that speak throughout this study are those of my "partners in research" who, with their kinsfolk, send out a wide range of "signals". For example, when given the opportunity to tell of how their people created farms and homesteads out of wilderness, how they organized their days and their years, how they responded to their surroundings and to life in general, how they interacted within the society that emerged, or simply how they made their living, they present their own image of themselves—the *conscious signals* which, in their terms, define *identity*. Furthermore, by admitting an observer to their society, and allowing her to participate in the lifestyle that characterizes them, they permit her, at the same time, to receive the *unconscious signals*, which are transmitted by their socio-dynamics, their unspoken words, and the many facets of behaviour which human beings take for granted.[43] Examples from this range of *signals* of everyday living will be examined here, for it is in the daily efforts of community life that *cultural identity* is most clearly reflected.

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43 See also W. Bascom, "The Esoteric-Exoteric Factors in Folklore" in which he discusses how insiders of a society view their traditions as opposed to how an outsider might view it.

CHAPTER 3

HOMESTEADING IN THE EASTERN TOWNSHIPS

The Townships

Today's visitor to the Eastern Townships is sometimes confused by the use of the word *township*. Situated about a hundred and twenty miles south-east of Montreal, the entire area comprises eleven counties. [Map 2] Only three of these counties were settled by immigrants from the Outer Hebrides, namely, Compton, Frontenac and Wolfe. A fourth county, Megantic, was, as already mentioned, settled at an earlier stage by immigrants from the Isle of Arran.[1] To add further confusion to defining the area under study, three of its main landmarks, Lake Megantic (now usually referred to as Lac Mégantic), the town of Megantic, and Mount Megantic, are all in Compté Frontenac, and *not*, as one might expect, in the county of Megantic. The eleven counties, which may be regarded as administrative blocks, are each sub-divided into *townships*, which have administrative powers delegated at a local level. It is to these *townships* that the first immigrants came,[2] and, out of what could have more appropriately been labelled *wildernesses,* they gradually carved out small hamlets, villages, and towns. [See graph of settlement pattern, Fig. 1]

On the visitor from Scotland, the interminable stretches of thick forest leave a lasting impression. Although there are reports and old illustrations of virgin forests consisting of enormous coniferous trees, what remains today is secondary or tertiary growth.[3]

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1 See chapter one, op. cit. The Isle of Arran, once Gaelic-speaking, is off the west coast of Scotland. In her report to the National Museum of Man, Ottawa, social anthropologist Sharon Gmelch makes the serious error of stating the place of origin as the Aran Islands which are part of Ireland. See L. Doucette (ed), *Cultural Retention and Demographic Change in the Eastern Townships of Quebec.*

2 In his *Register* Bill Lawson refers to township destination of emigrants.

3 Across the border in New England, which has a very similar wooded terrain, there are reports from oral tradition that the first branch of the

Spruce, fir, larch and pine grow so thickly in some places that their branches seem to be knitted into one another, leaving little space for light to reach the ground, far less a path for any human being to walk through.[4] While almost all of the largest trees have been cut down for timber many years ago, the rate of secondary growth is astonishingly rapid. Many second growth forests consist of large areas of hardwoods such as birch, maple, oak, ash, cherry and beech, as, needing more light, they were better able to flourish once the tangle of soft-woods had been cut back. Fruit trees and bushes also grow rapidly, often creating a pattern of raspberry and bramble bushes straggling along the borders of roads and woods. Bill Lawson, visiting from Harris, remarked that "coming from an area where trees can be grown only with the greatest difficulty [he] found it hard to adjust to the idea of trees as large weeds."[5] One is constantly reminded of the enormous challenge that must have faced the first settlers.

Although very few species of wildlife were familiar to the first Hebridean immigrants, they soon learned to recognise a wide variety of animals and birds in the area—weasel, fox, wolf, muskrat, beaver, mink, lynx, wolverine, marten, otter, moose, red deer, black bear, caribou, raccoon, red squirrel, rabbit, hare and skunk are relatively common in the region, while species of birds include the blue-jay, chickadee, finch, hawk, robin, redwing-blackbird[6] and thrushes.[7] The rivers have trout, salmon, and perch and swampy areas abound in frogs.[8] There is also a

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pine and fir trees was a hundred feet from the ground. From S.M. Morse, New Hampshire, b. 1893.

4 This is a familiar sight in many provinces, and the Scots who settled in Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Ontario, and Newfoundland must all have experienced similar periods of readjustment, to say nothing of the task of land-clearing that was common to all.

5 B. Lawson, *Register*, p. v.

6 The redwing-blackbird, *agelaius phoeniceus*, is described under the heading of Meadowlarks, Blackbirds and Orioles in Roger T. Peterson, *A Field Guide to the Birds*; see p. 211 and plate 53.

7 Several local histories refer to the fauna of the area. Catherine Matilda Day mentions several (though not all) of the above in her book, *Pioneers of the Eastern Townships.*

8 C.P. Traill wrote a letter home telling about the profusion of frogs and remarked upon the noise they made; see *Backwoods*, p. 146. As a newcomer to Quebec in 1976, I have clear recollections of my first summer in Milan,

profusion of wild-flowers, some of which are recognisable to the Scottish observer, such as buttercups, daisies, bluebells, yarrow, goldenrod, thistle, vetch, to mention but a few. While this description is more of a sketch than a detailed painting, it depicts the kinds of features a visitor immediately notices, and is given not only to acquaint the reader with the landscape, but also to serve as a reminder of the observations that may have struck the new immigrants. Undoubtedly any of the settlers interested in fauna or flora would, in his or her own time, become acquainted with the species peculiar to the area, or perhaps, like Catherine Parr Traill, adopt the attitude of considering herself "free to become their floral godmother and give them names of my own choosing" when she could not "discover the Canadian or even the Indian names" of plants.[9]

Surrounded by what the emigration agencies referred to as "wild lands", the *townships* that were largely settled by immigrants from the Outer Hebrides are Bury (established in 1803), Lingwick (established 1807), and Hampden (established 1867) in Compton County; Weedon (established 1822) in Wolfe County; and Winslow (established 1851), Whitton (established 1863—64), and Marston (established 1866) in Frontenac County. [Map 2.] As the newer townships were established, there was considerable secondary migration within the area, with records showing that most settlers in Weedon moved to Whitton, Winslow or Marston within two decades, thus eliminating one of the three counties, Wolfe, from the group.[10] Secondary migration sometimes depended on the relative success of the first settlers,

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when, apart from trying to become accustomed to the heat, humidity and biting insects, I found it difficult to adjust to what seemed to me to be the perpetual noise of frogs, day and night. I thought it most peculiar to waken to the croaking of frogs, whereas in Scotland the sound of birdsong would waken me each morning, and in summer continue till light faded. By comparison, there seemed to be very little birdsong, despite the fact that the nearest tree was never more than a few feet away. By comparison, there are no frogs in Lewis or Harris, and a wide variety of seabirds can be seen and heard all over the islands.

9 C.P. Traill, *Backwoods*, p. 136, 1836 edn. See also Catherine Parr Traill's later books, *Canadian Wild Flowers*, (1868) and *Studies of Plant Life in Canada,* (1885).

10 See Bill Lawson, Register . Throughout the book, secondary moves that took place relatively soon after emigration are noted.

some simply giving in to the fact that the land they were allocated was "almost impossible", while others moved to be nearer the nucleus of the Gaelic community. By the turn of the century, a significantly high number of "Scotch" farms were well established in the counties of Frontenac and Compton, with Gaelic as the prevalent (and in many cases *only*) language of the population.[11]

The area under study may strike today's visitor as a complex network of small towns, villages and farms strung out along main roads, and interconnected by backroads of varying quality. The latter are usually referred to as "gravel roads" for the wider, better ones, and "dirt roads" for the less used, and at times impassable, routes. In the past ten years, town- and road-signs have been erected to help travellers locate directions, and, while they succeed in that, they are also misleading as far as other aspects of the area are concerned. For example, large signs, such as "Bienvenu à Scotstown" and "Stornoway Vous Acceuille" [Plate 39] welcome visitors as they enter these towns, while new, neatly manufactured road-markers have been erected on back-roads that were once known only to the people who lived there. Signs, such as "Ch. Dell" or "Ch. Tolsta", meaning "chemin" or "road", may simply announce the name of a country road to the visitor, but to the people whose forebears cleared the land and helped to build the road, the new sign gives the message that they no longer belong. The signs are, however, in keeping with Quebec's unilingual legislation, which came into force in the 1980s. With French as the *only* official language of the province, it is perhaps understandable that the new generation of Québecois, many of whom are monoglot French-speakers, fail to understand that the towns and villages they now inhabit, and the farms they cultivate, have a colourful past that has helped to shape their present. Unless the story of that past is recorded, there will be many aspects of the present which will be difficult, if not impossible, to understand.

The issue of place names is an obvious example, as the older

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11 Language loss will be dealt with later.

inhabitants, Scots and French alike, already know. Almost a century-and-a-half ago, the two groups shared the naming of places as the townships developed; with no difficulty one could relate to their origins simply by listening or looking at the map. Names such as La Patrie, Val Racine, and St. Romain stand out among the early French settlements, while Stornoway, Tolsta, Galson, Druim a' Bhac, Dell, Ballallan, and Gisla are some of the names that cannot fail to say "Isle of Lewis" to the Scots.[12] Only the "old French families", descendants of the first French settlers, such as the Legendres in Stornoway, understand the significance of the Scottish place-names and the local history that is so closely connected to them.

Just over twenty years ago, when the community councils of Spring Hill and Stornoway, by then entirely French, proposed a change in the names of their towns to French names, Spring Hill became "Nantes", but the proposal in Stornoway was met by considerable opposition, led by the mayor, M. Legendre. He summarised the history of their town for those who had no idea that the Gaelic-speaking Scots were the first to settle the area, and persuaded the newcomers to pay attention. Not surprisingly, the incident is still recounted by many of the older people who report that the mayor insisted that "as long as there is a Legendre in the town it will remain Stornoway out of respect for their good Scotch neighbours".[13]

In recent years, the older French families, to their credit, have

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12 On August 13, 1992 I drove along a number of back-roads with Duncan McLeod and recorded him talking about landmarks such as schools, churches, graveyards, mills, gold-mines, and place names that were not on the most recent Ordinance Survey map. As he spoke, we plotted 94 sites on the map, all of which were of significance to the Gaelic settlers. Unfortunately the scope of this thesis does not allow further elaboration on the subject. The recording is, however, the only one that Duncan knows to be in existence telling of the place-names of the district. I will, however, attempt to publish it at a later date.

13 The story of the attempt of the Stornoway Town Council to change the name to a French one is now a frequently told legend among the Scots descendants who use it almost as a parable to demonstate the strong loyalty that existed between the Scotch and the French. I also recorded the Legendre family in 1976, and will quote from that recording at a later point in the thesis.

done their best to keep this part of their history alive by contributing details of the early settlers to the community's local history book, *Stornoway 1858—1983*, published in 1983 as one of the series, *Les Albums Souvenirs Québecois*..[14] Based on interviews with over fifty representatives of families who had been established in the area for several generations, and with occasional reference to Parish Records, the book records the fact that the area was opened to colonists in 1851 when twenty Scottish families arrived. Photographs showing land-clearing reflect the earliest beginnings of Stornoway,[15] and are captioned by comments such as "En 1853 arrivée de 73 autres écossais...." The editorial team must be commended for their efforts in recording details of these early settlers, such as the fact that their cabins measured 10 ft x 12, & 6 ft high, their language was Gaelic, their religion Presbyterian, and their services of worship included the singing of Gaelic psalms.[16] A view of Scottishness is presented in a number of photographs, including one of a Murdo McLeod shown in full Highland dress, "en uniforme de régiment écossais", and a family group in which the women are wearing tartan dresses.[17] The editors make reference to the Gaels' regard for customs, especially their adherence to the strict rules of the

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14 I am grateful to Duncan McLeod for lending me his copy of *Stornoway 1858-1983*. The editorial team was led by Guy Lalumière, and the book was printed in Sherbrooke to mark the celebration of the town's 125th anniversary. It is an invaluable source of information about the town and its people, as it takes a number of families and presents a profile on each, with important dates and photos.

15 There is a magnificent photo of rock moving, dated 1932. The locally-made contraption that used a pulley to help removal is not named. Within the frame, a huge boulder, wrapped around with several chains, is suspended in the wooden frame, ready to be wheeled across to the edge of the field. See p. 32

16 There is a photo of Stornoway's Gaelic church on p. 12, and a close-up of an open psalter on p. 8. In contrast to this careful attention to detail, J.I. Little's caption below the Gaelic church photograph in *Crofters and Habitants* makes the mistake of remarking on the hymns (sic) sung without organ accompaniment, thus judging the church service on what he expects rather than what actually took place. There were, of course, no hymns sung in the early churches which followed the customs established in the Free Church.

17 Op cit p. 36.

Sabbath, and remark upon the fact that they were given to composing poetry.[18]

There is no doubt that the French and the Scots of pioneer days held each other in great esteem, recognizing the joint efforts made to build their communities. As can be seen from anecdotes such as Russell MacIver's story of "come tomorrow, help lift big barn", and the Legendres' reminiscences of their "good Scotch neighbours", each group appreciated contributions made by the other. While they recognised their differences of ethnic origin and religion, their emphasis was on the common goals they shared. In the first decade of the twentieth century, André Siegfried wrote that the Scots in Quebec "manifested a real goodwill towards the French and these latter were the first to recognize it."[19]

Cultural enclaves created by the pattern of land grants was, as far as the settlers were concerned, an aspect of Canadian immigration that characterised the entire nation. They were aware, for example, that adjoining counties in the Eastern Townships had English and Irish settlers, while this part of the region happened to be granted to Scots and French. As neighbours, they shared common aims: they would work together, as families and communities, to tame this wild land, and in so doing would improve their own lot in life. As will be seen from further discussion, the increasing insecurity voiced by newcomers, which today embarrasses members of the older generation, was not characteristic of the early settlers. By way of contrast, descendants of the first French settlers, now in the minority, are proud to have shaped this area of the Townships alongside the Scotch.[20] This study was not undertaken, however,

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18 Included is a translation into French of an example of a Gaelic poem by the Rev. Malcolm N. MacDonald.

19 André Siegfried, *Le Canada, les Deux Races*, p. 73, translated by Henry B.M. Best in his article "'The Auld Alliance' in New France", in *The Scottish Tradition in Canada*, p. 15.

20 Recordings which were made in 1976 of Mlle Ellen Legendre and her brother Alphonse, confirm this attitude, and will be included later in the text. Their family were among the first French settlers in Stornoway, and, typical of their generation, are fully aware of the interaction between the two groups.

simply to record the past for a nostalgic minority, Scots or French; more importantly, it is aimed at today's population, many of whom are not descended from either group of first settlers, but have moved into an established area with little understanding of its past. It is hoped that the road-signs that now mark the towns and backroads, or the village streets in Milan, such as *Ruelle McLeod* or *Rue Nicolson* honouring Duncan McLeod's people, and Ruth and Dave Nicolson's family, may retain their significance, and not come to be regarded as meaningless labels that simply mark direction or place. It is just as important to remember that the new signs were erected by the present French inhabitants, who not only incorporated some of the old, established farm roads, such as Dell, Tolsta and Galson, but also created new street-names, chosen in the 1980s by the local community councils, which, by that time, did not have one Scotch voice to express an opinion. It is no coincidence that these road markers bear the names of McLeod, Nicolson, or MacDonald;[21] they are a deliberate choice made by former neighbours who have no wish to obliterate or forget the true meaning of neighbourliness. These same names are, today, also part of the identity of the older generation of French, descendants of *les habitants*, who appreciate their significance to the community in which they live.

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21 These three examples are all in Milan. When I lived there in 1976 there were several families in the village of those names, but no streets were named, either officially or unofficially. Duncan McLeod and Ruth Nicholson tell me that a few years ago the local community council were asked by the Township's central administrative body to name all streets and roads. As a result, they were obliged to choose new names for ones that had hitherto been unnamed. While Duncan and Ruth did not know if the choice of names proposed was unanimous, they were of the opinion that "there are still enough of the older Milan folk to keep the others right." [Discussion, Milan, Aug. 1991]

House and Home

Just as the *taigh dubh* had been home to most of the emigrants, so the log cabin became home to the first settlers.[22] With hard work, perseverance, and the application of newly-learned insulation techniques, they very quickly attained an acceptable level of domestic warmth. Never again would the Hebridean immigrants endure the life-threatening misery of that first winter; on the contrary, they would enjoy an increasingly comfortable lifestyle, and even discover it possible to derive pleasure from the Quebec winter. They would also discover a range of practical solutions to the dreaded infestations of summer: muslin or fine wire mesh screens over the windows; a screen door hung in the cabin door-jamb; and perhaps a comfortable screen porch to surround one or two sides of the house to allow the inhabitants the luxury of sitting in the cool shade free from blackflies and mosquitos. Log houses continued to be built for many years,[23] as most of the oldest residents, such as Russell MacIver, recall:

> Well I didn't see the first house, it was a log house, but my grandfather's house too was a log house, and that's where we lived—just stayed in the log house. [Sept. 16, 1992]

Warm, comfortable, and simply furnished, in Russell's young days all the houses were lit with kerosene-oil (paraffin) lamps, a few of which can still be seen hanging in kitchens or porches in case they are needed during a power-failure. Before lamps became common, the early settlers used candles, a relative luxury after

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22 For a comprehensive discussion on log cabin styles, construction methods and design, see Henry Glassie, *Pattern in the Material Folk Culture of the Eastern United States*, pp. 48-166. There are many similarities between the New England Stages and Quebec. See also Robert C. Bucher, "The Continental Log House" in *Pennsylvania Folklife* (1962), pp. 14 -19; Henry C. Mercer, "The Origins of Log Houses in the United States" in *A Collection of Papers Read Before the Bucks County Historical Society*, (1926), pp. 568 - 583 republished in *Old-time New England.*

23 The prevalent style was squared-timber logs with half dove-tail construction. For a comparative style, see Glassie, op cit, p. 156, Fig. 45B.

the first winter relying on daylight, or a home-made crusie,[24] or simply the light from their open fire when night fell:

> They soon became proficient in making tallow candles and these were followed by wax candles. Then came the first coal oil lamp in Lingwick, owned by the Hanwrights. People came from near and far to see it. The light from the lamp cast a reflection on the ceiling which was a great curiosity to everyone.[25]

Lighting the lamp every evening is well-remembered, especially as it usually had associations of bedtime for children who longed to be allowed to stay up late enough to sit in its light. Christie MacKenzie recalls:

> Of course, we, as little ones, had to be in bed by daylight, because there was only a few lamps. There wasn't enough to go round [all the rooms]. Besides, a grown-up would have to carry the lamp for you—they wouldn't trust them to children. [BEK

Families were very close-knit in those days; as Kay Young[26] put it, "There was always a grandparent—sometimes two or four grandparents in the one house." [BEK 4:B] The custom of extended families living in the one household was the tradition in Hebridean households (and continued to be so until after the Second World War). As such, it was quite common for newly-weds to begin their married life in the home of one set of parents. When Maryann and "R.E." (Roderick E.) Morrison were married in 1894, the couple were typical of their generation, as they spent their first few years of marriage in the home of the bride's parents: the same log house—warm, comfortable, and spacious enough—which, along with a barn, had been built soon after their arrival in Marsboro in 1888.[27] Situated in the settlement of Cruvag, it was also relatively close to R.E.'s family, and indeed to

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24 In *The History of Canterbury County, Quebec*, p. 30, Carl Mayhew notes that the early pioneers used a "dish of grease in which was placed a floating type of wick... This was called a crusie."

25 Annie Isabel Sherman, *History: The Families of Sherman-MacIver with Stories of People and Places on the Eastern Townships*, p. 31.

26 Née Catherine MacLeod, originally from Milan, has lived in Lennoxville with her husband, Bill Young since the Second World War.

27 Marsboro is in the township of Marston.

what must have seemed like a complete branch of the Morrison clan.

Cruvag was a tightly knit community, and every member contributed to its survival. The Morrisons, like all new settlers, not only attended to the everyday needs of home and farm, but continued the process of land-clearing, at the same time accumulating a healthy supply of timber for future building.

> Och, that's where four of my children was born, in a log cabin! But it got so small we had to move and get a place for ourselves...It was made very comfortable; we had a big, big stove, you know... Well, there was three rooms upstairs and one down. But, when we moved away from my father's house we had four boys—that was Danny, Sam, Peter, and Ewen. Four boys was born in my father's cabin. He had no boys at all, but the two little girls [Maryann and her sister,by then adults] so... they were in love with the boys. So, when we were leaving... we had four boys going, and my mother was crying and crying... she'd say to leave one of the children. My father said: "Leave one of the children beside your mother for a week and then I'll take him home." But he was attached to them and stayed with them, and stayed with them...He was brought up with them anyway, and we got along very well at my father's... Anyway we moved away and then we went to another log cabin that we went to live in. But [in later years] my husband built a big, big, good house... And we had lots of lumber on our farm, and it sold well, you know. [BEK 17:B]

At her parents' pleading, they left their eldest son, Danny, who spent not just "a week or so" but his entire childhood at the old homestead. Nevertheless, Maryann and R.E., who had another nine children, were content in the knowledge that they would be living close to their son even though he slept and ate at his grandparents' house.

As the Eastern Township communities developed, water-powered saw mills were erected on a number of rivers and their tributaries.[28] Inhabitants no longer had to depend upon the

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28 See J.I. Little, map of saw-mills, p. 161. While it serves as a useful guide to the Stornoway area, it does not include other mills that were erected. Duncan McLeod pointed out the sites of several mills that operated along the Big Woods Road, between Milan and Marsboro, when he was a young man. Recorded Aug. 13, 1992. If that one section of road is anything to go by, there must have been a large number of small-scale saw-mills in the entire area.

broad-axe to hew every log for construction,[29] or on pit-saws to manufacture planks for flooring. Instead, they could have large quantities of wood, sawn evenly into planks with minimal effort. While a number of small saw-mills operated in the area, the town of Stornoway became known for its larger-scale mills built on a tributary of the St. Francis River, and owned and operated by the Legendre family. Although Parish Records of the area apparently do not record any contribution made by the Scots settlers to milling—J.I. Little states that the "Lewis Scots did not produce a single successful miller"[30]—the Legendres themselves record that the saw-mill, which they had built in 1853, was constructed by Donald [S.] McLeod, a well-known mill-wright in his day:

> Les frères Legendre font construire le premier moulin à scie par Donald McLeod qui construisit plusieurs moulins dans la région.[31]
>
> *[The Legendre brothers had the first saw-mill built by Donald McLeod who constructed several mills in the region.]*

As a result of the appearance of this and other saw-mills, fashions in house building changed; no longer did the log house dominate the landscape, but new timber-framed houses began to appear. In a transitional stage, log houses were vertically planked with wide boards, primarily to keep up with changing styles, but also to add further insulation.[32] And, as fashions evolved and clapboard siding became the desired mode, building techniques were re-adapted and carpenters began to use timber studs to construct the main frame, over which was vertical planking, tar-

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29 See *Stornoway 1859-1989* for a photograph of a broad-axe "utilisé par les Ecossais", used by the Scots. P. 12.

30 *Crofters and Habitants*, p. 165. Several relatives of John MacKenzie, Christie's husband, were mill-wrights and millers (see Chapter 4). Also, several of Duncan McLeod's family operated mills—Norman H. McLeod operated a water-powered saw mill near the Marsboro Mills cemetery, and his grandfather, Duncan L. McLeod, ran one in Milan; their employees were Gaels.

31 Quoted from Alphonse "Pit" Legendre, in *Stornoway 1859-1989* , p. 165. There are also photographs of the site, and of subsequent mills, pp. 31-32.

32 There is one example of such a house in Milan. Formerly the home of Duncan MacLeod's grand-uncle, Roderick [Ruaraidh or Rory] MacDonald, it is now owned by Wayne Mouland. Today, it would be impossible to tell from its outward appearance that the modern clapboarding covers a log house over a hundred years old. Those who know it still refer to it as "the Rory house".

paper vapour barrier, and finally, horizontal clapboarding. The size of house built by the Scots settlers also became much larger than the small cabins which were necessarily economical in the early years. Timber was plentiful, and, at the cost of a winter's work, family and community effort could produce an impressive quantity, ready to be milled to whatever specifications were required by the builder.

By today's standards, the wood used was impressively thick, and the width of the planks indicates that the trees used were of a size that is now rarely seen. While the construction of walls usually had planking of a uniform width, about nine inches, floor planks were not required to be a standard measurement. In older houses it is not in the least unusual to find floorboards up to 18 inches wide. The carpentry employed in building these houses was of a standard that constantly elicits comparative comments from many of today's old-timers who remark upon joints like "you never see nowadays"; dove-tails and notches like "today's builders wouldn't know where to begin". The reality of these comments was vividly brought home to me during fieldwork, as the following comments from my field notebook illustrate:[33]

> July 27, 1992:
> c. 2 km south of Marsboro visited a ruin of one of the old two-storey houses. Log construction, hand-squared and notched, meticulous carpentry. At some later stage, it had been vertically planked, some as wide as 16 inches, circular sawn,[34] then on top of that again was 5" clapboards—possibly 3 stages of "outward appearance". Took photos of all the joints visible; very long timbers—and such craftsmanship! Nails were squared (possibly rectangular) iron, hand-forged, some c. 6" long. Roof metal finish (tin?); cedar shingles on upper surfaces of walls also. The foundations were of quarried granite, large blocks c. 4 ft long, (possibly from Scotstown quarries?) and part was built like a stone wall with cement. In one corner of the house was a rowan tree, in full leaf and green berry, now towering above the remains, a stark reminder of the lives that planted it, and a strong reminder of the ruined croft houses at home with their living rowans. The cleared fields above and beyond the house were still used as

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33 Apart from the occasional expansion of abbreviations (e.g. "poss." for possible), I have retained the style of my notebook as it gives a more accurate reflection of my own impressions at the time.

34 There were clear marks of a circular saw running over the grain of the wood.

> pasture for cattle. The land was luscious and the farm was bounded by stone walls (from field clearing, some of them huge) on one side, and on the far side by a stone dyke with cedar rail fence on top—an interesting combination of Old and New World styles. On the hill above the house was a grove of apple trees like an abandoned orchard; more fields stretched to the crest of the hill and beyond. One location between two fields was the site of abandoned farm implements, such as the remains of harrows, and harvest machinery (binder), rims of cart wheels and an old tractor seat. Also the remains of a cart, just the wheels and an axle sat at the edge. The view from the top of the hill over Mount Megantic and other layers of hills was spectacular. Must find out who owned the land, who cleared it, etc.[35]
>
> Aug. 11:
> Angus Morrison in Marsboro said it belonged to MacDonalds; it only fell down this spring. The farm next to it is owned by Foleys, a French family with an Irish name. The reflection of the hard work to carve out such a splendid farm was strong; the expanse and "generosity" of the land allocation is such a contrast to the pitifully meagre land the emigrants left in Lewis and Harris; yet the silence over the land, no human habitation on it, but only cattle in the adjoining [French] farm is almost eerie.[36]

In keeping with the appearance of many of the very oldest homesteads, several of which now stand in ruins, can be seen the vigorous rowan tree, not many yards from the house. So far, I have not come across anyone with a story about who planted the rowan, or where they got the seed, or the sapling.[37] Nor have I heard any acknowledgement that they kept away witches or evil spirits[38] though there is probably little doubt that the first settlers planted them, according to tradition, for just these

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35 Photographs are in the Photographic Archive of the School of Scottish Studies.

36 The demise of the Hebridean settlement is a subject which I will discuss later.

37 There are many examples of letters written by immigrants asking relatives to send seeds of a favourite plant. For example, in a student project at the School of Scottish Studies, a correspondent advises an elderly parent to make a paste of flour and water, like a glue, and then stick the seeds to a paper , in order to send them. Also, Catherine Parr Traill wrote to ask her mother to send in next parcel the seeds of flowers and the stones of plums, damsons, pips of apples, along with plants of her favourite flowers, primroses and violets. See *Backwoods,* pp. 149-150, 1836 edn.

38 By comparison, my uncle on Skye, remarked upon the rowans when I asked him about those growing on his croft in 1991: "Oh, the old people planted them to keep away the witches." And although he laughed as he said it, there was no apparent paradox that the family were (and are) all faithful church-goers.

purposes. In recent years, inspired by a visit to Lewis where she saw rowan trees growing outside the homes of relatives, Muriel Mayhew made the connection to familiar images of her native Quebec, and asked me to look out for saplings in the Milan area so that she could transplant one into her garden in a suburb of Lennoxville. Although there was already a profusion of trees, bushes and flowers growing, Muriel explained that the addition of a rowan would be more meaningful to her than any of the existing trees, as it would serve as a reminder to her of both Milan and Lewis.[39]

Whatever the skills in carpentry may have been when the Hebridean settlers arrived,[40] there is no doubt that these skills were developed to a very high standard in Quebec. Christie MacKenzie clearly remembers the family home in *Yard na Féidh* where she grew up. It was a well constructed two-storey timber-frame house, painted over with linseed oil "that was a sort of a preventative for the weather, like, so that the rain wouldn't be soaking through the lumber." The bedrooms were upstairs (except for one), and the main living quarters on the ground floor:

> I can remember—I could point out everything to you, [as] if it was there. Oh, it was very humble. There was a cupboard in one corner [of the kitchen], the table was in the centre, and the stove was away back, like. And it was a dry sink you know; there was a sink there where you put your pans and your pail of water, and all that, but the water had to be spilled outside, away from the house, like, somewhere... And if it wasn't handy to go out with your pan, you had a pail in the shed [adjoining the kitchen at the back], like, that you filled, and when it was full they took the pail out and emptied it...
>
> There was a little dining room—it wasn't much. But usually when we had company they ate in the dining room. It was a smaller table in there...
>
> And there was a bedroom downstairs. My father and mother always slept there, and whoever was a baby at the

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39 There are many Scottish references to rowans; see, for example, John Ramsay, *Scotland and Scotsmen in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. 2, p. 454.

40 I. F. Grant discusses the skills of carpenters in *Highland Folkways*, pp. 244-246. As expected in fishing communities, there were many highly skilled coopers working with wood, while in wooded areas of the Highlands techniques of use of pit-saws had taken over from the adze in the eighteenth century. Grant recalls that even "in the treeless Island of Uist" she was surprised to find an enormous pit-saw, and points out that these islands found a certain amount of wreckage from ships which was utilized by local builders.

> time.[41] The cradle was in there... it was sort of long and on rockers, where it would sway back and forth. It wasn't one of those cradles that stood still.[42] The last in our family was twins. So the cradle that I remember best was a long one—there was a baby at each end of the cradle. [And the baby would be in the cradle] until they'd be big enough to be creeping around—*walking* around. [BEK 16:B]

The house was modestly, but comfortably, furnished. "Well, there'd be chairs, of course, and—usually there was a bench on both sides of the table. There was so many of us, you know. There wasn't always chairs enough to go around..." Christie did not know where her parents bought some of their furniture, but she did recall that her "father made the benches"[43] and cradle.

Christie's childhood dates back to the years when Maryann and R.E. Morrison were setting up their new home. By that time, as Maryann recalled, furniture was almost "all bought, and very cheap." That is, cheap by today's standards; it was produced by a small factory that had been set up by an enterprising company. Though prices have increased considerably since the days when lumber was so plentiful and inexpensive, there is still a furniture factory in operation in Scotstown today. Encountered in a variety of styles, wooden kitchen chairs, most with spool backs and legs, still furnish many homes in the area.[44]

First impressions of some of the older Hebridean homes in Quebec give an instant reflection of many aspects of the lifestyle of previous generations. "Aunt Annie's house" in Milan (Marston township), where I first lived when I went to Quebec in 1976, had

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41 This arrangement of parents and infant children in a downstairs bedroom is exactly as it was in many Hebridean croft houses from the 1920s onwards. My uncle on Skye, who was born in a *taigh dubh* in 1916 and moved into a newly built croft house (now regarded as "traditional style") has told me that "Granny and Seanair always slept in the downstairs small room, the *clósaid*," which is also where the cradle was when there was a baby in the family.

42 Such cradles were a common feature of Highland homes. See I. F. Grant, *Highland Folkways*, p. 176 and M. Bennett *Scottish Customs from the Cradle to the Grave,* p. 72, photo after p. 171.

43 The bench, or *seise*, was a common feature of the blackhouses. See I. F. Grant, op cit, pp. 170-172, with a sketch of the bench on p. 171.

44 I recorded a discussion about the Scotstown furniture factory between Russell MacIver and Duncan McLeod on Sept. 16, 1992.

remained unoccupied for several years, apart from occasional summer visits by her daughter and son-in-law, Muriel and Herbert Mayhew. It was, therefore, "just as she left it", and, from my point of view, an ideal place to live. An old-style house, two-storied, and "smallish" by local standards (as had been their family of three), visitors approached by the front door which faced the main road through Milan. An open porch ran along the complete length of the front, so that visitors were immediately shaded from the elements as soon as they stood under the sloping roof. Only after living in the house did I discover the advantages of the porch: in summer, the cool of the evening breeze allowed respite from the day's sun which steadily heated up the house, and in winter when driving snow created drifts at every corner, one could arrive at the door and find a moment of protection before entering the house. The front of the porch was formed by a low wall (c. three feet high) which was punctuated every six feet by square timbered pillars supporting the edge of the roof. Grey painted tongue-and-groove planking formed the floor, which seemed springy and hollow, being set on widely spaced joists keeping it clear of the damp ground. There was ample room on the porch for a few chairs, a bench and a rocking chair, and some neighbouring porches even had a swing. The eaves were finished off by ornately cut trim which I began to recognise as characteristic of the work of the old-style carpenters: in varying designs, eaves, lintels, windows, door frames, and porches of the older buildings were usually finished in meticulously carved decoration then painted in a contrasting colour which, against the main colour of the house, showed up like lace on a garment.

One of the greatest improvements to the old-style houses was undoubtedly the introduction of a supply of running water, with all the accompanying advantages to house and home. Some families were fortunate enough to have their homes located near a spring, while others had to sink a well for household water supply. Ruth Nicolson recalled that several individuals in the area were able to use a hazel divining-rod,[45] such as Donald M.

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45 Fieldwork notes, Aug. 11, 1993.

Campbell, nicknamed "Malavy" (pronounced with the emphasis on the middle syllable). In his manuscript recollections, *Memoirs of Dell*, written in 1971, John Austin MacLeod, locally known as "Johnnie Bard", recalled that "anyone who anticipated the sinking of a well would usually need his assistance... and it was even used to locate a gold ring that had been lost in the vegetable garden while his niece was thinning carrots."[46]

While all the houses had kitchens, none of the first houses had a bathroom. The addition of what was then considered a luxury to the older houses—the now-essential bathroom—was very much a parallel to the modifications made to older croft houses in the Hebrides. The main difference between the two sets of improvements is that Quebec began considerably earlier than the Outer Hebrides. In Duncan McLeod's family, for example, his grandfather had modern plumbing and running water in the kitchen and bathroom before the end of the nineteenth century. By the 1930s nearly all the houses in the villages and towns were improved, [47] though in outlying areas, such as Cruvag, people still relied upon their wells and springs until the 1940s.[48] Homes in Lewis and Harris, however, were still catching up in the 1960s and into the 70s.[49] Although carrying water from a nearby well or spring was commonplace in both locations, the difficulties of

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46 I am grateful to Duncan McLeod for lending me a copy of the manuscript. The reference to Mulavy's skill as a water-diviner is p. 50.

47 Noted during a telephone call, Dec. 1, 1993.

48 Mary and Angus Morrison said they drew water from the well until they left in 1942. Some of Mary's French relatives had a windmill which pumped water into the house and allowed them the convenience of tap water before it was generally available. She said that not all houses with a water supply had a toilet installed at the same time; that came later. (July 1994).

49 By co-incidence, it was the installation of "water schemes" in a network of rural villages on the Isle of Lewis that precipitated my family's move from Skye to Lewis in 1958. My father was the civil engineer who surveyed the area, and until 1964 he was responsible for a series of projects involving the installation of water mains supplies. The projects were said to be "no engineer's picnic" as the accessibility of some of the outlying settlements (through peatbogs especially) proved enormously challenging. In the Ness area, for example, the only means of bringing in equipment and supplies was by helicopter, which, in those days, was quite revolutionary. Of interest to the folklorist is the fact that my father located many water supply sources by one of the oldest methods known to civilization: a water diviner cut from a forked hazel stick.

keeping the source free from ice, and then carrying the water through deep snow would no doubt be an added incentive to make improvements as soon as possible.

The interior of Aunt Annie's house consisted of two main rooms downstairs, the sitting room and a large kitchen, both heated by stoves, with cast iron "registers" directly above. A common feature of the older houses, these ingenious devices are set into the pine ceilings and through the floor above, thus allowing heat to circulate in the upstairs rooms.[50] A vent that is operated from the floor above controls the amount of heat admitted to the bedrooms. A simple wooden staircase ascended from the small hallway opposite the front door, and led to the upstairs landing and two bedrooms and a bathroom which had been converted from what had once been a third, smaller, bedroom. The landing was big enough to accommodate a "spare bed" and a dresser. All the rooms were decorated in the style which had been prevalent between the World Wars. The sitting room at the front of the house was shaded by the porch, and was seldom used as it was almost always bypassed to get to the kitchen. As the "best room", it was carpeted and was heated by a free standing, cylindrical stove which was fired by logs. There was a couch, two armchairs, an occasional table, a bookcase, an oak pedestal desk incorporating bookshelves at each end, and a few lamps. Most of these items were store-bought, and while not particularly characteristic of the area, [51] and only "old-fashioned" in the sense that many were from the forties, fifties and sixties, the acquisition of new furnishings, particularly for the best room, is in keeping with prevailing practices. As I. F. Grant wrote, when describing the furnishings and plenishings of homes in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland:

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50 "Registers" are still relatively common, and can be readily purchased at hardware stores and antique shops. This is the type of heating in Ruth Nicholson's house, and in summer she not only keeps the vents shut but sometimes places a heavy mat over them to exclude heat from the wood-stove. In Scotland I have seen them in the floors of older churches, with warm air rising from a boiler below.

51 Mail order catalogues such as Simpsons and Eatons facilitated the acquisition of furniture, household supplies and clothing to all parts of Canada and the United States.

> It would be out of keeping with the people's attitude of mind to cling to the archaic and the folksy. Like their forebears they adopt the current styles. One often sees in modern Highland houses the mass-produced three-piece suites so widely sold all over Britain and if there is more comfort and not room for quite so many, the row of Highland folk sitting on the sofa is by blood and attitude of mind the same as the men and women who once sat on the old *seise*.[52]

Access to the large, square kitchen was via the sitting room. Dominating the room was the cast-iron and white enamelled range, with its stove-pipe set into the brick chimney on the back wall. Summer or winter, it had to be lit each day, as it was the only cooking stove in the kitchen. It was also the main source of heat in winter, and, as in every house in the neighbourhood, the wood-shed kept a good supply of logs cut, dried and stacked well in advance of winter. Furnishings consisted of a kitchen table and six chairs, a wooden rocking chair, an electric fridge (1950s vintage), and day-bed which was laden with cushions and a very heavy, home-made tweed patch-work quilt, and a *cuibhrig*, (hand-woven coverlet), both folded up when not in use. The day-bed was (and still is) a feature of many of the older houses; rather like the bench or "settle", the *seise*, in Hebridean homes, it was (and is) often used for seating, especially when visitors increase household numbers.

The kitchen had a back door which opened into the location known as the "summer kitchen", a spacious, airy room, part of which was designated as the wood-shed. A common feature of the early French homes also—Mary Morrison remarked that "it kept the house cooler to sleep at night"—its construction was similar to the front porch, only the walls full-length and had a series of windows which in summer were screened and in winter glazed. On the hottest of days it seemed cool, and afforded an escape from the heat of the stove which could be quite oppressive. After the coming of electricity, Aunt Annie had added a small electric cooking ring which allowed her to cook a modest meal without having to light the stove at all. This was the exception, however, as the wood-stove was the preferred method of cooking.

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52 I. F. Grant, op cit, pp. 177-178.

The bedrooms had cast-iron and brass bedsteads, with a little dresser in each, and a wash-stand with facilities in one room. The beds all had hand-made patchwork quilts, old style [Plate 30], as opposed to "craft quilts" that have, to some extent, taken over in modern times [Plate 31]. The rest of the bedding consisted of white cotton or linen, some of which was trimmed with hand-embroidery or crochet, with a plentiful supply of woollen blankets, several hand-woven in Quebec [Plate 26] or Lewis. The floors were covered in "canvas" (linoleum) and had colourful, home-made rugs (hooked and braided) beside the beds and dressers.[53] Examples of all of these items surrounded me during my fieldwork visits in 1992 and 1993 when, again, I lived in Milan, this time in the home of Ruth Nicolson, who also cooked on her wood-stove every day of summer.

Aunt Annie's immediate neighbour, Mary "Allan" MacLeod, had a larger, slightly newer house, yet it had many of the same features, especially those I am about to describe. (So also did the other "Scotch" homes in Milan, Scotstown, Marsboro, Gould, and Lennoxville which I visited.) Whether we sat in the kitchen or in the best room, the surroundings told their own story: walls are usually decorated with a number of pictures, mostly portraits of grandparents and great-grandparents, well-dressed and well-groomed, in studio pose. A few in oval-shaped frames look solemnly at you wherever you move in the room. Fifty-year-old photos of communion services show throngs of faithful Presbyterians, entire villages of people clad in black, now immortalized in a group pose outside the church. Most of the pictures are reminders of the past. Still in the present, however, are bookshelves or tables with a few well-used Bibles visible; you could be in a cousin's home in Lewis, as far as that goes. Closer inspection of the row of black spines will reveal an extended range of gold-leaf titles: *Biobull* [Gaelic Bible], *Tiomnadh Nuadh* [Gaelic New Testament], *Holy Bible, New Testament*, and *Sainte Bible* [Holy Bible in French], and hidden

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53 The subjects of quilts and rugs will be discussed later.

among them the slim volume of the *Shorter Catechism.* Familiar biblical texts hang on walls, giving their message to all who enter the house. As far as the Québecois-Hebrideans are concerned, access to the scriptures and to the catechism is fundamental to their way of life. Just as the lives of their forebears were upheld by a strong faith, so also the tradition continued in Quebec to be central to every aspect of home and community, no matter what fate befell. Maryann Morrison, who tasted life in both the Old and New Worlds, reflected on what had sustained her kinsfolk through generations: "They lived on oatmeal and catechism."[54]

Regarded as "quite ordinary", and generally taken for granted, a blend of Old and New World *symbols* co-exist in every homestead. So integral to the identity of the Hebridean settlers are these images of "home" that nobody commented upon them of their own accord, except for two "incomers", both Eastern Townshippers who had married into the "Scotch" area. One was Duncan McLeod's wife, Kay, who remarked to me in conversation that "you wouldn't really need to speak to a soul if you wanted to know if they were Scotch or French around here. Just walk up the path and into their houses, and you'll see for yourself—the rowan tree, the bookshelves, the pictures, the photographs...it's all there."[55]

Faith of Our Fathers

According to Bill Young, the most memorable qualities that sustained the lifestyle of the early Hebridean settlers were "pride, poverty, and the Presbyterian religion. Those were the keynotes!" [BEK 3:A][56] Without exception, the first settlers were from Presbyterian families, and, though most do not use any other term

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54 In his article, "Pottery and Food Preparation, Storage and Transport in the Scottish Hebrides" Hugh Cheape remarks that "... since the Reformation in the 16th century, Scots have proverbially been reared on the hardy diet of porridge and the Shorter Catechism." See *Food in Change,* p. 117.

55 Paraphrased from field notebook, 1976. Kay died in Oct. 1980. The second individual was former school-teacher, Myrtle Murray, whom I recorded at the age of 94 in 1992. Her comments will appear later.

56 Since I have already discussed religious influences and changes in "Folkways and Religion...", pp. 127-143, this section will concentrate on the more recent recordings.

than "Presbyterian", according to descriptions of their church services, they would be referred to as "Free Church" in Scotland.[57] Until well into this century, only psalms were sung in church,[58] and since most of the services were in Gaelic in the early years, the old style of lining out, or precenting, was practised. Certainly there was no organ—"There was no music in Jesus's funeral, or birth, or anything. They went by that, you know," was the explanation given by Maryann Morrison whose family "never missed a Sunday", as her son Angus recalled:

> 'S bhiodh sinn trì mìle coiseachd—a dhol dhan eaglais. Anns a mhadainn bhiodh sinn a' dol gu *Sunday School* mu dheich uairean, 's nuair a thigeadh sinn as a' *Sunday School* dheidheadh sinn dhan a' choinneamh Ghàidhlig. [Thòisicheadh e] mu aon uair deug, 's bhiodh e as déidh meadhon-latha. Bha na ministearan a' cumail na seirbheis glé fhada, uair a thìde is uair gu leth. Choisicheadh sinn dhachaidh a rithist, dà mhìle eile.[59] Anns an fheasgar, choisicheadh sinn dhan eaglais a rithist—chun na *h-Evening service* mu sheachd uairean. Bha sin da mhìle dheug anns a latha a' coiseachd dhan eaglais....Bha sinn a' coimhead glé mhath le deise bhreagha 's bròg an, ach bhiodh sinn a' dol dha'n sgoil air ar casan rùisgte—cha robh bròg an againn... Dìreach ach Làtha na Sàbaid!
> [August 8, 1992]

> *We would walk three miles to church. In the morning, we would go to Sunday School around ten o'clock, and when we would come out of Sunday School we would go to the Gaelic meeting. {It began} around eleven o'clock, and it would be out at mid-day. The ministers used to have very long services, an hour or an hour and a half long.* [60] *We walked home again, two more miles. In the evening, we walked to the church again for the Evening service around seven o'clock. That was twelve miles a day walking to church....We were looking very good with beautiful suits and shoes, but we would be going to*

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57 Maryann Morrison could remember her parents and grandparents talking about the strife among families at the time of the Disruption (1843) as she compared it to the rift in the Presbyterian Church in Canada when there was a move to form the United Church.

58 The singing of psalms was also traditional to Russian immigrants, the Doukhobors, who, like the Gaels, retained this church custom for the first few generations and then modified it. Koomza J. Tarasoff, *Traditional Doukhobor Folkways: An Ethnographic and Biographic Record of Prescribed Behaviour*, p.63.

59 Most of the services were in the church in Marsboro, three miles away, though some of them were in the old school, only two miles from the Morrisons' home.

60 Angus's wife Mary remarked that in her young day "some of the French priests used to have long services too". (July 1994)

school on our bare feet—we didn't have shoes [on us then]... Only on Sundays!

Preparation for Sunday began on Saturday afternoon or evening, a familiar custom to Hebridean Presbyterians.[61] Though the Sabbath is no longer kept to the extent that it once was, everyone remembers taking part in the busy household routine. Bill Young's experience of Saturday was fairly typical of most families:

> There was filling wood-boxes, splitting the kindling, piling the wood...That had to be all done the day before; even the meals had to be prepared the day before. You might put the kettle on, or something like that, but the rest was ready. Cooking was put aside—[you'd hear] "This pie is for Sunday; this cake is for Sunday; this cold meat's for Sunday." Sunday there was nothing to be done! [BEK 3:B]

In every village and on every farm there was a similar pattern, as Isobel Stewart of Dell recalled:

> Saturday! Of course we had the well-house out back, you know, and we had the rope, with the bucket on the rope. We had to bring in the water; we had to bring in the wood. And if we had a [home-made toy] cart—we didn't have many toys, of course—we had to put our toys away. Of course in the wintertime we weren't allowed to [sledge or play in the snow]. And to whistle! That was one of the biggest curses! To whistle on Sunday—now, isn't that strange? Oh, no, everything had to be very quiet on Sunday. Gosh! Nothing like today—*ugh!* [Isobel's expression of disgust is directed at the way things are today, though she was not considered to be particularly religious.] Everything had to be put away on Saturday—you had to bring in all your wood. The only thing, they'd milk the cows, or something that really *had* to be done, but no stable was cleaned, or anything like that. [BEK 9:B]

The oft-quoted phrase from the Fourth Commandment, "except for the works of necessity and mercy" made it quite clear what

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61 During my own childhood and adolescence on Skye, we took it for granted that Saturday evening at my grandparents' would be spent peeling potatoes and other vegetables and making other preparations for the Sunday dinner, polishing everybody's shoes for church, and bringing in extra peats. If it happened to be too stormy to go out and play, my grandmother usually decided that Saturday chores would begin as soon as we had cleared up after dinner (around 2 o'clock) and the tasks would be extended to polishing all the silverware and sanding the kitchen knives. The only thing I found questionable in this routine was the fact that we did not ever have peeled potatoes on the other days of the week.

could, or could not, be done on Sunday.[62] Nevertheless, at times it was difficult to understand a faith that would keep people from harvesting crops during a week when the only fine day turned out to be a Sunday.[63] As a new bride, Angus Morrison's wife, Mary, could clearly recall the adjustment she had to make when she moved from the French Catholic home of her parents to the Presbyterian stronghold of her in-laws in Cruvag. When her mother-in-law, Maryann, told her how a stern uncle once rapped her sharply across the knuckles for picking a few raspberries by the roadside to eat on the way home from church, Mary found it difficult to reconcile this kind of behaviour with a religious belief.[64] Kenny MacLeod of Scotstown, also strictly brought up to observe the Sabbath, found that his generation began to adopt more relaxed attitudes as they left home. Kenny could nevertheless joke about the old ways, characteristically attributing the strictest observances to a village other than his own:

> Well, they tell a story about the Scots, and how strict they were. Take out in Marsboro—Saturday they used to tie up the rooster till Monday morning! [BEK 8:B]

Whatever day of the week, however, family worship was a feature of life that began and ended each day. Every family followed a set pattern of worship, usually meeting together in the kitchen. Christie MacKenzie described family worship in her parents' home in Milan:

> My father and mother always had family worship, but he couldn't read the Gaelic. But oh boy, his father could read the Gaelic [Bible] and sing; he was a precentor, you know, in the church for years and years—Murdo MacKenzie, Murchadh [—?] we used to call him.—Well, they opened with a *beannachd* [blessing], the *adhrachail* [devotional] and they'd read the chapter, and those as could read the Gaelic could sing a psalm too. And then they closed with prayer; everybody got on their knees, [just around the kitchen], yeah, and no matter how

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62 Writing in the 1880s, Dugald McKenzie McKillop notes that his people from Arran soon found they had to change their custom of bringing in the water on Saturday night for Sunday because by morning it was completely frozen and useless. *Annals of Megantic County*, p. 18.

63 In *Stornoway 1858-1983*, complied by Guy Lalumière, p. 36, there is a brief mention of the fondness of traditional customs among "les Ecossais", especially their strict observance of Sabbath.

64 Summarized from a recorded discussion, Aug. 8, 1992.

> busy they were, this was done right after breakfast, before they'd go out to work. And then, in the evening again, after supper, before going to bed...Well, there may be one or two that [still] do in Scotstown, but not very many. [BEK 16:A]

Bill Young, who was brought up in Scotstown, recalled childhood memories of the same custom:

> And every night before bed-time there was a reading from the Bible, and... I remember as a child having to turn around and kneel on the hard floor while I was saying prayers, and it went on and on till my knees were sore.

Isobel Stewart continues:

> Oh, yes, yes, everywhere! Everywhere! They'd read the Bible and they'd sing a hymn[65]. And everybody'd get down and kneel. We took it for granted that was *it*—that was what we were supposed to do. But today they never do that. [But some of the old people still do it, read their Bible in Gaelic.] Oh, yes, like Annie [-?-], she won't let Angus go to the barn till he reads the Bible—he's the one that reads the Bible [in that home]. [BEK-9]

As everyone implied, it was a way of life. On a visit to Maryann Morrison's home in Montreal in 1976 I recorded her leading family worship in Gaelic at the age of a hundred. She no longer sang, as she felt her voice could not do justice to the psalms of her youth, or to the hymns that became popular later in her life, but she read and prayed aloud, as her parents and grandparents had done before her. Her fluency and clarity in reading the texts was not just a reflection of her competence in reading the Gaelic Bible, but more an indication of her thorough knowledge of the book that was at the very centre of the lives of her generation.

The Rev. Donald Gillies, who spent his retirement in British Columbia, is well remembered by the older people, as he has had a long association with the Eastern Townships and conducted some of the last Gaelic services held there.[66] Originally from St. Kilda, the Rev. Mr. Gillies spent a few years in Cape Breton before

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65 The usual component of family worship was a psalm, as hymns did not come into the Presbyterian church till they started using English. In Isobel's youth it was all Gaelic, and presumably her family sang psalms.

66 I recorded him preaching in Gaelic in Milan in July 1976. He died in in his nineties in 1993.

moving to Quebec in 1930.[67] Looking back over his life in the church, he drew comparisons to the older generation that characterized the huge congregations he once knew. As far as he was concerned, the Hebridean tradition of family worship morning and night, and of reading and memorising Scripture contributed to the strength of the Presbyterian Church in the days when all churches were filled to capacity:

> There was family worship at home. The church started at home. If you haven't got a church started at home, you're not going to have a church outside... The home is the church, now, you see. And eh, you know, the parents, they saw that [the children] went to Sunday School...To begin with, that generation was entirely a different generation [to the present one]. They had the Bible—that's all that they were concerned about. A concordance wasn't in their minds [i.e. needed]as well as that—they had a full knowledge of the Scripture... when you met a fellow man that was dedicated and devoted to the church, and lived according to the doctrines of the church... [in response to] certain questions even in the Bible and—he didn't need the concordance; he would tell you exactly where it was!
> [BEK 13:B]

There was scarcely a home where reading the Bible was not part of the daily routine, and even fewer homes where Sunday, usually referred to as the Sabbath, was not strictly kept. As an adult, and especially in her old age, Maryann Morrison gladly followed the strict observance dictated by the Fourth Commandment, but she remembered that she was not so happy about doing so as a child:

> And my grandmother, we hate[d] my grandmother keeping us in on Sunday. We couldn't go out and play with the other children. And she would keep us there—read the Bible, read the psalms, read the Catechism on Sunday. But you can go out any other day to play—but [at the time] we hate[d] my grandmother for that! Oh, they were all religious people, my mother's side. [BEK 17:A]

Even if they had been allowed to go to play, Maryann would have found very few "other children" to play with in the neighbourhood, for they too would have been under the same strict rules. Similar sentiments are re-echoed whenever the

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67 He originally came a student minister to Marsboro in 1930, then to Milan in 1931. He returned to Cape Breton after his stay in Quebec but kept lifelong ties with friends he had made, returning many times as guest preacher.

subject comes up. Bill Young remembered the some of the feeling he had as a youngster in the 1920s and 30s and even into post-war years:

> Sunday was a dead day at out house. A dead day. You dressed up; you had your breakfast, and sat quietly around the house all day. You done nothing else. You didn't even whistle. [In my grandparents' house] they got up early on Sunday morning and they got ready for church. And my grandfather had a big, gold watch-chain. Well, it might have been dipped [i.e. plated], I don't know! But it was a big, heavy thing. And he'd take that off, and he'd put his shoelace on it when he went to church, because you're not supposed to show any vanity, eh. Remember that? No vanity. The women ought to wear a dress with collars and long sleeves. I can remember the first young girl who went to church in short sleeves... and the church pretty near all got up and sat on the other side of the aisle!
>
> Not too long ago, right in the church in Scotstown, Murray got up one night and preached against it. He would never allow anyone in there in that [--?] Immodesty, vanity! We went to church in the morning and the services were in Gaelic, and I *had* to go. Now, I was reaching the point where I could understand a bit of it, and I had to sit through this whole thing. And then, they'd go home, and I had to go to Sunday School. And then I'd go home, and we'd all have dinner, and there'd be relations or somebody dropped in. They'd be all sitting quietly around on the verandah, or something, if the weather was good. And then, somebody would be elected to say a prayer, and we'd all have to go into the house, and we'd all have to get down—kneel down while prayers were said. And then in the evening, back we'd go to church. Now, you had to have something like an earthquake or the end of the world for to stay home from that! You *had* to go—there was no way [you would be excused].
>
> We had eh, perhaps, as far as from here down to the corner there, to walk in the winter. A lot of people would come in from outlying districts and, especially in the morning service, they'd come in sleighs in the winter, and put their horses in sheds, and come in, and oh, a [?storm?] never stopped them. And Kate's folks never missed a Sunday. [BEK 3:B]

Obedience to the Ten Commandments was, of course, mandatory, and every Sunday School pupil memorised them at an early age, along with the rest of the Shorter Catechism. Very similar to the requirements of my own childhood and adolescence in Skye and Lewis, only religious books were allowed to be read on Sunday. In some homes, however, this rule applied to every day of the week, as in Bill Young's household, where his grandmother, an enthusiastic reader of spiritual books, decided on behalf of the entire family:

> Well, it had to be religious, something religious. Oh, heavenly days! I remember the first Western story she ever caught me with in the house! Well, I got rid of that fast—or she did! It wasn't on Sunday either! Whooosh! That was clear trash. [BEK 3:B]

Religion was for every day of the year, to the point that some of the young people, such as Bill Young's contemporary Johnnie "Bard" MacLeod, began to feel that even his own mother "seemed to be possessed with religion":

> She seemed to feel that God would hold it against her if she would miss a prayer meeting anywhere within the confines of the church parish. These meetings were always held on a Thursday at two o'clock in the afternoon. Consequently, whatever papa might be doing with the team of horses would usually have to be postponed at noon on that day so that mama could have one horse to go to the prayer meeting with.

He remembered too that the first time she saw a bicycle she said she'd seen "the devil going by on wheels." Within their home she let it be known that "playing cards was sinful— she'd never have them in the house". Like many of her generation, she regarded dances as taboo, and as for the use of tobacco, "poor papa could never enjoy a relaxed smoke in her presence." It was not until she discovered that Billy Graham, the American evangelist, broadcast on a Sunday that she relaxed her views about playing the radio.[68]

Despite the frequent references to the austerity of fundamental Presbyterianism, almost everyone acknowledges that the church played a very positive part in uniting the community. There was a certain security in knowing and observing the limitations set by the church, even if one felt restricted by them. Ivy MacDonald, Ruth's aunt-by-marriage looked back over the years and, comparing today's relaxed attitude to the days of her youth, she exclaimed, "Oh, my goodness! In the old days, indeed in my day, we'd never *think* of going to church without a hat, never!" Like many of her generation, the church services made a deep impression on her:

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68 John A. "Bard" MacLeod, *Memoirs of Dell*, p. 24.

> In the old days they had two [precentors]. It was usually one who did it, but then if he played out [laughs] there was another one to take over, you know. Oh, I remember years ago, as a little girl going to a church—have you been up to the cemetery where Ruth's people are buried? Well, it was before you get to that; there was a church there, a great, big Presbyterian church, and there was a cyclone and the roof blew off so they never rebuilt it, they built the one up in Milan and then one up at the MacArthur Corner. Now what was I going to say about that?...Oh yes! Going to that church, one day my brother had croup and he couldn't go to church, and we lived out near the St. Leon road then, and Papa had two horses and they were snappy horses, good. And Mama couldn't come to church without bringing my brother too, so Papa and I went to church. And he said, "Now you go in." He had to put the horses away—it was a cold, cold day. And oh! There was this *huge* big church full, *full* of people. There was a big stove with pipes going, looked to me like miles of pipes, you know, to a chimney to warm the church, you know. And I remember standing there feeling about that high, [she indicates two feet] you know. And I suppose when I closed the door all the, half of them turned around to look at me, you know, and I remember walking up, when Papa came in, walking to our seat and feeling so small with all those people there, you know. You can't believe all the people that used to be here! And when they'd sing, just the walls and the roof would just *reverberate*, you know.[69] [Aug. 11, 1992]

At no time was the singing more memorable than at the communion services, generally referred to as *na h-òrduighean*, even when speaking English. They were held twice a year, usually in June and September, and lasted five days, from Thursday to Monday inclusively, as Duncan McLeod explained:

> The communions, oh, it was a chance for people to get together. They came from a 25 mile radius...What they used to do back then when there was a sizeable community, while the Gaelic service was on in the church they would have the English service in the grove beside the church.

Everybody attended *na h-òrduighean*, and depending on the location of the church, members of the congregation would either stay with friends or relatives for the duration, or, if home happened to be nearby, then they would have a houseful of guests to attend to. Myrtle Murray who became the school-teacher in Milan in the 1920s. remembers the impact communion season made upon her as a new-comer to the area:

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69 Several people who have retained a link with Lewis have obtained copies of the cassettes *Gaelic Psalmody Recital*, 2 vols., Stornoway, 1978.

> A different custom in their religious world was the *orduighean,* spring and fall. Some people would travel to each *orduighean,* and they would go to the homes and stay with friends or relatives. I remember my husband [Jack Murray from Milan, whom Myrtle married a few years afterwards] saying when the *orduighean* was on in Milan, you never planned to sleep in your own bed, you slept wherever there was room. Probably twelve or thirteen people would come from Marsboro, or Middle District. The Milan people would go to these other places, Marsboro, Megantic, Middle District, whatever... They had these Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday—they were, let's say, religious days. I knew nothing about it until I went among the Scotch... There were four [actually five] days set aside, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, sometimes Monday, and people, some of them came by foot, and they just parked in with friends or relatives, or whatever. So they had the church services; one day they had a question box, and the elders, along with the visitors, would take these questions out, and then have a conference and discuss some, and perhaps next week they had Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday at Lingwick. Some families would follow them. I stayed over [in Milan for one of the school holidays] one year to go, and I was amazed at the hundreds of people who went into the Gaelic service and came out. And if it was a fine day on Sunday, by this time they would have an English service in the sugar bush. English was being more spoken, but a lot of the elderly people just did not talk anything but Gaelic.[70]

While the observance of *na h-òrduighean* was "different" to Myrtle, to the "Gaelickers", as she called them, it was simply taken for granted, as predictable as Christmas or Easter. Like the rest of her contemporaries, Muriel Mayhew, a former pupil of Myrtle's, could look back on many a communion season. She recalled the predominant colour of dress worn by the congregation: "Oh black! everything was black!" and the fact that there were strict rules governing who was permitted to the Lord's Table. The custom of distributing communion tokens to the "worthy" was practised in all the churches, and now that it is a thing of the past, there is a glass-case display of tokens and other items of historical interest in Scotstown church, dating back to the time of the first settlers who arrived in Winslow in the 1850s. Muriel, who has been a

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70 Mrs Murray was recorded on August 18, 1982 by Isobel Loutit and Gladys Hutley. Their tapes are deposited in the Special Collections at Bishop's University, Lennoxville. Although I recorded Myrtle in 1992 at the age of 92, and her memory was still very clear, she did not talk in such detail about *na h-orduighean.*

"volunteer historian" for St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Sherbrooke for many years, continued:

> Some of the [communion] tokens were metal; [in later years] some were card; you had to have one to take communion. If you joined the church you got one before communion... And if you had done something bad since the last one they would be taken away.

When I asked what sort of things would be termed "bad", Duncan McLeod mischievously made a joke, citing the least likely scandal that he could invent—"Oh, like going out with the minister's wife, or the organist, you know! [laughs] I don't know when you got your card back!"—his point being that *any* scandalous behaviour was likely to come under the watchful eyes of the minister and the elders.

The long services that lasted for hours[71] are part of every childhood memory, as are the stern preachers whose fiery sermons left indelible impressions on many young minds. Reflecting on her lifelong association with the church, in 1993 Muriel considered the dramatic changes she had seen over the years, and felt that many were for the better. She remembered that "mother was indignant" when Muriel commented on the harshness of the judgement that many ministers displayed,[72] and suggested they were "not above criticism themselves" as far as their own way of life was concerned. She was expressly referring to what she described as a "lack of love" in their attitude to humanity, a feature which seemed to go unnoticed by her mother's generation who "put the minister up on a pedestal":

> *It was mostly Old Testament theology, and they were learned, *good* theologians, typical of the Presbyterian church. All trained in Scotland. Most of the old-style ministers preached sermons of *fear*—not the *love* of Christ. The Rev. Malcolm MacDonald, born and brought up in Winslow, Quebec, was the

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71 In Megantic County, D. M. McKillop recalled very long Gaelic services lasting from 11 a.m. to 3 or 4 p.m. Op cit, p. 51.

72 At this point Muriel told me a story about a young woman (named) who had died in childbirth, and her newly-born infant with her. Naturally the funeral service for this beloved friend, daughter, wife, mother, sister was filled with grief, made infinitely worse by the minister (named) who chose as his text "The wages of sin is death." August 1, 1993, from memory, as she asked me not to record the names.

> first I ever heard preach an evangelical message, based on repentance and the love of Christ.
> [Fieldwork notebook, after church, August 1, 1993]

In Muriel's youth, the presentation of the gospel was generally lacking in joy and in the spirit of love. She was not the first to express such an opinion, however, as her mother's contemporary, Maryann Morrison, also made the comment that in her day "they didn't care for happy things, and happy songs, or anything". The traditions of the church blended in with every aspect of life, even with the much more ancient belief in the supernatural, as Muriel remarked with amusement when she recalled this local anecdote:

> There was another time—they used to *walk* all this distance [from Gould to Whitton]; there were no roads, I guess. But these people were going to communion, the *orduighean* was very—the sacraments were *very* important in the lives of these settler people at the time. And there was a group of them travelling and they stopped at this house and the woman was supposed to have the *buisneachd*—do you know what the *buisneachd* is?[73]—oh, put spells on people—and they called for her, but she wasn't ready to go, she was baking bread ... The *cailleach* was baking bread, she couldn't possibly go, she wasn't ready to go. So they went on; she'd said, oh, she'd catch up to them. So they went on, and she still didn't come, and she didn't catch up to them, and they finally got to the church in Gould. And went into church, and there she was, sitting down ahead of them. And the *only* thing that passed them on the way to Gould was a rabbit, so they were sure she had changed herself into a rabbit [laughs]. *That* convinced them she was a witch! [BEK 1]

Stories of witches are few and far between and are now very much a feature of the distant past. Today, only the older generation remember *na h-òrduighean* and the throngs of faithful Presbyterians which once filled the churches. Memories such as these, along with old photographs taken after communion services, are all that is left of the old-style church gatherings. [Plate 11] The much-loved psalms are gone, and the organ plays the hymns that are standard to the Presbyterian Church of Canada.[74] Only at very special services, when several church

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[73] *Buisneach* refers to witchcraft; Dwelly gives *buitseachd*, meaning "witchcraft, sorcery, enchantment".

[74] This has also been the experience of the Doukhobors. In 1975, a retired school-teacher who observed the decline of Russian psalm-singing in Canada explained to folklorist Koomza J. Tarasoff: "Perhaps the old type of

congregations join together for an occasion such the Annual Scotstown Church Picnic and Reunion[75] could any church be described as full. More than fulfilling the desire to worship together, such an occasion is generally seen as fulfilling the social aspect of life: it is the one time of year when people can get together as they once did, can catch up on visiting and on the news of family and friends. They can reaffirm the ties that bind them to the Gaelic community of the Eastern Townships.

Traditions of the Céilidh

While the entire community acknowledged *na h-òrduighean* as the spiritual high point of the season, they also appreciated the extended opportunity of visiting friends and relatives during those two weeks. Visiting, usually referred to as "going for a *céilidh*", or *"céilidhing"* even when speaking English, also had a day-to-day importance in the social lives of the Gaelic communities.[76] Bill Young described the tradition of the *taigh-céilidh* that is just as familiar to the older generations in Highlands and Islands of Scotland:

> Visitors were always dropping in. You never had to be invited, eh? Teapot was always on the stove. People'd just come and walk right in—here were no preliminaries, no... That was the pastime in the evening, you see. We had no TV or anything like that. We had to be quiet, of course. Children were to be seen and not heard in those days, and we were allowed out into the living room to sit. And of course visiting was a big thing, wasn't it? Everyone came around and visited...
>
> Time meant nothing, really. Quieter type of life, and us children'd sit around and the old folks'd tell these ghost

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psalm-singing is doomed. Why? Because the old type were based on martyr-like suffering, sung by old-timers who actually suffered in Siberia and elsewhere. The style was melancholic. Now in a new setting in Canada, the young people have not experienced the same suffering and consequently, they will not be able to take over these psalms." Recorded by Tarasoff and quoted in *Nothing But Stars: Leaves from the Immigrant Saga,* p. 50.

75 See Field Notebook, July 26, 1992; there were over two hundred people at an open-air service in Scotstown.

76 I have discussed the function of the *céilidh* in a Gaelic-speaking community in Newfoundland in *The Last Stronghold,* Chapter 3. Many of the observations also apply to the Quebec situation.

> stories. They didn't believe them, I suppose,[77] but it used to scare us and we'd be afraid to go to bed, and—[laughs]... Oh, there were those that believed in the second sight. [BEK 3:A]

Possibly the earliest written record of the *taigh-céilidh* in this part of the Eastern Townships[78] is by "home-boy" John J. Mullowney who lived with the MacLeod family in their two room cabin in Spring Hill from the mid 1880s and early 1890s. Though he started life in Liverpool, he had learned Gaelic with the local children, and quickly fitted into their way of life. Observing everything with fresh eyes, no doubt his experiences made a more lasting impression on him than if he had been born into the lifestyle. Though he does not use the word *céilidh* (for he was, by that time, writing largely for an American readership), what he describes is a lively portrait of what once was characteristic of every village in the area:

> Occasionally, when winter conditions would allow, little Katie MacDonald and her brother Dan would come over to the McLeods' to spend the evening. Then, as the blazing logs chased Winter's cold away and the flames painted eerie shadowgraphs upon the walls, we would gather around the wood stove and listen, spellbound, while our elders spun their tales. Sometimes these tales would take on the guise of ghost stories, sometimes becoming so awesome that we youngsters would creep off to bed with our hair literally standing on end...
>
> The Scotch are rich in folk-lore and the most earnest believers in premonition... our elders, especially the women, were strongly possessed of the powers of divination or premonition...I could cite many incidents to attest to that statement... [He tells a story of Mary MacLeod hearing continuous unexplained knocking; she sent the children to the door; nobody there. The next day her husband called to help a Frenchman who was snowed in; they carried him back to their house, almost frozen stiff. As they passed the door with him, they replicated the knocking sound of the door. He died shortly afterwards.] ...Coincidence? Maybe. But I have seen so many similar incidents, so many like prophecies come true that it has often caused me to wonder deeply. It has made me, candidly, credulous.

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77 This was not actually the case, as later accounts clearly indicated. Bill was probably being very cautious as this recording was made very early in the project, the first day I met him. It is not unusual for informants to hold back any acknowledgement in belief in the supernatural until they have confidence and trust that the interviewer will not judge the belief, or worse, make fun of it in any way.

78 D. M. McKillop, a contemporary of Mullowney's, refers to the activities of the *céilidh* throughout his book, *Annals of Megantic County*.

> Night after night, during the long winter evenings people would gather, first at one place, then at the other. Around a crackling brush fire they would congregate...and would swap stories, joke and sing the folk songs of their old homeland. In the meantime the women would prepare vast quantities of food... [Some evenings] the women quilted... [other times] all the moveable pieces of furniture would be thrust out of the way, and, as the fiddlers ground out their gay Scotch melodies, all hands would temporarily abandon their cares to join in joyful dances.[79]

Well over a century later, Muriel Mayhew recalled her childhood memories of winter evenings when her mother went to the prayer meetings and she had her father, and sometimes some of the neighbours would enjoy the stories in a very similar setting:

> *I can remember when my father stayed home with me, when I was about six, and we sat in the kitchen by the stove, when he would open the damper and you could see the flames of the wood burning and that would make shadows all round. That was before we had stoves that were entirely closed in. And I believe that before his day they were even more open in style. [Fieldwork notebook, Monday, Aug. 2, 1993]

> [He used to tell] stories about when he was young, when he was working away, mostly—out West, Montana, mostly—working in the woods or on a farm—anything he could find....My father was quite adventuresome. I can remember some of the stories, but not really in detail. But I do remember he [also] used to tell me stories of books that he had read . "The Sky Pilot" for one, and "The Man from Glengarry"—Ralph Connor stories. [Recorded, Nov. 14, 1990]

Duncan McLeod spoke of Muriel's father, George "Deacon"[80] MacDonald, as "a good storyteller" and "I remember he was a great reader...because there was always books up at the store, and when one book came in he read it ten or twelve times!" Along with the stories he knew from local tradition and anecdotes of his own adventures, he could re-tell the stories to Muriel, making little or no distinction between those he had heard and those he had read. Storytelling was popular no matter whose kitchen offered hospitality. Topics covered during an evening visit could

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79 John J. Mullowney, *America Gives a Chance*, the first paragraph is from p. 19, the other two from p. 25, re-ordered, my summaries within square brackets.

80 Since every family had its nicknames, this name followed Muriel in the next generation, although the incident that gave rise to the name was said to have taken place when her father was a very small boy.

be entirely on one subject (for example, second sight), or they might cover a wide range—emigration stories, historical legends, anecdotes or comical stories about local characters, ghost stories or other accounts of the supernatural. No two storytelling sessions were alike, and people never tired of hearing variations of a story they had heard many times before. Donald Morrison of Scotstown, known as a good storyteller himself, described how these sessions generally evolved:

> It would depend on what happened. Probably one night they'd get into ghost stories a lot, and another night—I can just remember on the Red Mountain [where I was born and brought up], sometimes they'd get talking about the West. You know, they'd pick a different subject about—probably Donald Morrison the Outlaw story; and they'd probably get onto something that happened locally. Sometimes it'd be a comical thing, like when they caught the two robbers that supposedly robbed the bank in Scotstown. [BEK 7:A][81]

Even in Donald's youth, the 1920s and 30s, the younger people were beginning to tell the stories in English, as several families, including his own, decided that their children should speak English "so that they would get on in the world". Likewise, in the home of Duncan McLeod, whose father was the local merchant, English was spoken to the children while the Duncan's parents could still carry on the family business in Gaelic to please their older customers. If, for example, he and his brother called at Muriel's home, just a hundred yards down the road, she and her parents thought little of switching to English. Just as in Gaelic Scotland today, both languages may be heard during house-visits.

Songs, too, were part of the entertainment at the old-style *taigh-céilidh* where old favourites such as "Mo Rùn Geal Dìleas" and "Fear a' Bhàta" could raise a chorus, and local compositions could evoke a range of responses from listeners.[82] As with the stories, themes of songs varied, though perhaps those dealing with nostalgia for the past were most frequently sung. It has been

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81 I recorded all of these and several others besides in 1976. For a list of those published, see Appendix D.

82 I have discussed this topic in greater detail in "Gaelic Song in Eastern Canada: Twentieth Century Reflections", in *Canadian Folklore canadien*, pp. 21-34.

many, many years, however, since songs were as spontaneously sung as they once were. In 1991, even the oldest Gaelic-speaking resident, Johnnie MacKenzie of Scotstown, in his hundredth year, spoke of Gaelic singing as a thing of the distant past:

> Oh I could sing—I didn't have many songs but I used to listen to a lot of them. There were some good singers in our class at that time [at the turn of the century], there were some *very* good singers, women and men. Oh I could sing a hymn, or sing a song, what little I know of them, but I wasn't keeping them in practice. [Were they all Gaelic?] No! Mostly all English. Years ago I guess it was, but it turned around to be English mostly. We had this fellow by the name of Johnnie Iain Mhurraidh [?] and he could sing any song or hymn or Gaelic song that he knew, and he was a good singer. And he was brought up by his uncle Kenneth—Coinneach [Iain ?] Mhurraidh. And they were haying over on his grandfather's farm about twelve miles out of Marsboro and a big storm came up, and instead of staying in the stable or in the barn where they left the team, they went into the house and sat down, around, in there. And this fellow used to do a lot of singing at parties was sitting up next to this—his back to a post that was up in the middle of the room. And by the time that the storm was over his Uncle Kenneth said to one of the other boys that had come too "Why don't you get Johnnie to get up?" [and give us a song]. They went to get John to get up, and he was gone! [The lightning] had gone right through his spine—he was dead! Yes, by lightning, and they didn't notice anything happen, or anything! He just sat there with his pipe in his mouth, and it was still in his mouth when they went to get him off the chair. It had gone right through his spine from the wall that was behind him, or wherever the lightning struck. Anyway, his pipe was still in his mouth as if he was still smoking, but he was gone when they got to him... Yes, he was a good singer. He could sing any song or anything that he ever learned, he could sing it to perfection, Gaelic or English...[Johnnie then recites in an emphatically stressed rhythm:]
>
> Guma slàn do'n rìbhinn òg
> Tha tàmh an eilean gorm an fheòir,
> 'S e dh'fhàg mo chridhe trom fo leòn
> Nach fhaod mi'n còmhnaidh fuireach leat—
>
> Now that was one of them, but he had quite a few others.
> [Nov. 13, 1990]

Although the singing of songs seem to have endured longest where people were most isolated, for example, in the outlying lumbercamps, singers and songs have now become the subject of anecdotes and reminiscences. Unless a visitor is invited to sing (as I have been on many occasions), then songs are not generally part of the *taigh-céilidh* any more.

As an adolescent, Duncan McLeod remembers his reaction to the more formal céilidhs that used to be organized in the village hall in Milan:

> We used to have Gaelic concerts and those that could sing'd be up on the stage—the building's gone now, but it was just beside our church[83]—the Oddfellows' Hall—in 1959 it was gone....You know, when we were kids we'd go to these concerts, and that was one thing we got sick and tired of, then length of the Gaelic songs! [Some of us] didn't understand a word of it, and [some of] the singers weren't that good either! ...The hall'd be full—oh, a hundred and fifty, probably two hundred, that was in the 1920s, that's when I remember it. The building was built in 1915, and prior to that they used to hold them in other [places] in Milan—and in people's houses, but not on a large scale. [Nov. 14, 1990]

Despite the demise of the more formal village-hall ceilidhs, the informal house-visit type still continue as an important part of the Quebec Hebridean culture. People still visit, have a "lunch" of tea and home-baking together, and enjoy discussions on the everyday topics that always had a place at the old-style *céilidh:* current items of news, local gossip, genealogy,[84] cooking, baking and household management, knitting or any other needle-craft, hobbies, medical-lore or recently publicised discoveries, weather-forecasting, farming, hunting, fishing, gold-mining, politics, religion, travel, or whatever the moment happened to bring. And interwoven with the more serious exchanges there are usually local anecdotes that have circulated in oral tradition for many years, often with an amusing or poignant side to them, reminding

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83 The Milan church, which held regular weekly services when I lived in the village, was demolished in the early 1980s. Despite the fact that it was not a very old building, compared to other buildings in the village, and was in good condition, the members preferred to "take it down" rather than see it sold for a secular purpose. [Duncan McLeod, in conversation.]

84 Since the appearance of Bill Lawson's *Register of Emigrant Families*, published in 1988, the interest in genealogy has occupied many hours of discussion. Enthusiasts will tell you their "Q number" in the book, will point out connections to other families, and reconstruct complicated genealogical networks. According to one passionate enthusiast, it is "not so much a hobby as a disease". [See Fieldwork Notebook, Aug. 3, 1992; also recorded on the same day.] There are, however, other individuals who are thoroughly bored by these long discussions and will attempt fend them off in a teasing manner by saying something along the lines of "don't let them start on this again!" When such a remark is obviously too late, or simply ignored, it is not unusual to hear "Here we go again!"

the company of their common background and of their forebears who once told the same stories.

In the closing decade of the twentieth century, tradition-bearers on both sides of the Atlantic often hark back to the days of the *taigh-céilidh*, where, during the long winters' evenings the finest and best songs and stories could be heard. There seems to be an almost inherited nostalgia for the past, not just for the traditions that have faded over the years, but for the way of life that produced them. There may be no Gaelic society on earth where "times have changed" so rapidly and so drastically as in Quebec—language, population, house-types, farming methods and agricultural trends—yet, paradoxially, I would suggest that the little village of Milan is also one of the few places where, in the1990s, the *taigh-céilidh* can still be found. Granted, the prevalence of house-visits is no longer in the winter—in fact it is in the middle of the summer. This is not just because road conditions are notoriously unpredictable, often with several feet of snow blocking roads, but because there is virtually nobody left during the winter except Ruth Nicolson. As any of the locals would quickly point out, the deep snow didn't stop them in the past, and it wouldn't stop them today; "it's just that times have changed." Even within the past two decades, a comparatively short association with Quebec, I have seen clear evidence of that for myself: when I lived in Milan for a year in 1975-76 there were still just enough people of Hebridean descent to make it possible to have a spontaneous *céilidh*. Nobody had to be asked; there were the McLeods (Duncan and Kay), the Nicolsons (Ruth and David), and Mary MacLeod, the MacDonalds, and the Rosses, who all lived in the heart of the village of Milan, and on the edges were the MacArthurs, the Shermans, the Morrisons, the Stewarts, and the Moulands, not to mention numerous families in the nearby communities of Scotstown, Dell, Gould, and so on. Today in Milan there is only Ruth Nicolson, as the entire village is French, with a few "mixed" houses where both French and English are known, but where most of the visitors are French, and where television culture has completely taken over. If one would wish to experience a "real *taigh-ceilidh*" then a visit to Ruth's would

perhaps be as close as any to be found on either side of the Atlantic.[85]

My two summers living with Ruth not only enriched my entire experience but gave me an insight I would never have attained otherwise. To refer to her house as the last *taigh céilidh* is no exaggeration. Scarcely a day passed but somebody, quite unannounced, arrived at her door to visit. Some days there were several sets of visitors, each welcomed and treated to characteristic hospitality. Baking was scheduled into most days, not as part of a plan, or even as a chore, but more a reflection of a way of life: it was exactly as it had been in 1975 when, on the many occasions I "dropped in" she would be attending to something in the oven, or making tea. On snowy, winter days when I called in passing, Ruth was often at her baking-board, and even if she had finished, the smell of fresh baking was the first thing a visitor would notice the moment the main door was opened. She had no definite pattern that she could describe; as I observed her, she would make her decisions: today baking powder biscuits [oven scones], tomorrow oatmeal scones, the next day cookies, brownies, or some other favourite recipe, and most days "something for dessert" because the oven was hot.[86] Living with Ruth in the summer months when the kitchen was hot, the door was always ajar, and the smell of baking wafted through the screen-door so that all who approached the house would playfully remark upon the alluring smell. Often the visit would begin with good-natured teasing, suggesting that such a delicious smell was why Ruth had so many visitors in the first place. But of course that was not the case. Almost all of the summer visitors had travelled by car at least ten miles (Scotstown is the nearest village), and some even boasted several thousands of miles "just to visit Ruth". While the teasing always made her laugh and return some witty remark, for she knew quite well they had other friends and relatives to visit, Ruth would welcome each one into

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85 To my great regret, I have come across just as much, if not more, evidence of the take-over of television culture in Hebridean homes which were, within my own lifetime, well-known for *céilidhean.*

86 The recipes are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6.

her kitchen. Rarely would the company get beyond the kitchen to sit in the living room,[87] but would be invited to "take a seat" as soon as they were inside. The two wooden rocking chairs were usually favoured, unless guests were asked to sit round the table to eat, then any or all of the six wooden chairs would be occupied, and finally, the daybed would hold the remaining guests. In the course of an afternoon or evening I have seen all the seating filled, and Ruth bring some of her dining-room chairs to the edge of the kitchen. Only when everyone else was comfortably installed would Ruth sit down, often on a wooden stool near the stove, as she invariable needed to keep an eye on that side of the kitchen.

Before long, the kettle, which was always kept full on top of the woodstove, was brought to the boil, and if Ruth felt comfortable enough to accept help from anyone else, (for example, her sister), she would ask her[88] to fetch out the china cups and saucers from the cabinet to help set the table. Even if it did not seem very long since the last meal, guests were invited to a generous spread, consisting of an inviting array of home-baking, usually with a variey of jams that Ruth would identify individually—by the maker, "that one is Noëlla's, Wayne's wife", or by the locality of berries—"we picked these out by Dell cemetery", or by the season—"that's some of last year's..." And so the socializing would progress, with all the company enjoying the "lunch"[89] and the visit. On many occasionss the entire evening was spent around the kitchen table, long after the teapot had been emptied several times. The participants would remain there, like players in a serious game, where one conversational move would send the entire group into fast-moving exchanges and banter. All of a

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87 There were two exceptions during my stay: the first was when the daughter of a local man who had moved to Ontario over thirty years ago brought with her a visitor from Scotland. The second was when a friend of mine, originally from Montreal though living in Milan, came to call. Although this room has a television, we only watched it once, when there was a programme about the Loch Ness monster.

88 It would not occur to Ruth to ask any men to help. Staying at the house I was pleased to be included among those permitted to help.

89 The term could be used for any time of day that guests would sit down to eat this kind of spread. See also Chapater 5, when the women at a spinning bee would stop to eat.

sudden, one participant might dart in and draw everyone to a halt with a long-forgotten local anecdote that immediately captured every imagination or set them all off again in another direction. The dynamics of one evening would never be repeated at another, even when the players returned for second round.

For example, though Ruth and her younger sister, Bernice, had a three-week reunion in Milan every summer, they would eagerly listen to all the local stories they had heard throughout their lives. A simple action like pouring out tea elicited a memory such as *"Do you remember, Ruth, Grandpa would get mad if he saw us asking for tea *"Oh, cailleach na té!"* Often the one would prompt the other into telling a favourite episode: "Oh, tell the one about..." and so it would go, "I remember the time..." There was often uproarious laughter, especially when their Aunt Ivy, visiting from Scotstown, would add her wry perception of a situation, or tease "the girls"—Ivy is eight years older than Ruth—about some amusing incident. Over a number of these occasions a fairly detailed portait of their family life gradually emerged, which included certain aspects that both of them claimed to have long since forgotten.

Since this was the setting for many of my observations, it would serve two purposes to piece together details from these *céilidhean* to form a composite account of Ruth's and Bernice's family memories: first, it will show how the interaction between the participants of the *céilidh* eventually builds up a picture of life; and secondly, perhaps more importantly, it will acquaint the reader with these lives that are so significant to the community of Milan and to this project.[90]

Ruth's and Bernice's father was known to everyone as Norman "Doak" [MacDonald], and since their mother died when the children were young, both sets of grandparents made strong impressions on the family. There was "Little Grandma" with whom Bernice and her sister Alma, a year older, lived, and there

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90 This account is based on notes in my Fieldwork Notebook (re-ordered) and a short recording of Bernice, Aug. 14, 1992.

was "Big Gramma" who originally lived on the family farm in Milan (now owned by Peter Jort), who stayed there for the rest of her life, and who, from all accounts, was a formidable character. All of them were Gaelic-speakers, though "Big Gramma" began to talk English to her grandchildren—not always quite grammatically.

> Bernice: *"Big Gramma" used to say things like "Get me the pan dog" for "Get me the dog-pan," to feed the dog. Well, she always said it the same and we never corrected her—she wouldn't have taken kindly to that! That was "Big Gramma"; her name was Ishbel [MacDonald]—she was kind of stern; she didn't show much sympathy. But she had had a hard life—her husband had been killed by a falling log at the age of 39, leaving her with six children to look after, including [our] Mother, who was four years old when her dad was killed. She had lost other children in infancy—they died very suddenly, with chicken-pox or measles. She was married to her first cousin. Her eldest son was old enough to take over the farm when his father died, but he also died as the result of an accident. On the way to church the horse kicked over the traces and he was found with a crushed pencil in his top pocket, as if the horse had kicked him in the chest. "Big Gramma" lived with our father and his family because they actually moved into the old folks' farm. When our mother died, Ruth was eleven and a half, I was two and Alma was three. Momma was pregnant when she died, the baby had died in-utero, and though she went to the doctor, but—she hadn't been too well. The baby didn't abort, and Momma died. The older children stayed with their father and "Big Gramma", who took over from their mother, and though she did most of the work she also taught Ruth to do house-work. Ruth used to milk the cows too.
> [Fieldwork Notebook, composite account]

Meanwhile, the two little ones, [Bernice and Alma] went to stay with "Little Grandma" (Mary) in Dell.

> We went over there right away [after our mother died]. And we slept on straw matresses, we liked that, Alma and I were real happy when we saw that...
>
> Well, in looks "Little Grandma" was very short, she was in her 60s, and so sweet and gentle, never angry. She talked Gaelic with Grandpa all the time, and would throw a little bit of English in when we were kids. And we had a hired man over there who was French then she'd go back and forth...[Then we would get confused because she didn't use one language at a time, and Alma] used to say things like "Oh look at the big *cuileag mòr*!" [sic] And I always asked her "Can I *sguap* the floor" We swept it twice a day after meals and I liked to do it, so I'd ask...
>
> Little Grandma was so nice, we just loved her. She was never angry—she was very special...Grandpa was a bit severe, and she'd say [loudly whispered] "Wait till Grandpa goes to the barn." But one time we had a [wooden, home-made] rattle and

we never found it till years later [as one of them had hidden it to stop the children being so noisy]... And he would [play with us sometimes] and hold on to our hands and we'd be on his knee, [saying]

Hob-ob aig an each a' dol asteach a Linwick[91]
Bidh e turabaich[92] 's a bramadaich[93]
Gu ruig e taigh Iain ?Ruidhlear.

[The horse goes hop-op, going into Linwick
He'll be swaying about, and farting
Till he reaches the house of Ian the Dancer (reeler).]

[Then when] I was five and Alma was six, and we went back home to the farm in Milan so that we could go to school. When we got home, we were with Ruth and Helen and Charlie but I don't think they understood Gaelic as much as we did. Until then, I didn't know our other grandmother, "Big Gramma", at all, and she was living with us [on the family farm]. She was quite strict and she didn't waste any smiles, she had a lot of hardships in her life. But she didn't seem to have much time for children; if we ran around it iritated her and we'd have to scurry out of the way.

The two girls shared only a short time together at the family homestead before Ruth left Milan to go to MacDonald College, a teacher-training college in Montreal. Shortly afterwards, however, their father remarried a local woman, Marion Matheson, who, happily, was a good step-mother to the family and could soften the influence of "Big Gramma's" stern ways. Many years were to pass before Ruth and Bernice could again share a home together in Milan, if only twice a year for a holiday. Somehow, however, the daily routine of Ruth's kitchen automatically takes them back to the family farm in a way that no other event can. A simple operation like cleaning off the stove after baking scones reminds them again of "Big Gramma". Suddenly Bernice remembers:

Oh she was the one who had the feathers [for the stove]—I think they both did! Just a lot of feathers tied up in a bundle with string, especially for cleaning off the stove, after making scones.[94] Oh, there was a warming oven at the side,

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91 *Lingwick*

92 Dwelly gives *turabal* = oscillating; and *turraban* = constant rocking motion of the body.

93 Dwelly gives *bramadaich* = state of being swelling.

94 All the croft houses in the vicinity of my grandparents kept a *badag*, as it was called, for cleaning the *grate*, (in my childhood, the Rayburn), or the

> for water, and we kept it filled to have hot water for the dishes, and you'd see the steam coming up.[95] Gramma used to make barley scones, and she used to make "water barley scones" and they were very thin, but I didn't like the flavour of them.

It was the ordinary, everyday things of life that were woven into the fabric of every *céilidh*—talk of how people lived and how they made a living, with the occasional diversion of a story or a joke.[96] In such a setting, it is only in the telling and re-telling of memorates and anecdotes that traditions of family and community are valued and continue to be kept alive. Whether the *céilidhean* are held throughout the winter evenings, as was the custom in Lewis, or in Quebec before so many people moved away, or whether they are in summertime, around Ruth's kitchen table, it scarcely matters. The importance of these social events lies in the fact that they not only entertain but they also reaffirm the cultural identity of the participants whose Hebridean forebears enjoyed similar social interaction.

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top of the griddle. Every time my grandfather killed a hen Granny would keep the tail and/or wing feathers to make a new *badag*.

95 Before most homes had hot-water plumbing, a fairly common design of kitchen range was one that incorporated a small water-tank, which Bernice calls an "oven", attached to the side of the stove. When water was needed for dishes or washing it would be ladled out with a "dipper" or small saucepan that was usually kept on a hook nearby. Since the stove was almost always lit for cooking, there was seldom a shortage of hot water.

96 In his quest to define what evokes a "sense of belonging", Anthony P. Cohen suggests that people employ "whatever means come to hand: the use of language, the shared knowledge of genealogy or ecology, joking, the solidarity of sect, the aesthetics of subsistence skills..." He points out that these are all "processes which occur close to the *everyday* experience of life, rather than through rare, formalized procedures." Op cit, p. 6, his emphasis. The features which I will be discussing throughout the rest of this thesis will very much deal with the "*everyday* experience of life".



Plate 1
George N. and Annie Macdonald with their daughter Muriel, [Mrs Herbert Mayhew], Milan, Quebec, 1916.
From the collection of Muriel Mayhew.



Plate 2
Bill Young, Scotstown, 35th Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery, Sherbrooke, Dec. 7 1939, the night before they left Sherbrooke, Que. bound for Liverpool.

From the collection of Kay Young.

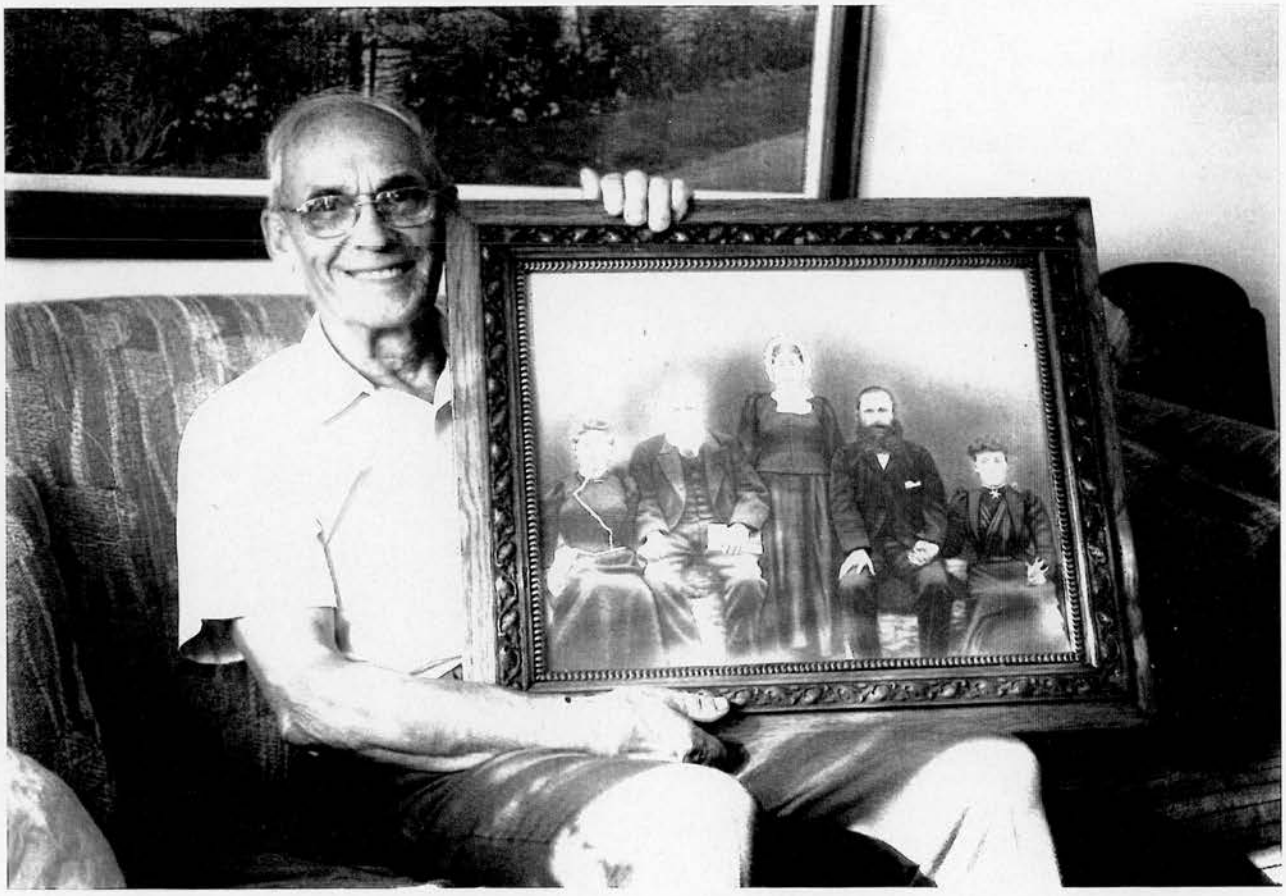


Plate 3

Angus Morrison, son of Maryann Morrison, in his home in Marsboro, 1992, holding a framed family portrait of his mother's family who emigrated from Geocrab, Harris to Quebec on the *Siberia* in the 1880s. Left to right are:
Mary (Maryann's sister, age c. 18), Donald Morrison (Maryann's grandfather) Lexie (Maryann's mother), Samuel Morrison (Maryann's father), and Maryann (age c. 16). Lexie is wearing a *currac*, a frilled bonnet, which was the custom for married women of her day.

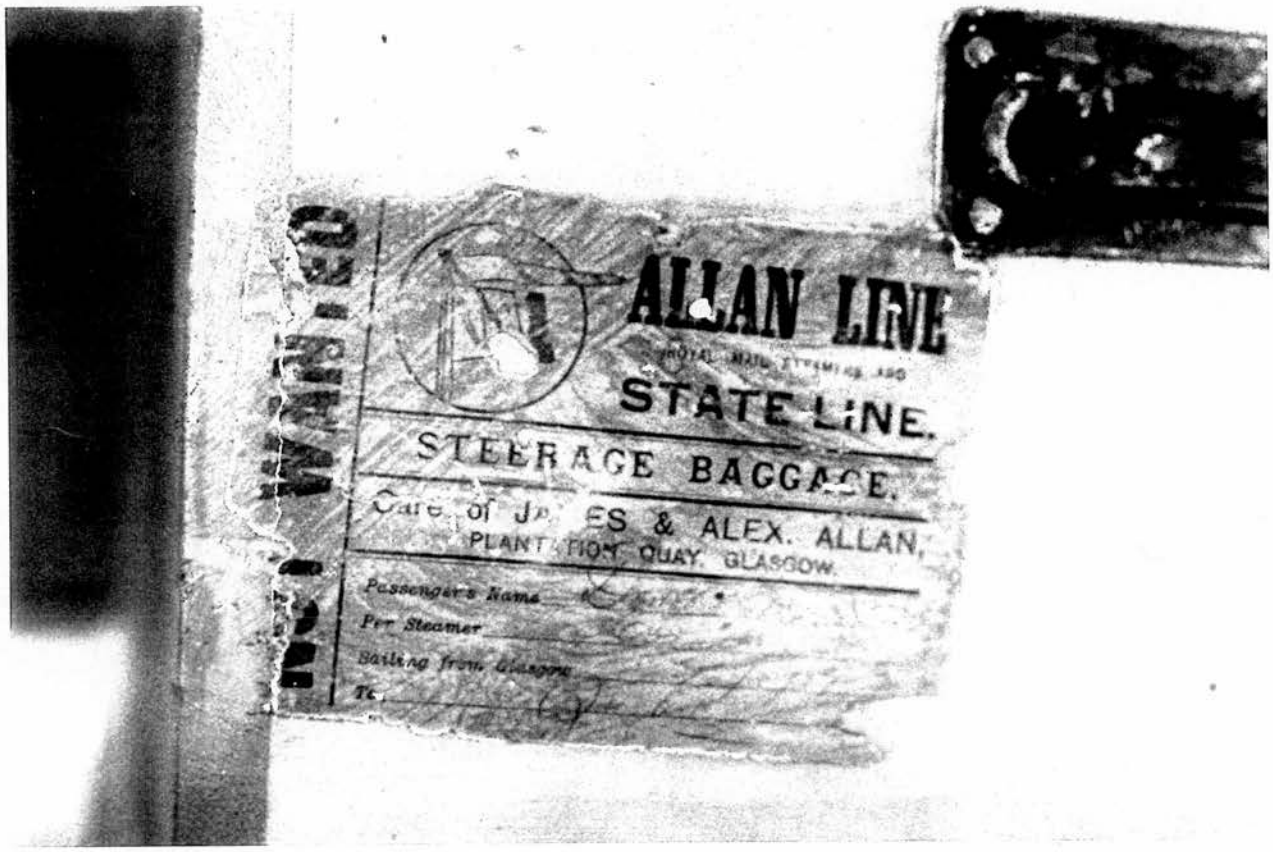


Plate 4
Close up of the label on a wooden trunk brought over from Scotland by Hilda (Stewart) MacRae's people:

ALLAN LINE
ROYAL MAIL STEAMERS AND
STATE LINE.

STEERAGE BAGGAGE.

Care of JAMES & ALEX ALLAN
PLANTATION QUAY, GLASGOW.

Passenger's name: Donald Mac-----?
Per Steamer *Corinthian*
Sailing from Glasgow: 28/5/87 [07?]
To: Quebec

NOT WANTED is written down the side of the label to indicate items not needed during the voyage.

Photographed 1992.

Plate 5

> We raised a shanty which now serves as a shed for my young cattle; I would not pull it down, though often urged to do so, as it stands in the way of a pleasant prospect from the window; but I like to look on it, and recall to mind the first years I passed beneath its lowly roof. We need such mentions to remind us of our former state; but we grow proud, and cease to appreciate our present comforts.
>
> Catherine Parr Traill, 1836



Squared-timber log house built by Donald MacRae [far right] who was born in Lewis in 1866 and emigrated to Quebec at the age of eight.

> He built it around 1894. He squared the logs with the broadaxe... there's still some of it standing, just the bottom few logs [approx. 6 ft high]. And just a few years back [1976] the whole house was still standing; it's on the next farm [to mine] where my grandparents lived. And he was over 90 when he died. [grand-daughter, Miriam, 1992]

The house was not occupied at the time of the photo in 1932. L to R: Annie MacRae, Emily MacRae [Donald's wife, mother of Annie and the others], Lucy, Johnnie, Dan, Harvey, and Ted MacRae, with Grandfather Donald. Unidentified girl with dog in front.

From the collection of Miriam MacRae Holland, Gould, Quebec.



Plate 6
Miriam MacRae Holland, holding her great-grandfather's broad-axe which was used in the building of the family's first home. Photographed outside her own house which she built herself in the late 1970s of logs cut by chain-saw and stripped by a hand-held spoke-shave. Gould, Quebec.

August, 1993.

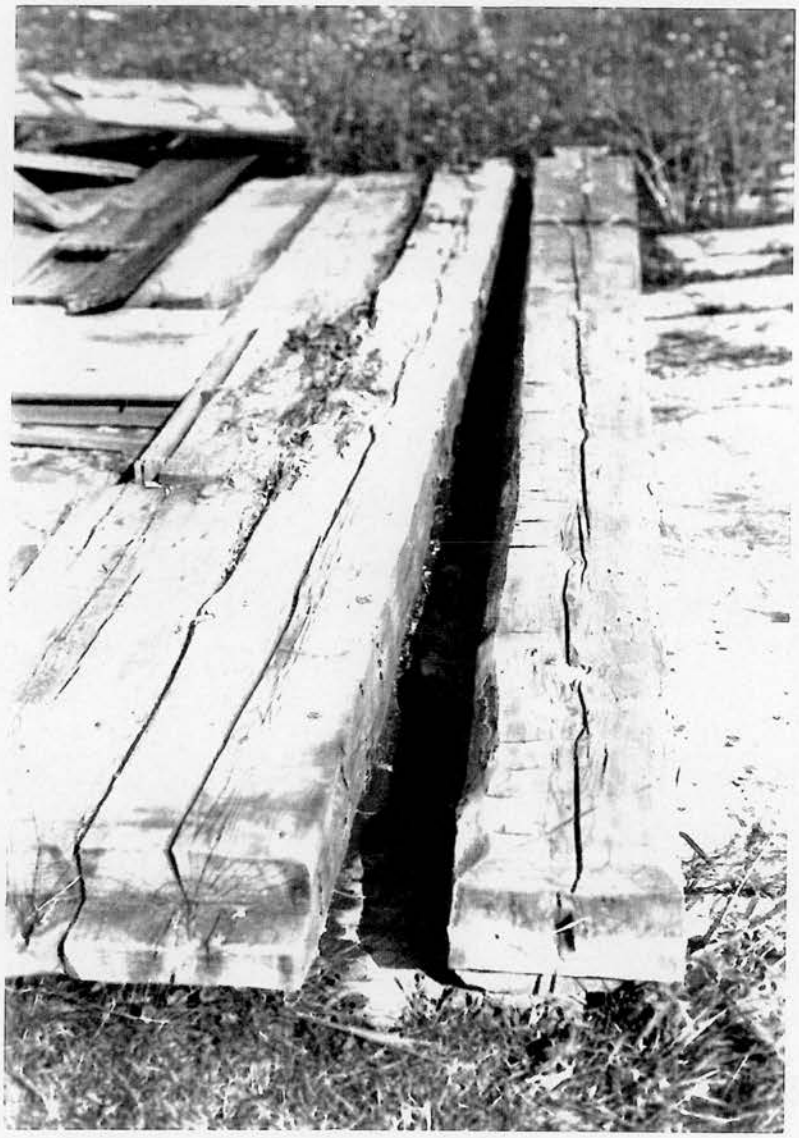


Plate 7
Detail of dove-tail on a squared beam, hand-hewn with broad-axe.



Plate 8
"Scotch" house, now abandoned, with rowan tree.



Plate 9

R. E. and Maryann Morrison on their farm at Cruveg, Marsboro, 1940. All around them is the land which was cleared by their family in the years after they took up the land-grant in the 1880s. From the collection of Angus and Mary Morrison.

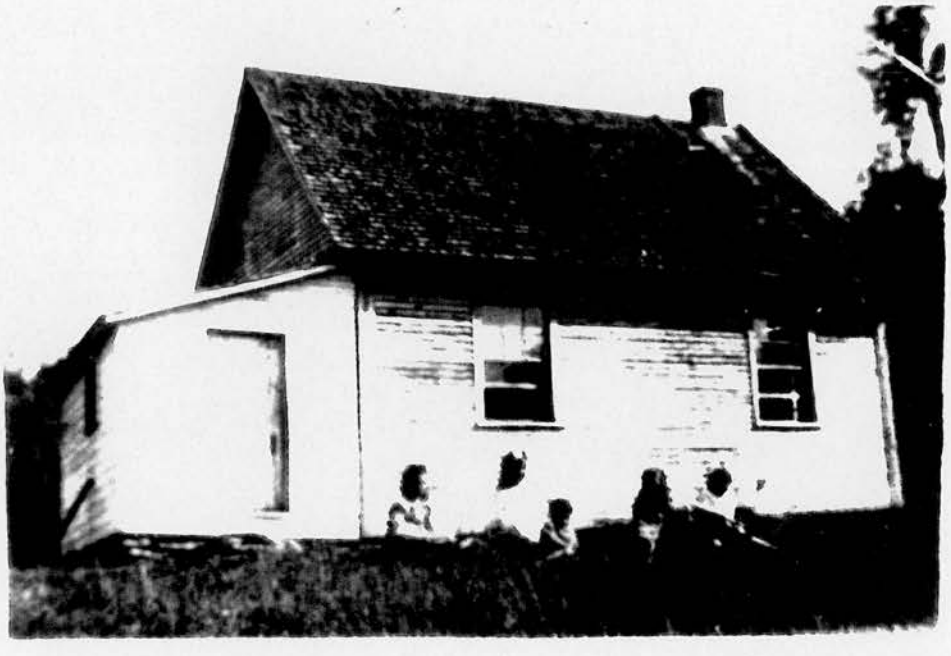


Plate 10

The Morrison children were all educated in "the old school house", Victoria school, situated on the road that leads from Cruvag into the main settlement of Marsboro. Late 1920s. Today there is not even the foundation left as the whole area is covered in tall timber and thick bush.

From the collection of Angus and Mary Morrison.

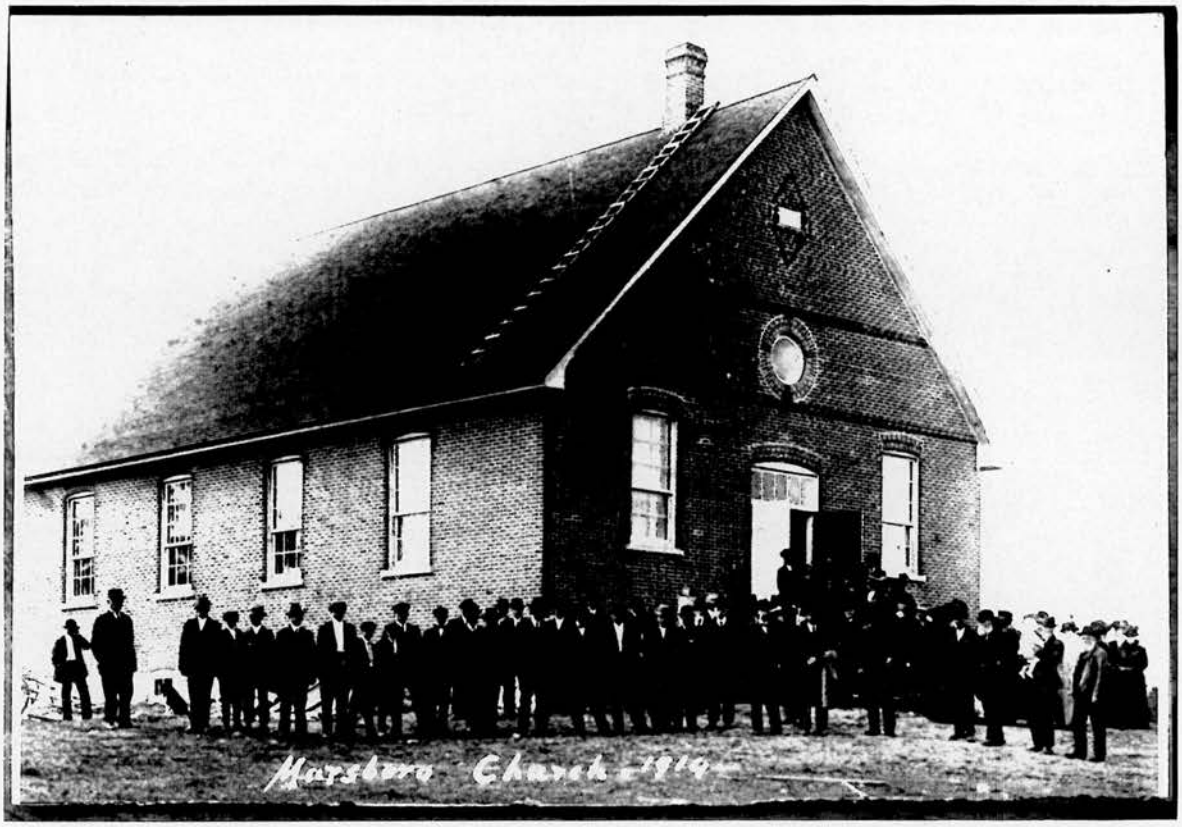


Plate 11

Marsboro Church, some of the men and youths attending the Communion service, 1914. Most of the women are in the background. Today the church has a spire which was built on after the building was bought by the Catholic Church.

From Muriel Mayhew's collection, now displayed in the cabinet of Scotstown Presbyterian Church.

(a)



(b)

This do in remembrance of Me.—Luke 22: 19

Presbyterian Church in Canada

COMMUNICANT'S CARD

NEC TAMEN CONSUMEBATUR

Congregation

Communicant

Address

Elder

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come.—1 Cor. 11:26.

Presbyterian Publications, Toronto.

Plate 12

(a) Communion tokens commonly used till the 1940s. On one side are the symbols of the bread and wine on the table, and on the other is inscribed THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME I CORR. XI 24.
(b) A modern communicant's card. (Typed on the display is: COMMUNION TOKEN AND MODERN COMMUNION CARD.)

Displayed in Scotstown Presbyterian Church, both were donated by the Rev. Robert D. Bhe, Scotstown, 1964 - 1967.



Plate 13

Angus Morrison and his bride, Mary, [Marie Claire Martin] on their wedding day, Aug. 22, 1940. The ceremony took place in the church in Marsboro, and the reception [photographed] was on the Morrison farm at Cruveg. Angus's mother, Maryann, made the cake.

From the collection of Angus and Mary Morrison.



Plate 14

Angus and Mary Morrison on the site of the family farm, which is "now all growed over." As he pointed to a field completely wooded with birch and conifers, Angus commented "that was where we used to hay... It makes me sick to see it like this... Oh they worked hard!" Today, the site of their family home is on the edge of a tree plantation .

August, 1992.

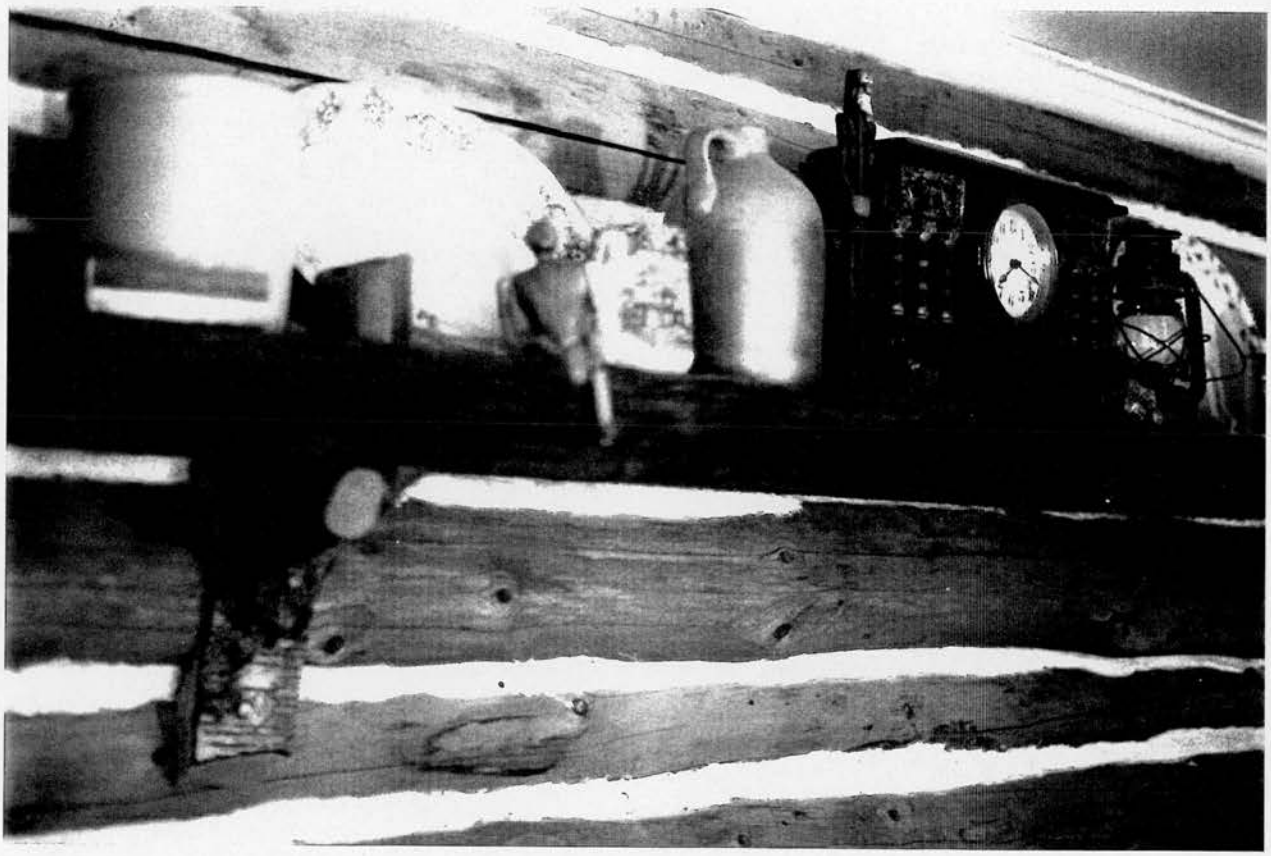


Plate 15
Inside Miriam MacRae Holland's log house, which is built on the farm on which she grew up, next to her grandparents' farm in Gould. Note that the logs are not squared, but caulked in between and cemented over. The corners are saddle-notched. Family possessions from days past: butter crock, ashet, wooden hand-carved dancing doll, delft mug, syrup crock, grandparents' parlour clock, storm lantern.

August, 1992.



Plate 16
Preparing for a Quebec winter, 1930s: Hay load in Gould, with Harvey MacRae on the cart. Written on back: "Stack is 23 feet high, 18 feet wide and 40 feet long."

From the collection of Miriam MacRae Holland, Gould, Quebec.



Plate 17
Two of Miriam's Highland cattle, pasturing in the summer on a field beside her parents' old house. She commends the hardiness of these animals which can even be wintered outside in the bitter cold of Quebec, as they shelter among the trees by the house and forage for food from the lower branches.

August, 1993.



Plate 18

A lumber camp operated by Neil Buchanan in North Whitton, by the White River, c. 1923. Muriel Mayhew's father, George N. Macdonald, was one of the crew:

> This was a big woods operation; they're probably sitting on the stable roof as the camp was better constructed than that.

On ridge of roof: Ed Buzzell, Arthur MacDonald (Whitton), George N. Macdonald, John D. Smith, John Nicolson (Scotstown, then of the Yard, [Robert's father], Leslie MacLeod (Milan, brother of Mary "Allan"), Norman MacLeod (Milan, not related to Lesle).
Sitting in middle is the owner, Neil Buchanan, and his young son John, with Murdo Hughie MacLeod (Gould) on the lower edge.
In front: Mrs Tupper (née Mary MacDonald), Margaret Buchanan, her mother Maggie Buchanan (wife of Neil), Margaret's cousin Katie Buchanan.

From the collection of Muriel Mayhew

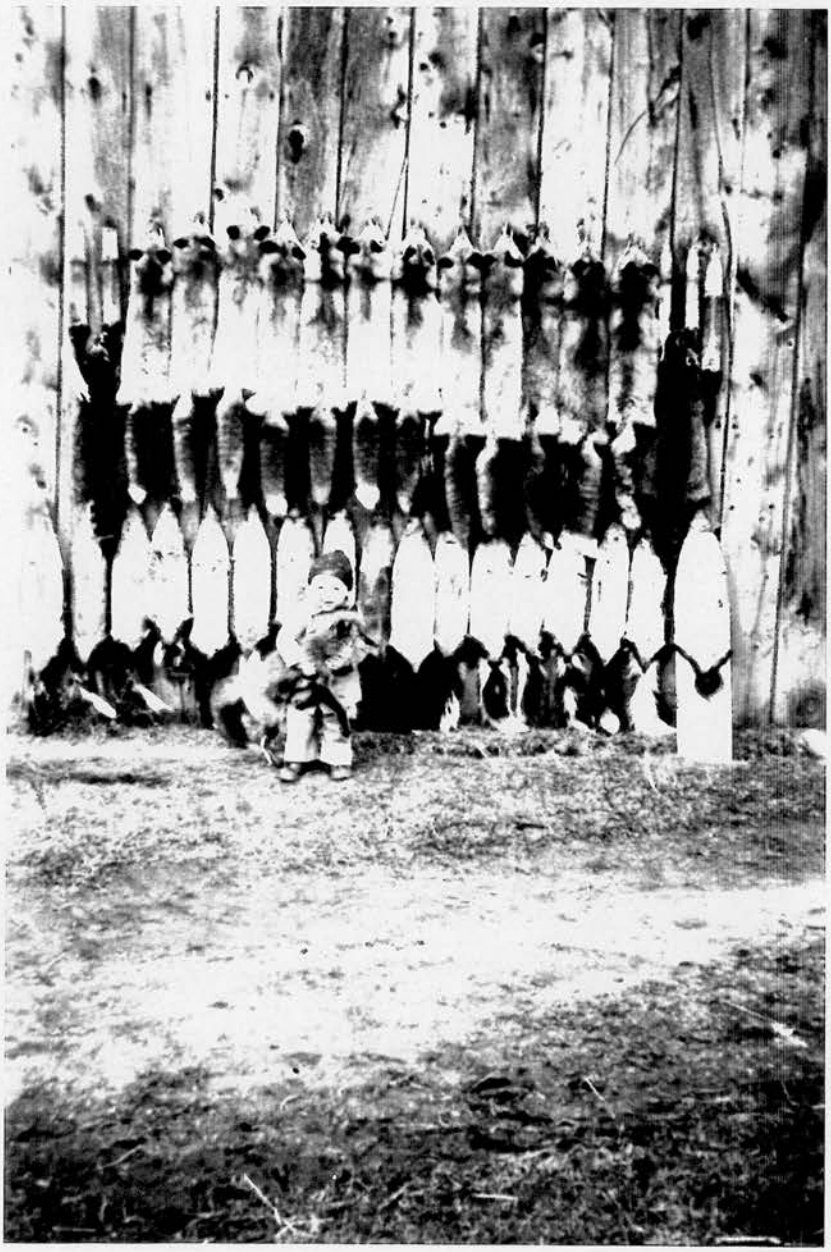


Plate 19

Fox-farming: pelts nailed to a barn wall, with child and fox in foreground. Gould, Autumn 1945. Miriam MacRae Holland, Gould notes that it was probably not her father's farm, "though he [Harvey] did very well at that... he quit 1946."

From the collection of Miriam MacRae Holland, Gould, Quebec.

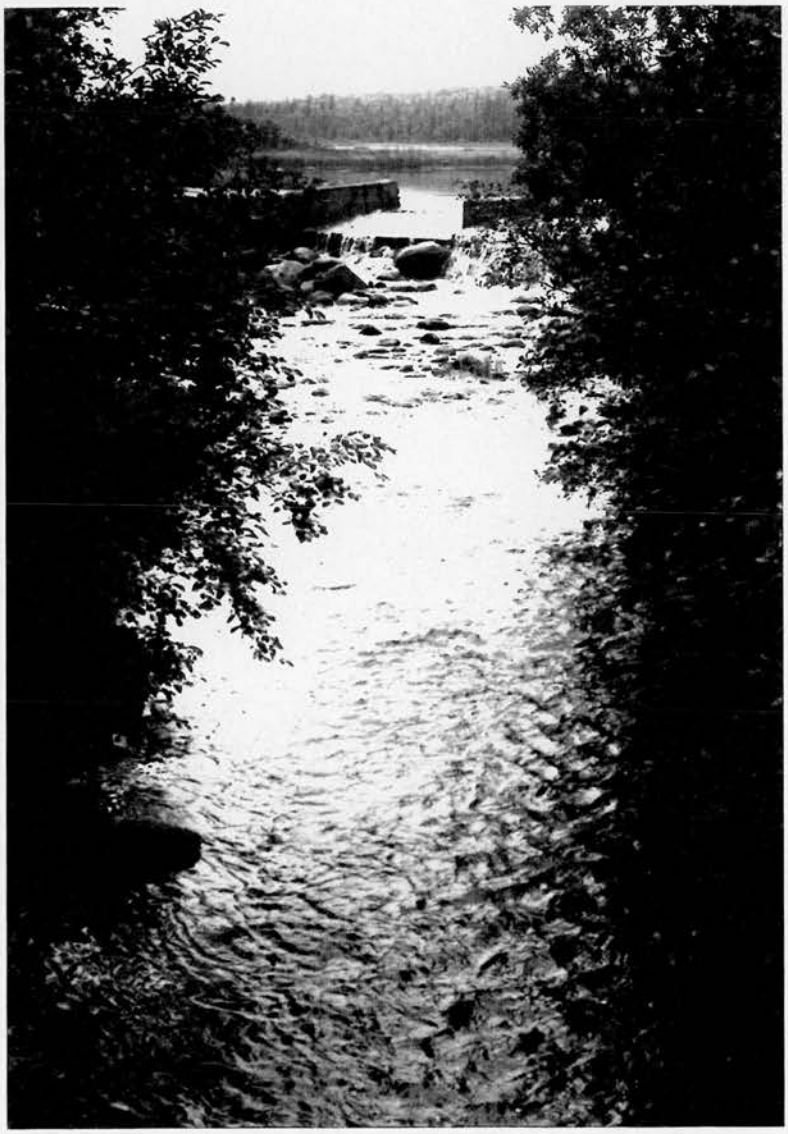


Plate 20
One of the many dams constructed by the Scots settlers to harness power for milling. "Big Woods Road" near St. Leon, now disused and abandoned.

August, 1993.

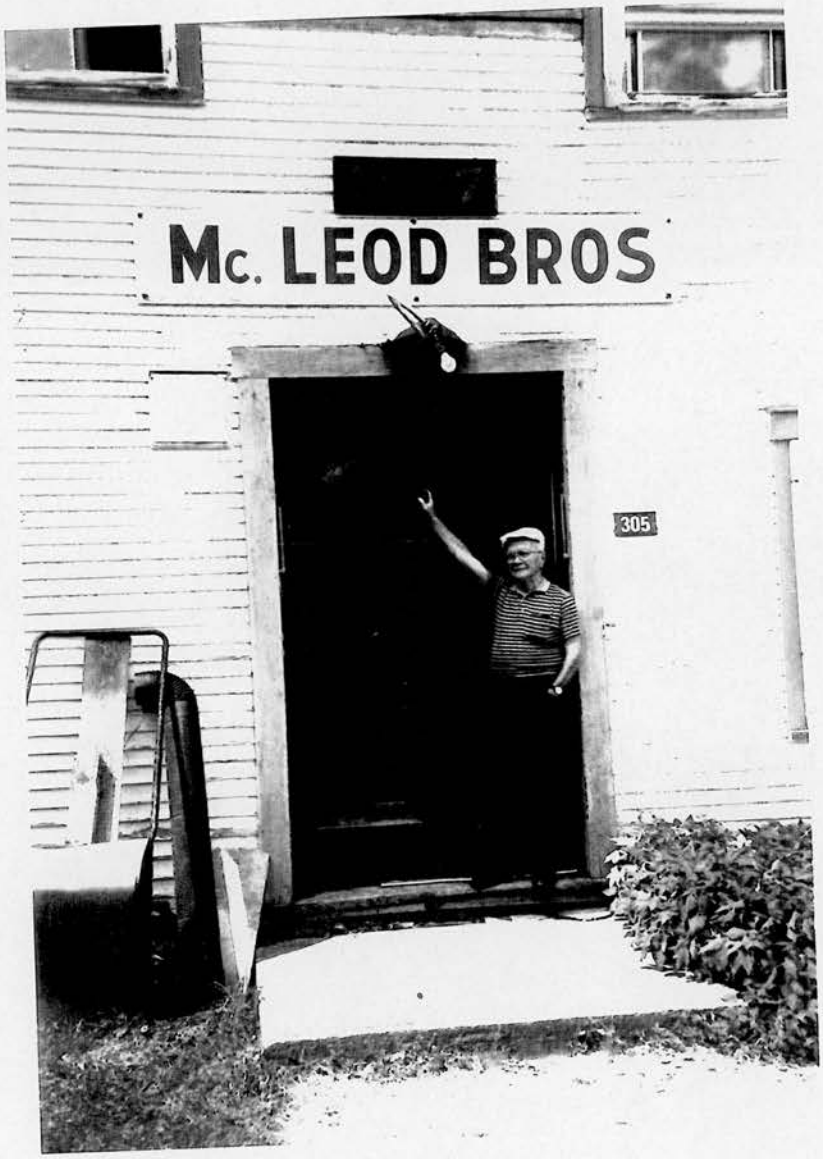


Plate 21
Duncan McLeod outside the family store, Milan, 1992.



Plate 22

John Norman MacKenzie [Seonaidh Tharmaid, also known as "Seonaidh A' Mhuilleir" (John, the miller's son)] and Christie [Christine] Effie Murray, on their wedding day, March 31, 1920. Their daughter, Jean, noted that "they were married at Mom's home in Milan, in the Yard".

From the collection of Mr & Mrs Alex (& Jean) MacIver.



Plate 23
Christie's silk wedding dress, with pearls and marcasite, hand-made by her sister. Photographed on a tartan blanket, 1992. "I told Jean I'm going to be buried in that dress."

Photographed August 1992.



Plate 24
Fine needlework characterized many home-made items of clothing, even undergarments. Ruth's mother's camisole, hand-stitched cotton, with hand-crocheted trim.

Photographed August 1992.

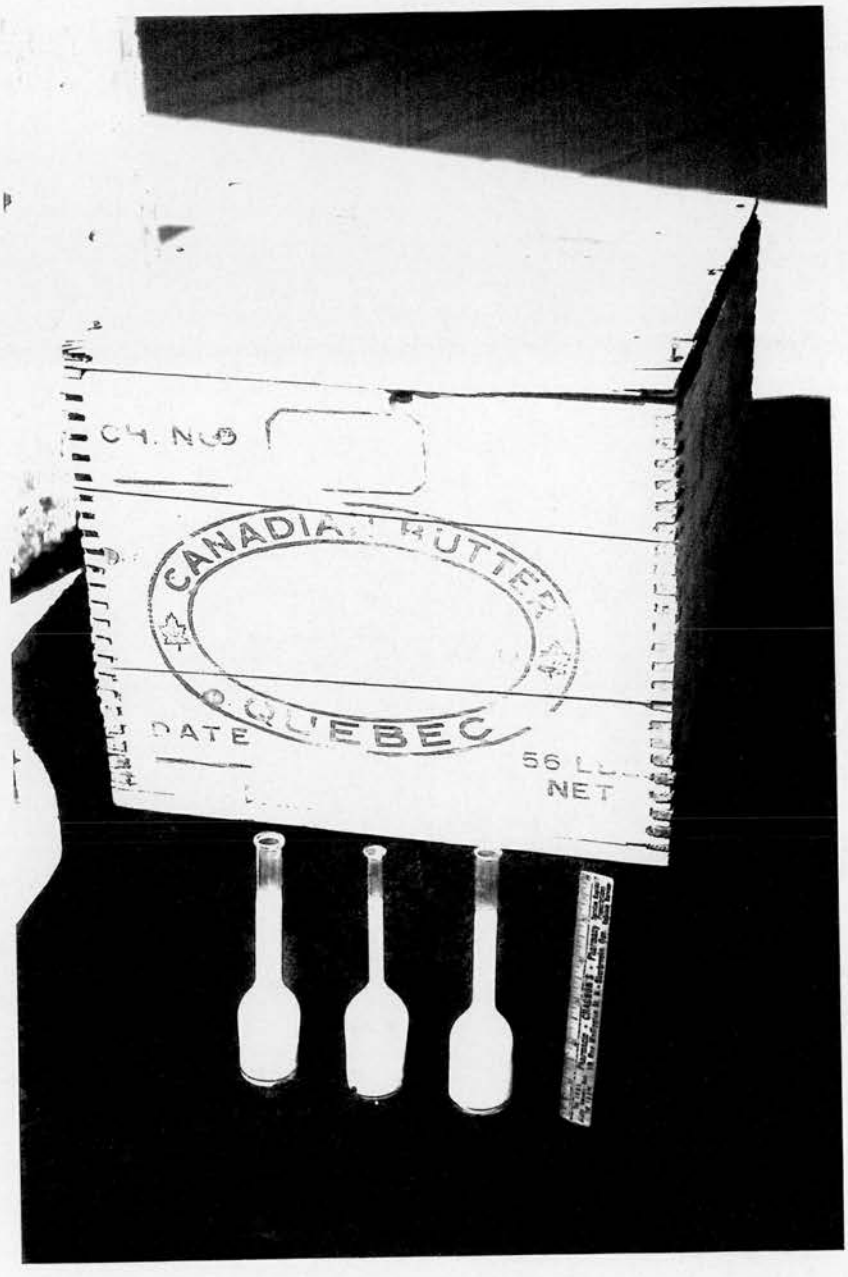


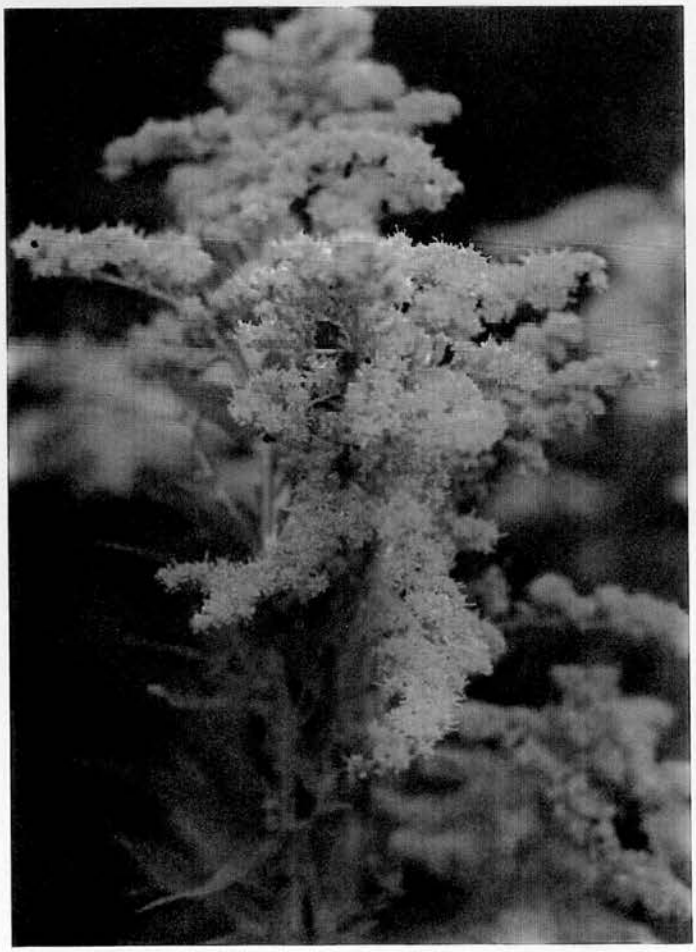
Plate 25
Wooden butter box from MacDonald's creamery in Milan, with four bottles from the centrifugal machine used measuring butter-fat content. Approximately 1930.

Photographed at Ruth Nicholson's house, Milan, August 11, 1992.

Plate 26



(a) Goldenrod, the most common plant used for dyeing, here growing by the roadside.



(b) Close-up of goldenrod.

Plate 27



(a) A field of buckwheat, next to a crop of oats, on a farm outside Milan on the road to Scotstown.



(b) Close-up of buckwheat

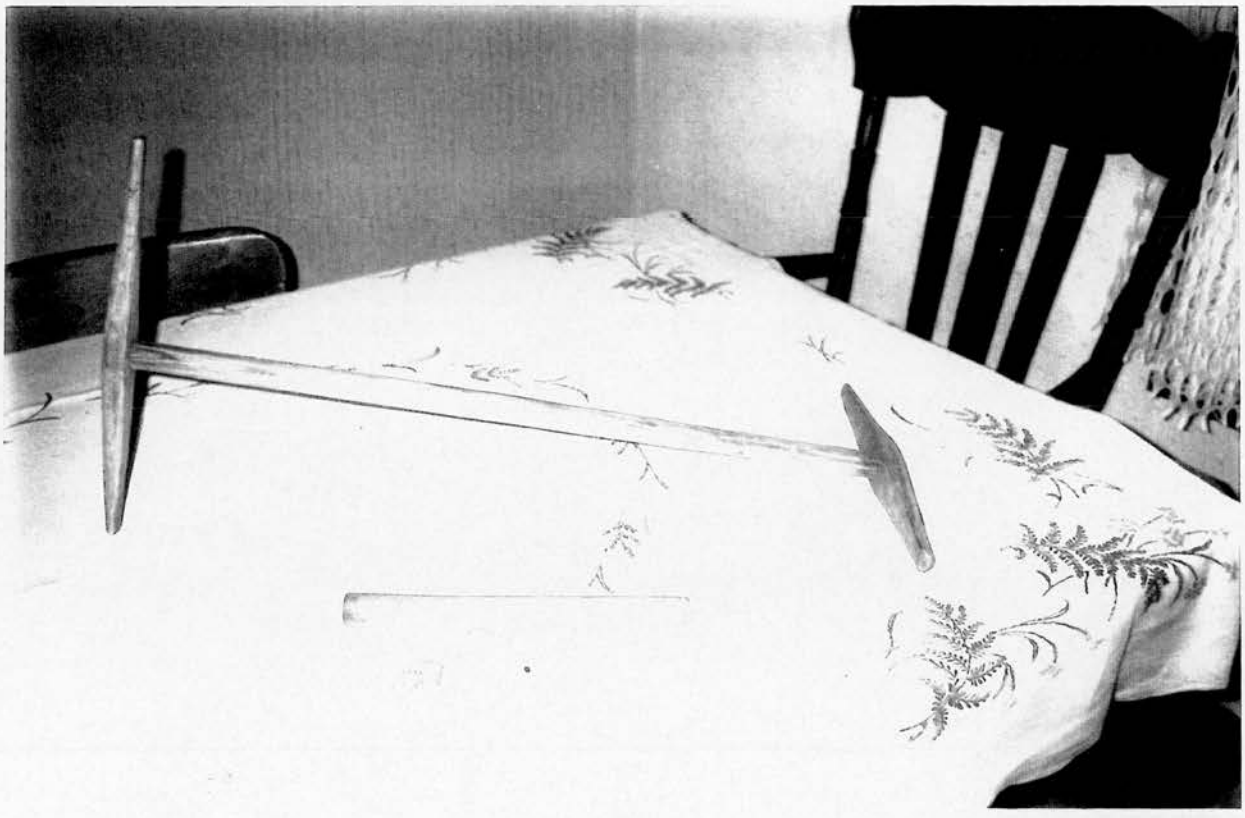


Plate 28
On Ruth's table are her grandmother's *crois iarna* for winding hanks of wool and her *dealgan* which she used for twisting together her hand-spun wool.

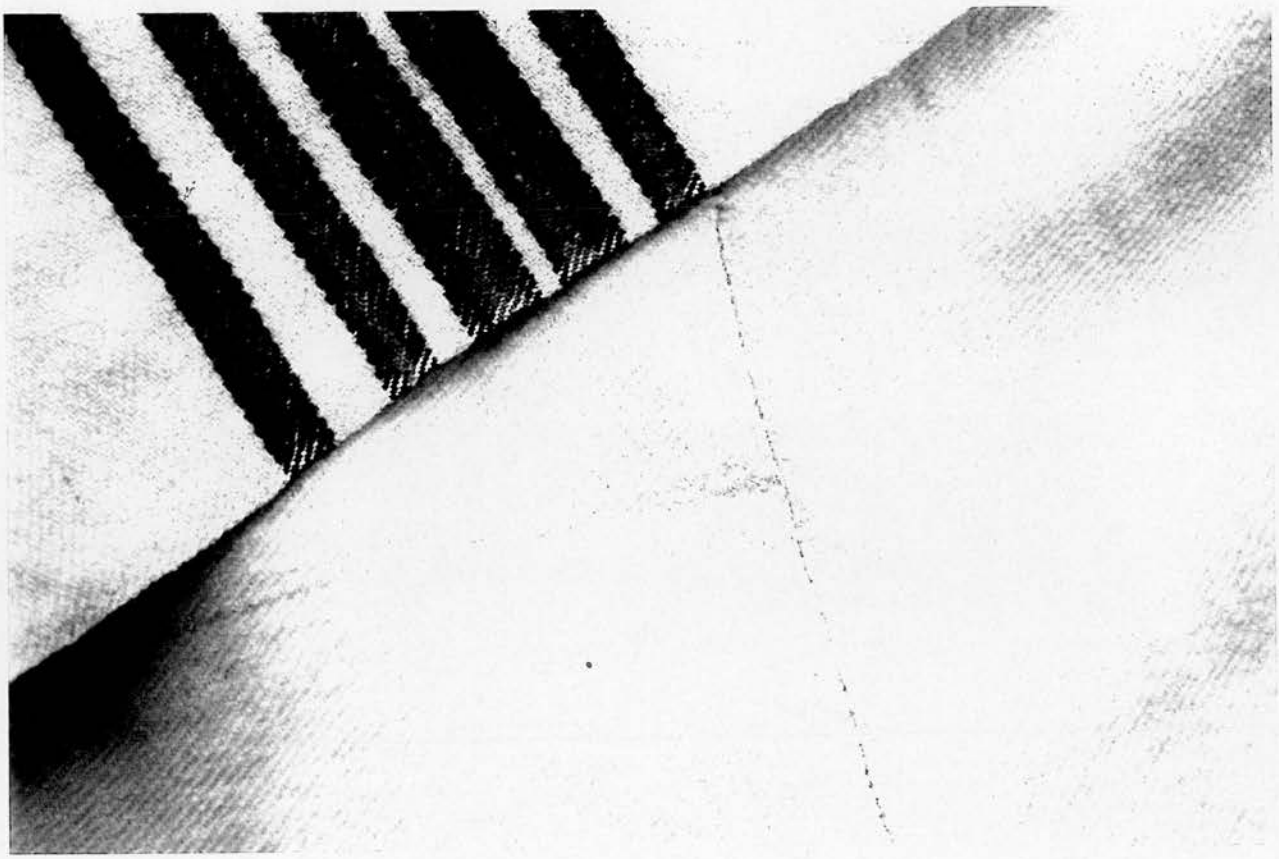


Plate 29
Details of one of Ruth Nicolson's blanket, hand-woven in Milan by her grandmother MacDonald; note the flat seam joining the two widths of cloth, and the dyed borders which are blue and red.
August 11, 1992.



Plate 30

Bedroom in Muriel's house, upstairs: the patchwork quilt was made by her grandmother MacDonald who came to Canada at the age of 3 months; small braided rug by Muriel's mother, Annie MacDonald. large rug made by her father's sister, Aunt Helen, born in Stornoway, Quebec.

August, 1992.

Plate 31

Patchwork quilt, log-cabin pattern, hand pieced from odd scraps of clothing. Quilted with local carded wool. Made by Muriel Mayhew's "Canadian grand-mother", Ann MacDonald, Stornoway, Quebec. Turn of the century.

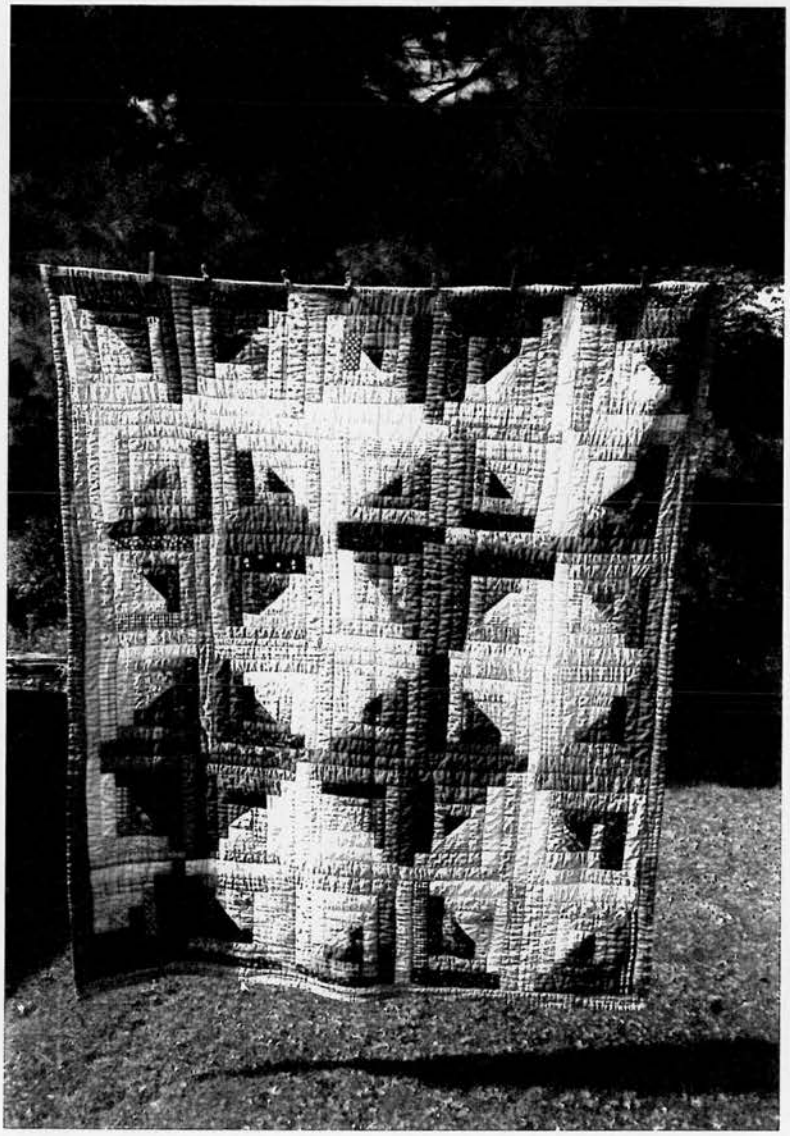
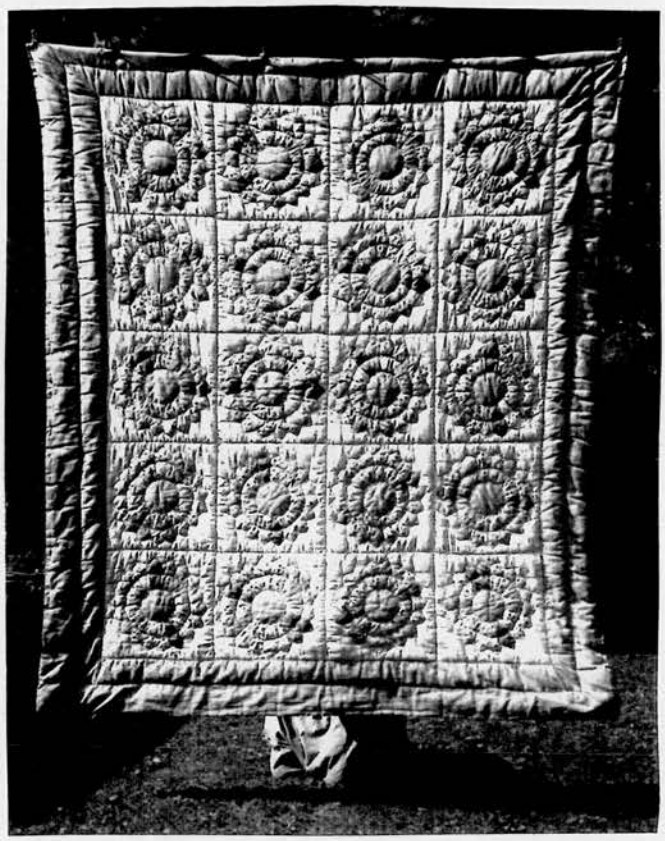
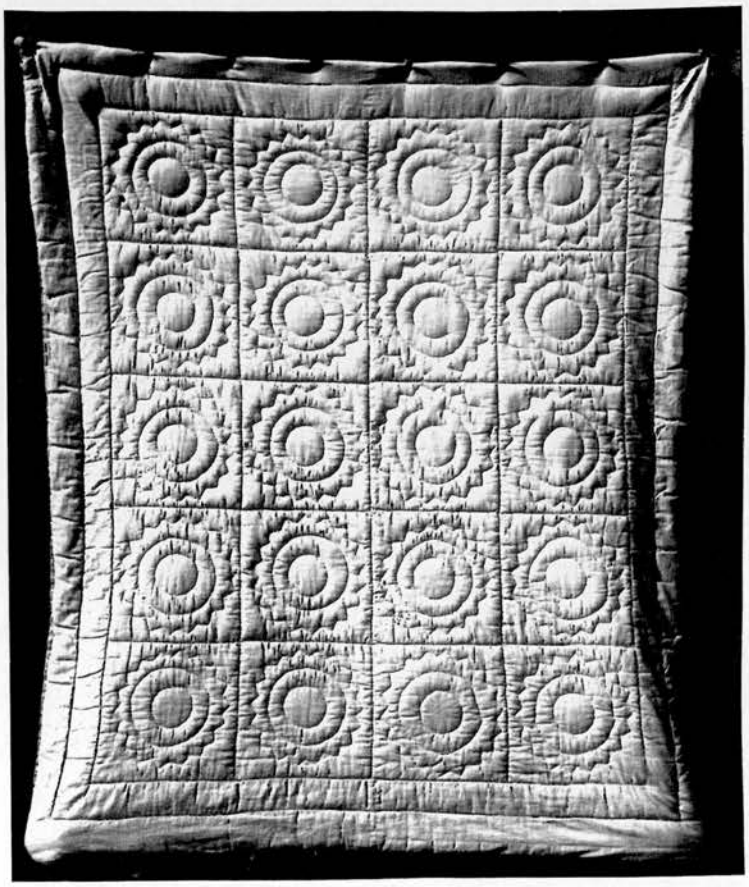


Plate 32



(a) Patchwork quilt, in the "Dresden Plate" pattern, made of cotton which was selected and bought for the purpose, late1940s.

he reverse side is all one piece of white (coloured or printed) cotton, and the batting is wool.



(b) The reverse side also shows the detail of the quilting technique characteristic of the local women whose stitches are evenly done on both sides. Collection of Muriel Mayhew, August, 1992.



Plate 33
Eastern Townships' cotton batting factory, 1881.
(From Belden's *Illustrated Atlas.*)

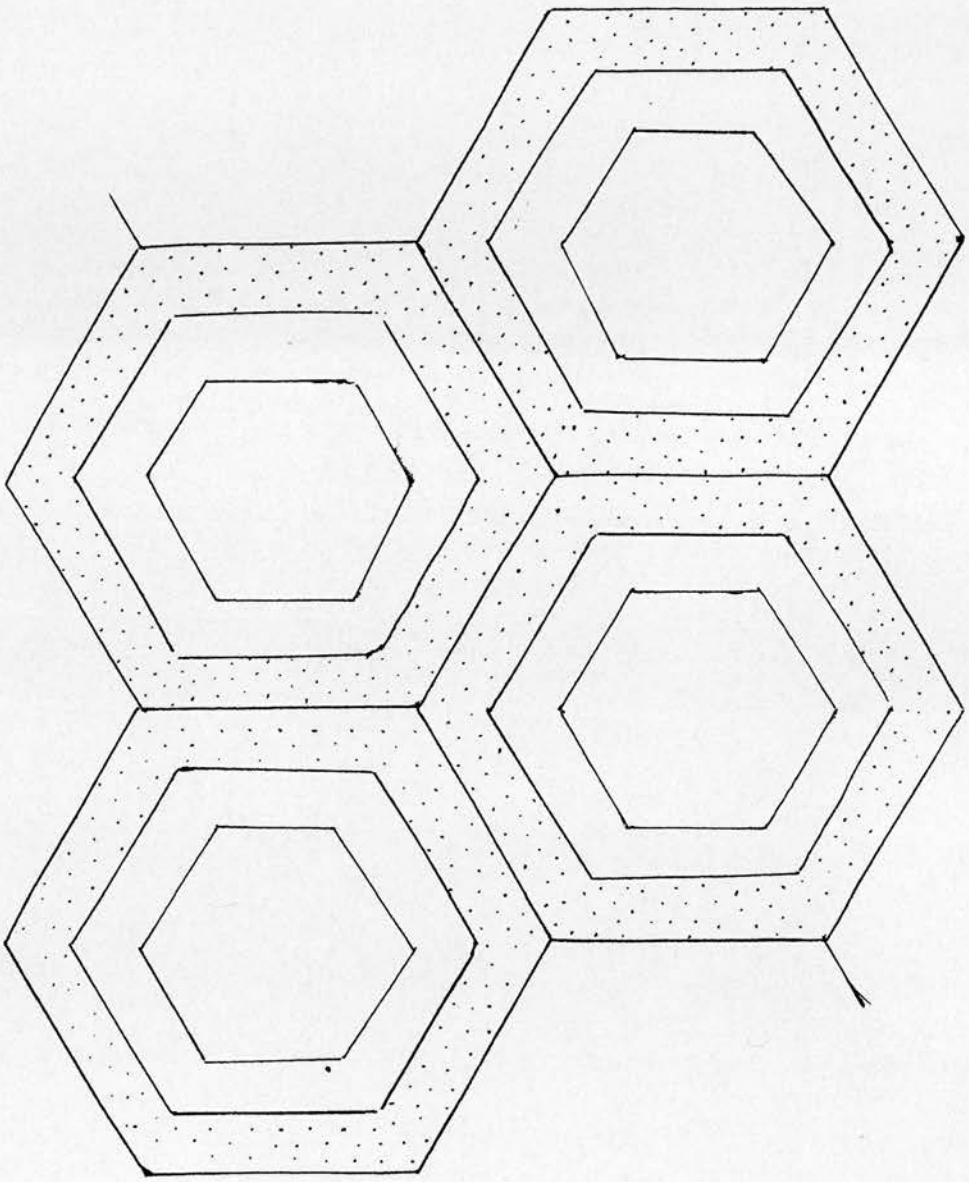


Plate 34

Sketch of Mrs Matheson's design for a rug made from sets of concentric hexagonal pieces of felt sewn together.

Plate 35

Muriel Mayhew rolling out oatmeal scones. on her bread-board.
Lennoxville, August, 1992.





Plate 36
Ruth Nicolson making buckwheat slaps on her wood-stove.
Milan, August 1992.

Plate 37

Bathtub Madonna, windmills and pink flamingo, in the front garden of one of the older houses, near the Nantes-Stornoway crossroads. August, 1992.



Plate 38

Modern house with swimming-pool, pre-cast plaster shrine with Madonna presiding over poolside flamingoes, swan, negro fishing boy, and attending maidens.

August, 1992.

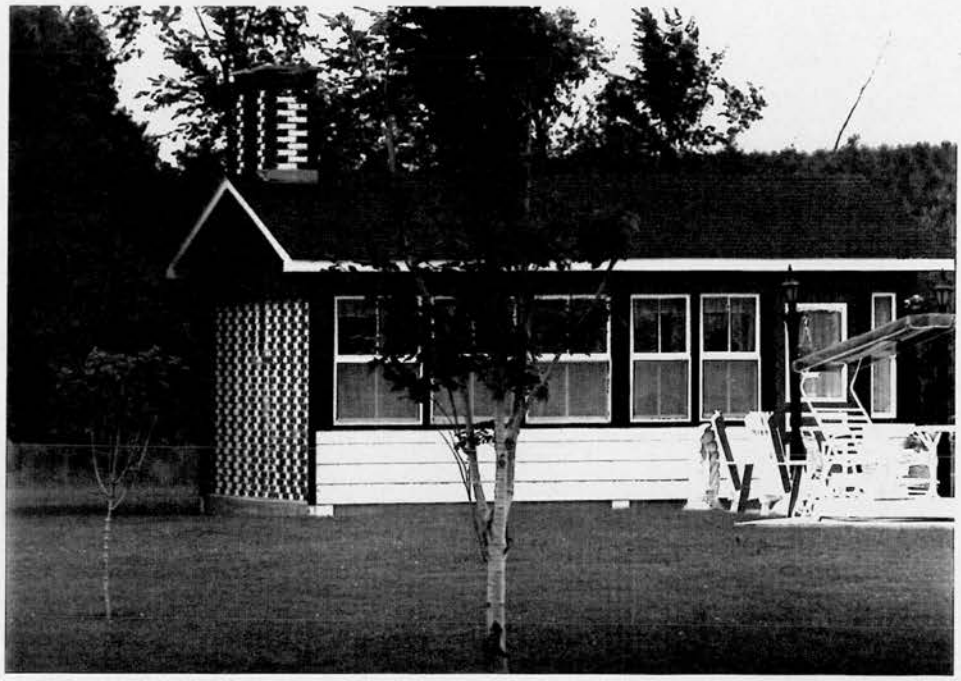






Plate 39
Welcoming sign as you approach Stornoway.

August, 1992

CHAPTER 4

MAKING A LIVING

The Year's Work

Having managed to carve fields out of forest, the homesteaders faced the annual task of removing stones. Of every size imaginable, they seemed to be everywhere; it was as if they grew each year as a new crop. As a result, learning to work on the land began in early childhood: as soon as a small child was able to pick up stones and deposit them on a selected site, then the fields had gained another labourer. Those who were born on the new farms grew up accepting it as a part of the season's work. "Oh, yes, well, we had no choice," remarked Angus Morrison who, like everyone of his generation, "did his share."

> Oh boy, the big stones! I could take you around and show you stone piles that you wouldn't believe... And mind you, they started in with ox [sic]. They didn't have horses at all—ox! You know what they are! You may as well have an elephant as one... You may as well have an old cat as [them], you know how slow they are, ox. [But in my day], we had three horses.

Angus's wife, Mary, put in a good word for oxen, however, affirming that the French settlers also farmed and logged with them.[1] "My brothers worked with ox; well, they weren't very fast," but some people improved the situation by harnessing an ox with a horse. "Well they used to fix the trace..." so that the two animals would work as a more efficient team. Unless a rock was of such an enormous size as to defy removal, the men tackled it:

> They'd go with a team of horses; like there's the stone...and they'd put the chain around and turned the stone around like that—you'd just haul them out. Big stones too.

Rocks weighing well over a ton were tackled in this way.[2] No matter whose land it was on, several men would be required to

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1 There is a photo of an ox used by the Legendre brothers for hauling wood to their saw-mill. See *Stornoway 1858-1983*, p. 15.

2 There seems to be no discrimination between a *rock* and a *stone*. Both can be little or enormous.

help, and judging by a photograph which was taken on one of the French farms near Stornoway in 1932,[3] there were several ingenious approaches to rock moving: in this case, a huge wooden contraption, like a pyramid-shaped cage, had a pulley at the apex, by means of which a monstrous boulder, tied around by a chains, was winched aboard, secured within the frame of the cage, then wheeled across to the edge of the field to be dumped.

Smaller rocks (of several hundredweight) were towed away on a home-made "stone-boat",[4] and deposited at the side of the field. Despite the fact that they were living in an area with such a profusion of wood that there was never any need for stone construction, a great many of them were used in the making of dry-stane dykes, a tradition learned in their native Islands of Lewis and Harris. Russell MacIver described what they were like:

> They had some fairly good ones made into a stone wall in the old days—[the men would] take them onto what they called a stone-boat. They'd drag, you know, and roll them on there and roll them off. [laughs] And boy, the stones! Those stone walls are on some of them farms yet... They'd build them on this side, on that side, and then throw them [rocks & rubble] into the middle... Some years ago there was a millionaire lived here, over here, had a lake, and along the road there, they built a stone wall. Oh, it was just perfect, you know. He hired men the year round, making that stone wall. Old men that couldn't do very much, and he hired them just to make that stone wall! There's some of that left yet, 'course it's falling down some.

In fact there was no practical reason to have a laboriously built stone wall in this part of Quebec which abounds with timber. The most common method of constructing a boundary fence, and by far the quickest, is cedar railing, common throughout much of

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3 The photo is published in *Stornoway" 1858-1983*, p. 32.

4 In his book, *The Past in the Present* , Arthur Mitchell describes Hebridean people using carts without wheels for the removal of stones from fields. He acknowledges that while he initially thought it a peculiar practice, he quickly saw that it was the only way of coping with the terrain on which they were working. See p. 97. Also, I.F. Grant writes about "slypes" which were used to drag stones from fields; see *Highland Folkways*, p. 204, and though the name is not known in Quebec, her description and the sketch of a "slype" are closest to what Russell MacIver described. See Fig. 65, p. 283.

Canada[5] and the United States.[6] As far as Russell MacIver or men of his generation are concerned, it is difficult for them to imagine why anyone but a millionaire, with enough cash to pay for labour that had no logical purpose, would go to the trouble of erecting a long, perfectly built stone wall. As a result, such a wall is seen as having some kind of aesthetic value.[7] It became clear to Duncan McLeod, however, after his first visit to the Old Country, why the previous generations did not seem to question the choice of construction method, nor did they lack the skill involved. For Duncan, the sight of rural Scotland's ubiquitous networks of dry-stane dykes dispelled what had, till then, been something of a mystery. Clearly, the early settlers who built stone walls were highly skilled, as was characteristic of Highland crofters and farmworkers. They simply did so as a matter of course, just as their forebears had done for generations.

To Russell, however, it was not entirely surprising that when a road construction crew appeared many years later and needed massive quantities of road-fill, they welcomed the sight of ready-made material. They seemed completely unable, however, to discriminate between "stone piles" and the carefully constructed stone walls. "When they put the road through they used pretty near all them stones."[8]

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5 On the subject of boundary markings, Catherine Parr Traill writes these "zig-zag fences of split timber... are very offensive to my eye," and she laments the fact that everything is done by "the most practical method, with little regard for beauty." See *Backwoods*, p. 56.

6 The subject of fences and their importance to the landscape in Canada and America has been widely researched. See Harry Symons, *Fences*; George E. Harney, *Barns, Outbuildings and Fences*; T.S. Buie, "Rail Fences" in *American Forests*, (Oct., 1964), pp. 44 - 46; Douglas Leechman, "Good Fences Make Good Neighbours" in *Canadian Geographical Journal*, (Oct., 1966), pp. 467 - 496; Eugene C. Mather and John F. Hart. "Fences and Farms", in *The Geographical Review*, (April 1954), pp. 201 - 223; and Vera V. Via, "The Old Rail Fence", in *Virginia Cavalcade*, (Summer, 1962), pp. 33-40.

7 Stone walls are relatively common across the border in New England, probably for similar historical reasons rather than for practical ones. Henry Glassie writes of a comparable situation in the Bluegrass area of Kentucky, where a wealthy farmer, of English background, had his slaves build a stone wall reminiscent of the style he knew in England, with upright, diagonal capping stones. See H. Glassie, *Pattern in the Material Folk Culture of the Eastern United States*, pp. 99-100.

8 From Russell MacIver, Sept. 16, 1992. In 1972 I came across a very similar incident in Newfoundland, and was shown a picture postcard of a wall built

When the homesteaders had removed the biggest stones that horses and men could tackle, there still remained a few giants, literally the size of houses. These were simply left in the fields, like odd-shaped monoliths. Finally, within the past twenty years, most of them were removed and deposited in random piles forming massive boundaries between some of the farms,[9] as Russell MacIver explained: "Them big stones, not too many years ago they used the bulldozers on them." It had taken more than a century and a half to create today's landscape, "and I tell you, they worked hard."[10]

Having spent much his life farming in Victoria near Scotstown, Russell MacIver was well into adulthood before he realized that poor, stony ground was not characteristic of the entire Eastern Townships, even although it was all the Scotch settlers knew. A mere fifty miles east was a different story, one that affirmed there was indeed "beautiful land to be had". This was the element of truth that had been broadcast in the 1830s, 40s, and 50s by the land companies which had been so eager to entice Hebridean emigrants to settle. Russell still recalls his surprise at this discovery:

> In near Lennoxville, my brother-in-law had a farm in there, and I helped him plough one time; that's before they had the tractor—he had horses—and we were ploughing. I couldn't even find a little stone like a hazelnut to throw at the horse! My God! That looked funny! And at home, I'd be breaking plough points and tipping over, and spending weeks hauling stones into the stone walls.

But plough they did, and every spring would plant their crops in preparation for the following autumn and winter. Despite the drawbacks of the early days, their hard work was rewarded by increased productivity. As Bill Young's generation recalls,

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around the turn of the century which was then demolished by road-makers.

9 The most remarkable examples of these are to be found between Stornoway and Nantes (formerly Spring Hill); the farms are all owned by French farmers today.

10 This comment is from Angus Morrison. Later in the thesis I will deal in greater detail with further changes that occurred in the landscape.

virtually every family who had persevered with their land gained a high level of self-sufficiency:

> Everyone had their own garden. I'm speaking of—like in the village. Like farming, everybody went right in for it. It wasn't specialized like it is today, but it was diversified. They raised what they needed... Sheep supplied the wool for their blankets, and stockings, and mittens. And their cattle and pigs supplied their meat for the winter.[11] And their hens, the eggs. And they planted the brown buckwheat, which you don't get any more today, which made lovely pancakes. And they had scones, which were the old stand-by; and they were barley, and they were buckwheat, and there were potato ones; and, you name it, they had them, eh? And Mrs. Mayhew, and the wife, and a few other women in the town are about the only ones left that can make those things today. And whenever they have a Scotch supper, everybody goes to it, because that's where you get solid food![12] [BEK 3:A]

Since spring came late by comparison to that in the Outer Hebrides, settlers had to adapt to the ground remaining frozen until late May or early June when ploughing could begin. The main crops were much as they had been at home: oats, barley, rye, hay, potatoes, turnips, with the addition of wheat, buckwheat, and "sometimes a little corn", known elsewhere as Indian corn or maize. It is well known in the Eastern Townships that oats, barley, and, to a lesser extent, rye, were staples in the Old Country, and that Lewis and Harris "would be too cold and wet" to grow wheat or corn. Curiously, however, most people do not seem to realize that buckwheat is virtually unknown among their kinsfolk overseas. So popular had it become by the turn of the century,[13] that it was assumed without question that buckwheat was part of the old-style Lewis and Harris diet. No Highland or Island crofter I have ever asked has come across it, except those who have visited modern, urban "health food shops" who have seen it on labels on a shelf.

In *The Book of the Farm*, intended as a text-book guide for

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11 The omission of mutton is deliberate, as will be seen in the next chapter.

12 Mahadev L. Apte and Judit Katona-Apte discuss the increasing awareness of "ethnic foods" that has accompanied a general change in "food behaviour". See "Diet and Social Movements in American Society: The Last Two Decades" in *Food in Change*, pp. 26-33.

13 References to growing buckwheat appear in many of the settlers' accounts, including C.P. Traill, David Kennedy.

nineteenth century British farmers to consult while training their farm-workers, Henry Stephens acknowledges that buckwheat has been grown in the British Isles:

> This plant is comparatively little grown, being easily susceptible of injury from frost if the seed is sown earlier than the middle of May. The crop is sometimes cut green and used for soiling. The grain is used chiefly for feeding game or poultry.
>
> In Ireland the term "buckwheat" is sometimes locally applied to some of the varieties of common wheat, with which the true buckwheat has no connection.[14]

Despite his meticulous attention to the details of growing and harvesting all of the above-mentioned crops, Stephens does not, however, give any further information.

In a study based on readings of early herbals, botanical works, and folklore documentation, Geoffrey Grigson suggests that the name *buckwheat* is derived from the German *Buchweize*, meaning "beech wheat" since the small, dark, triangular, sharp-edged seeds resemble beechmast.[15] It was introduced into Europe from Asia in the sixteenth century,[16] and until the nineteenth century

> buckwheat was widely cultivated in Great Britain, giving a poor man's flour as well as food for cattle and hens... Early colonists took Buckwheat to North America, a good crop for the poor soils of New England.[17] America has not abandoned it as we have, and in the drug-store or the cafeteria no breakfast is more delicious than a golden pile of Buckwheat cakes soaked with maple syrup.[18]

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14 Henry Stephens, *The Book of the Farm Detailing the Labours of the Farmer, Farm-Steward, Ploughman, Shepherd, Hedger, Farm-Labourer, Field-Worker, and Cattle-Man*, p. 255.

15 Geoffrey Grigson, *The Englishman's Flora*, pp. 251-252. Despite his title, Grigson includes references to works from Scotland, Ireland and Wales.

16 The Oxford English Dictionary gives 1548 as the date of its appearance, and states that the "seed in Europe is used as food for horses, cattle, and poultry; in North America its meal is made into buckwheat cakes." [O.E.D.] As far as Canada is concerned, however, buckwheat cakes, made with yeast, do not fit the description of food made in Quebec. See also Marjorie Tallman, "Buckwheat cakes", *Dictionary of American Folklore*, p. 41.

17 This region borders with Quebec and shares many similarities in climate, landscape, and soil type.

18 G. Grigson, op cit, p. 252.

In Quebec, however, the "golden pile" is still very much a feature of the kitchen table, and does not appear to have reached the cafeteria menu yet. *The Canadian Encyclopedia* confirms that buckwheat, Fagopyrum esculentum, is grown in Canada "mainly for human consumption (e.g., flour for pancake mixes, bread and ethnic dishes, breakfast cereal) and is also used for livestock and poultry feed...and as a source of buckwheat honey". [19]

Among the Eastern Townshippers of Hebridean descent, buckwheat is just as important a part of the diet as barley and oatmeal. Although I have not come across anyone who is aware of when this became the case, perhaps it is not entirely surprising, since it was already established among British immigrants as a staple crop at least as early as the 18th century. This is confirmed by emigrant letters, such as one by Elizabeth Russell, who in 1792 wrote home to England:

> We live in a log house ...and have a nice little Farm about us. We eat our own Mutton and Pork and Poultry. Last year we grew our own Buck wheat and Indian corn...[20]

My own first introduction to buckwheat was in 1976 when it was served to me as buckwheat pancakes. Having never seen the growing plant, nor what I assumed to be "the grain that produced the flour that made the pancakes", I can well understand the confusion of the Irish[21] or any other individual. Buckwheat, not being a grain-producing crop, bears no resemblance whatsoever to its part-namesake. As can be seen from the photograph [see Plate 28], it has broad leaves, produces small white, or pinkish, flowers, which, after they fade produce little triangular seed pods which turn brown when ripe. In the autumn the crop is harvested and threshed, just like the grain crops.[22]

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19 *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, vol. I, p. 235. Manitoba produces 85 per cent, and Quebec 15 per cent of Canada's crop, which, in 1981 was estimated to be 53,000 tons, valued at $20.5 million. About two-thirds of it is exported.

20 From the Elizabeth Russell Papers, Toronto Public Library, edited by Innis, p. 6.

21 See Stephens, op cit, above reference.

22 In Chapter 6 I will deal with the use of buckwheat, its importance to diet, and its role in *identity*.

Vegetables grown were, for the most part, the same as the kinds they grew in the old country—at least an acre of potatoes, half an acre of turnips, and smaller plots with carrots, beetroot, cabbages, and onions. Several varieties of beans grow well in Quebec, as do peas, and are easily dried, although relatively few Scotch farmers seemed to grow them on a large scale, and dried beans were usually listed among items obtained from the store.[23]

Planting time was always very busy, with work for everybody in the family. Just as it was with the island crofts, at potato planting time even the smallest pair of hands could be put to work.[24] John MacKenzie of Scotstown said that some families, though not his own, used to plant their potatoes after the new moon had appeared, because they feared a crop failure if they planted when the moon was on the decrease.[25] In view of the fact that the potato famine of 1846—51 had been the ruin of so many crofting families, little wonder that their descendants were prepared to observe whatever law of nature was prescribed to prevent another disaster. Nevertheless, John himself used to plant "just when the ground was ready." [BEK 16:A]

The warm summer weather comes suddenly in Quebec, and is accompanied by a rapid acceleration in growth. During this period, hoeing, weeding and thinning were daily demands. I have yet to encounter anybody who lists thinning turnips among his or her favourite activities for a summer's day; a necessity without immediate rewards is what it seems like. Perhaps Scottish crofters and farmers can yet take encouragement from the practice in Quebec, where a favourite dish of early summer is boiled turnip or beetroot greens, utilizing the fresh, young plants

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23 In September, 1976 I took part in a day's threshing at Paul and Julia Doerfloers's farm, where beans were one of the crops put through the threshing machine. A variety of kidney beans, they had been left to dry on their "bushes" and the entire plant was pulled up and threshed.

24 Within my own family on Skye, there were at least ten cousins, some of them small children, who would be expected to help with the planting. We were each given our instructions for the day, and, following the adults, made our contribution to the planting. Families who had fewer members relied on the help of neighbours.

25 For comparative sayings connecting planting with the moon, see Richard M. Dorson, *Buying the Wind*, pp. 118-124.

which, in Scotland, are usually discarded during the thinning process.[26] Since there was always more than one family could possibly eat while they were fresh, a large quantity were bottled for the winter.[27] Today, among the few farmers who remain, it is more common for these greens to be frozen.

One of the benefits of land-clearing was the noticeable increase of wild fruits such as raspberries, blueberries, choke-cherries, crab apples and high bush cranberries. Regarded as one of nature's miracles that the birds should be instrumental in dispersing the seeds, the appearance of wild berries and fruit was a welcome gift to hard-working families. Having realized that certain fruits grow well in that area of Quebec, many farmers planted apple orchards of several varieties in a field near their homes. Christie MacKenzie remembers when some of the orchards were created in Milan: "We planted some [apple trees]; we got some from a fellow that was selling them. And some grew wild later on..." [BEK 16:A] To this day, the harvest of apples that appears on these domestic orchards is profuse, even where farms have been abandoned and trees left untended, they suggest that America's folk-hero, "Johnny Appleseed", has done his rounds among the Scots in Quebec.[28]

Although planting time always seemed exceptionally busy, the busiest time of all arrived in late summer and autumn, with food and fodder crops requiring to be harvested before the onset of cold weather. Frosts could suddenly appear in September, and snow as early as October, and because of the severity and duration of the Quebec winter, a great quantity of food had to be stored for both animals and humans. Fortunately, during haying

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26 In *The Book of the Farm*, Henry Stephens describes turnip cultivation methods in great detail, (pp. 149-158) but makes no mention eating the young plants. He recommends that the thinnings should be left on the field and used as "green manure". Also, A. Fenton deals with turnip husbandry in *Country Life in Scotland*, but again, no mention is made of eating greens. See pp. 142-145. So far I have not come across any information about the existance of this practice in Scotland.

27 The method employed will be dealt with in Chapter 6.

28 I have come across innumerable examples of these orchards, such as the one on the abandoned farm in Marsboro, mentioned above.

time they could be almost assured of good weather, and seldom, if ever, did they have to endure the prolonged adverse weather that too often characterises a Hebridean summer, flattening the hay and corn, and bringing despair to crofters. Yet again, everyone who was on the farm was called upon to do his or her share.

Not everyone in the family could be home for haying, however, as it was one of the few seasonal occupations that could bring in extra cash to a family, provided one or two could be spared from their own farm-labour. Paid seasonal labour was a common and necessary feature of many communities of new settlers, as the Ayrshireman (mentioned in Chapter 1), David Kennedy, recorded in his memoirs of homesteading in Ontario in the 1830s and 40s:[29]

> We always found some of our neighbours very anxious to secure our assistance and in that way we earned over forty dollars in a few weeks. This proved to be of great help to us in the way of purchasing a supply of provisions and groceries and other needful things, such as wheat for seed, besides a quantity of miscellaneous articles..."[30]

There are no memories of neighbouring farmers who employed men on these terms, as all the neighbours, Scotch and French alike, were in the same economic situation. For the Eastern Townshippers of this area, paid work meant "going across the line" to Vermont or New Hampshire. The opportunity was regarded as a mixed blessing: on the one hand it could be the means of paying off debts that had accumulated over the winter, or loans on farm equipment and seed that had been necessary for progress, or even survival; on the other hand, it meant extra hardships for those left behind, to say nothing of the encounters of those who went. Only the oldest people in the community remember young men going. Age was not a barrier to going haying, however, as Russell MacIver, Duncan McLeod, and a visiting neighbour [N] recalled one afternoon in 1992. (In order to project as much of the atmosphere as possible, the transcription is given in full):

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29 Catherine Parr Traill also wrote in one of her letters home that many of the men were "obliged to hire out to work for the first year or two to earn sufficient for the maintenance of [their families]" and they also needed ready cash to cover settler's expenses. See *Backwoods*, p. 101.

30 David Kennedy, *Pioneer Days*, pp. 53-54.

Russell: Another thing they used to do from around here, when it was haying time in Vermont, they'd walk from here up to Vermont to do the hay, and it was all that crooked sticks, you know. They didn't have mowing machines then. [laughs]

MB: No. A scythe?

Russell: A scythe, and by gee, there were some o them were good. I used to do some of that too. My father was pretty good at it—he was strong. And one time there was a bunch of men went up to Vermont, my great-uncle, Neil Beaton—he wasn't very big, he wasn't very old either. And he [the Vermont farmer] went to hire out fellows to cut and scythe too, he had quite a bunch o men. And [looking at Neil] he said "I won't pay you a man's wage."

"That's all right," said Uncle Neil, "then I'll do a boy's work!"

"Oh," he went on, "why don't you keep up with the rest?"

He says "You pay me what you pay them and I'll keep up." Well, the fellow thought he'd try it—he paid him. The others couldn't keep up to him then! [laughs] You met him, Duncan—it's just because he was small.

MB: And witty!

Russell: They used to have to walk up there [to Vermont] and walk back.

Duncan: They had to live by their wits.

Russell: But there was some o them'd go up by team [of horses and wagon]. My father had a cousin went up one time by bicycle, then came back. And places where there was clay, they'd get stuck and have to carry the bicycles. **Huh!** But there were some of these fellows they weren't very honest, from around here, although they were Scotch people they'd go up there in teams, they'd steal chickens, they'd steal stuff [just to keep from starving on their journey]. [laughs] Well, that was something to eat, and they figured it wasn't stealing.

MB: Where would they stay when they went up on those farms?

Russell: There was a couple o them stopped at a farm and asked if they'd give them some dinner. "Oh, we haven't any dinner cooked," [they said].

And one fellow, pretty sarcastic, he said "Too bad we didn't telephone ahead that we were coming!" They didn't have any telephones anyway! [laughs]

Duncan: Well, the time that Dave Nicolson's grandfather[31] went [to the Vermont harvesting] and died there, they were in the haying, that'd be July probably. And his wife didn't hear about his death until they walked back in September or

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31 The late Dave Nicolson was Ruth's husband.

October.

Russell: My, I heard them talking about that in the Hotel there lately.[32] It was one hot day, oh, it was awful hot—terrible! And they took out this ice cold water and he drank so much it just killed him.

MB: That was Dave Nicolson's grandfather?

Russell: 'Course they couldn't do nothing, they just buried him.

MB: He must have been up in years when he went haying, then?

Duncan Oh no, I suppose he'd be 30 or 40. That's a long time ago.

MB: Yes, and really, they were going for extra money, income, weren't they?

Duncan The only ways they had then of earning cash.

MB: Yes, to go haying.

N: Would they take their own scythe?

Duncan: [louder, to Russell] Would they have their own scythes or would the farmers—?

Russell: Oh I think they'd get them up there. That'd be an awful thing to carry when you're walking, or on a bicycle. [laughs] If you went in a buggy you might take them, wrap them up in something.

Duncan: I think they walked, though. I don't think they had any buggies.

Russell: Most of them walked.

MB: Did they ever say what kind of treatment they got? OK, they earned some money, but where they stayed, or how they were fed when they were there?

Russell: Oh, I don't know, they used to—oh, I think most of them would feed them pretty good. But going up there, or coming back, walking, they were always sure of a good meal if it was a Scotch family. They were never turned down by the Scotch although they're supposed to be so tight. Whatever, [among other strangers on the road] a lot of them'd turn them down. But they said the Scotch were kind; they had nothing for themselves but they could still give you some dinner.

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32 Russell is referring to the Scotstown Hotel, now renamed Hotel Scotstown, where some of the older men sometimes gather for a beer and a yarn. Russell occasionally meets his friends there.

MB: D'you think they would sleep in barns or stuff like that?

Duncan: Oh yes, anywhere at all.
[Sept. 16, 1992][33]

Meanwhile, at home, the work of the farm still had to be done, as every farmer has to prepare for long winters demanding more than six months of indoor feeding—an enormous load of hay, even for only a few cows and a horse. [See Plate 16] The men and youths who remained usually handled the horses and machinery, while everyone else busied themselves with fork, rake, or simply a pair of hands. Maryann Morrison probably did as wide a range of tasks as any woman of her day:

> Well, I would be in the load. I used to rake the grass [hay], make bundles of it, you know. And—this was before the boys got old enough, you know, to go in the load of hay [i.e. on the cart], or in the oats, or barley, or whatever we have. So, I used to be in the load of hay, or oats, or barley—whatever was to be cut. But when the boys got old enough to do that, I never went. But I worked very hard on the farm. He was on the ground, pitching loads of hay over... over to me stamping on it, up and down. And [we had] a pair of horses, and I could drive the horses.

On a summer day in 1992, Maryann's son, Angus, the fourth of her thirteen children, stood on the land that his parents had farmed and, at the age of eighty-two, he pointed out what had once been a hayfield. Reflecting on his younger days he remarked: "My mother was in the load and my father pitching hay up on the cart the day before my brother Peter was born—now that's work!" While acknowledging the fact that they all worked extremely hard, he remembered with pleasure the cohesion of family and community during their years at Cruveg. Reminded that it was relentlessly hot, sweaty work bringing in the harvest, Angus

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33 The French farmers also went haying to make extra cash for their families. Mary Morrison's grandfather used to tell of similar experiences in his youth, though Mary was of the opinion that most of them stayed on the Quebec side of the border, and generally worked for English farmer "who had the good land over near Cookshire." They would walk from Marsboro, and spend the much of the summer working. "*In the late 1800s when he got married he had just returned from Cookshire and he said he was well off because he had $17 for the summer's work. And he bought his wedding suits, the shoes, and the rings, and he had money enough left over for what they needed to start housekeeping." [Conversation, July 1994]

laughingly recalled how he and one of his brothers invented a shower, which, having no bathroom in the house at that time, they all enjoyed at the end of the day's work. Angus's shower must be one of the earliest instances of the use of solar power, if not in Canada, then certainly in the Eastern Townships. Their invention was housed in a small log cabin, built by them for the purpose. On the roof the boys installed a tank which they had salvaged from an old car. (They were later to replace it with "something bigger".) To the tank they fitted a hose leading into the cabin, and on the end of the hose a shower-head with a faucet (tap) that they had purchased in a store. Every morning they would make sure to fill the tank with icy water from the nearby stream, and then they relied upon the heat of the sun to warm it, as indeed it did. At the end of the day they looked forward to a refreshing shower, with preliminary cautions of "don't use all the water" to the one who got in first.[34]

The Morrisons' ice-cold brook, flowing through thick, shady trees below the farm, was also an important food preserver in summer. By lowering a wooden food-box containing meat, or an earthenware crock containing butter or cream into the cold water, they could keep these foods fresh and cool through the hottest summer day. [35] "Just feel how cold that is, even today!" The fact that the community lacked electricity and indoor plumbing throughout all of Angus's childhood and much of his adulthood was only inconvenient upon reflection.

The demands of farm work are for every day of the year where there is livestock involved. Though the situation varied from farm to farm, Russell MacIver's family were typical: "Oh, we had sheep, cows, horses, hens... Well the most we ever milked was seven, but we had a few young stock." In his day he shared in all the chores connected with the care of animals, but in Maryann's time, milking, along with many other tasks, both inside and outside the house, were considered "women's work". The

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34 Fieldwork notebook, August 12, 1992.

35 A. Fenton writes about the "Butter Wells" which served the same function in Scotland. Op cit, p. 157.

division of labour may have kept the women constantly busy, but, as far as Maryann was concerned, there were many pleasures that could be enjoyed in the course of a season.

Aside from the work horses, the Morrisons also kept a finer horse which gave Maryann the sort of independence her mother and grandmother in Harris could never have had:

> I had one for myself to drive. When I'd go to the Ladies' Aid, I'd take two or three women with me. I had quite a big wagon. It wasn't a small one—you could have three in the same seat... I had a very good horse. [BEK 19:A]

Although the family did not think that there was anything unusual about it at the time, Angus reflected on his mother's skill with her horse and wagon, and realized that she was a very capable woman:

> Tha cuimhne agam. Bha each brèagh, cha robh e glé mhór, bha e *special* dha na boireannaich, bha e *quiet*, agus bhiodh mo mhàthair, reidheadh i dh'àite sam bith leis. 'S nuair chuimhnicheas mise air na laithchean sin—O bha *wagon*—ceithear cuidhlichean air. 'S a's a' gheamhraidh bhiodh, oh rud ris an canadh sinn *cutter* . Yeah. [Coltach ri *sleigh*?]...Se. *Sleigh* a bh'ann. Ach, 's e rùm do dhithis a bha sa' *chutter*, ach bha *sleigh* eile againn 's bha dà shuidheachan innte. Rinn sinne bith-beò ag obair a's a choille.
>
> *I remember. It was a beautiful horse [called "Pat"], it wasn't very big, it was a special horse for the women; it was quiet, and my mother could go whatever place she wanted with it. When I think on those days! Oh, it was a wagon [she had] with four wheels on it. In the winter it would have been, oh, a thing we called a cutter. Yeah. [Like a sleigh?] Yes, it was a sleigh.* [36] *But there's room for two on the cutter, but on another sleigh we had there was seats in it. We made our living in the woods.*

Comparatively few people kept sheep; cattle were, and are, preferred by most farmers, possibly because the earliest settlers discovered, fairly soon after their arrival, that they thrive better on newly cleared land than sheep do. They are also much better

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36 The "cutter" was fairly high compared to other sleighs, and had a set of steel ribs between the body of the sleigh and the runners, keeping it well off the ground as it travelled. The other sleigh was a "pung" which had two steel runners attached directly to the body, thus it travelled much closer to the ground than the cutter.

able to cope with the winter's snow, and the threat of preying animals.[37] Even in recent years, the few people who kept sheep complained bitterly about the number killed by wolves. The MacArthur farm in Milan was probably the last Scotch farm to have kept sheep, as Christie's son, Donald, a bachelor in his sixties, finally got rid of them all in 1990.

Animal Husbandry

Aside from keeping cattle for dairy products and beef, horses for farm labour and transport, and sheep mainly for wool, most farms raised a few pigs for domestic consumption. From childhood, every member of the family took a share of the work involved in the care of animals. The men and youths generally undertook the heavier work, while the children and adolescents were assigned suitable tasks such as helping to feed the cattle. The women, meanwhile, did most of the milking and dairy work which, until well into the twentieth century, was considered "women's work".[38]

Although farmers generally bred their own cattle, horses, sheep and hens, only a few bred pigs. Angus Morrison recalled walking with his brothers from Cruveg to a farm in Marsboro, about four miles away, to buy piglets, and returning home with the wriggling animals under their arms. The majority of families, like the Morrisons, bought their piglets to fatten for the winter.[39]

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37 In the late 1980s two farms in Scotstown and Gould introduced Highland cattle to the area. The initial incentive for the choice was based purely on preference for the Scottish Highland breed, but since their introduction they have proved to be "as hardy as it says in the books", as they can survive the bitter Quebec winters with only the shelter of the trees to protect them. Miriam MacRae Holland showed me the wintering for her cattle, fairly close to her house, in a thick belt of trees. Field notebook, Aug. 1993.

38 This pattern is very similar to the Highlands and Islands; for example, my own grandfather, born in 1881, never milked a cow in his life, though his sons, born in 1915 and 1921, were quite agreeable to taking on all dairy tasks.

39 This appears to have been very common in many areas, for example, among the settlers from Arran, in Megantic County, Dugald McKenzie McKillop writes that his mother told him that when she was about sixteen,

"We didn't raise our pigs but the other farmers did—you'd buy a pig for two dollars, maybe three dollars."[40] At the end of autumn the pigs, having been well fed all through the summer, weighed about 200 pounds and were ready to be slaughtered "after the first fall of snow."[41] According to Christie MacKenzie, some families adhered to the old belief that pigs should only be slaughtered when the moon was on the increase, otherwise the meat would shrink when it was cooked.[42] It was also thought that the weather could be forecast by studying the spleen of the pig, as recorded in the following verse by Johnnie "Bard" MacLeod :

> Among these people were weather prophets untold,
> Who forecasted the weather of winters of old.
> Tho' some of them swore by Dr. Chase's almanac,[43]
> Yet, others, the spleen of the pig, butchered out back.[44]

In his *Memoirs of Dell*, Johnnie "Bard" explains how the forecast was made: if the pig's spleen was long and fat, there would be a hard winter ahead; if it was short and thin, they could expect a mild winter.[45] He also adds that nothing was wasted, not even the pig's bladder which was either made into a money bag or a

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around 1830, she and her sister were sent on an errand to carry home one little piglet each. See *Annals of Megantic County*, p. 73.

40 Recorded Aug. 8, 1992.

41 Bruce Walker discusses prevalent methods of slaughtering animals in Scotland in "The Flesher's Trade in Eighteenth and Nineteenth-Century Scotland: An Exploratory Investigation into Slaughtering Techniques, Tools, and Buildings" in *Food in Change*, pp.127-137. Only in Quebec is the first fall of snow a signal for butchering. See also Lamont Pugh, "Hog-Killing Day", in *Virginia Cavalcade*, (Winter, 1957), pp. 41 - 46.

42 [BEK 3:A] This belief is quite prevalent throughout Scotland, Canada and America. For a range of examples from all over Britain, see *A Dictionary of Superstitions*, edited by Iona Opie and Moira Tatem, 262-263. Also, a close comparison exists among the French and Scots in the Codroy Valley where they specified "two or three days after the new moon"; see *The Last Stronghold*, p. 86. For an American comparison, see Richard M. Dorson, op cit, p. 128.

43 Dr Chase's Almanac is as much of a household name in North America as Whitaker's Almanac is in Britain. It has been published for many years and is still very popular among country people and farmers.

44 These lines are from verse 4 of 7 (8-lined verses) of an unpublished poem from local poet, Johnnie "Bard" MacLeod who lived in Dell. I am grateful to Duncan McLeod for giving me a copy from his papers.

45 Op cit, p. 81.

tobacco pouch, or, by means of a straw, it was blown up into "a balloon for the kids".[46]

During a house-visit at Ruth Nicolson's in Milan in August 1992, the subject of winter preparations arose, and, while the men took a back seat, it was discussed by the three women in the company—Ruth, her sister, Bernice (Laurila, née MacDonald) and Christie MacArthur's daughter, Isabell (Mrs Ross Beattie). All had clear memories of the importance of these preparations, and of the fact that most families had at least one pig to slaughter. Generally, when an animal was butchered at the onset of winter it would keep for a long time simply hung up in a shed or other out-building, for, once the temperature dropped below zero at the end of October, it was likely to remain so until well into the new year. Isobel, whose parents' farm is still in operation on "MacArthur Corner", spoke as I wrote, remarking:

> *I think the spring time was the hardest time to prepare meals. In the fall my father always butchered four pigs and as soon as the weather was cold enough he'd store it in an out-building. And in the winter we'd eat *four pigs*. There were a lot of hired men around to feed too. And we always had potatoes and turnips to see us through, though the carrots would be long gone by Christmas. And then when spring would come and the weather would be warm and we had meat left over we would try burying it in the snow banks to try to keep it fresh. And although it was cold it wouldn't have the frost in it. And then after that, [when the weather got milder], it was put in the brine to keep it.[47]

Preserving food was of prime importance and although there were several methods in use, it was universally accepted that it would be much better to share meat than to let it spoil.

Donald MacLennan, from Scotstown remembered a story his father used to tell, and though in old age Donald was still amused by it, he was in no doubt that it had a didactic message. Although

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46 As a child in Skye in the late 1950s, I saw my grandfather, John Stewart, blow up a sheep's bladder after he had butchered one of his own sheep. He tied the opening in a tight knot, and told me that in his young days the boys would dry the blown-up bladder and use it for a football.

47 Field notebook, Aug. 12, 1992. Methods of preparation will be discussed later.

he originally heard the story in Gaelic, Donald's own family had been using English as the language of his home for many years, and thus he re-told the story as he knew it best:

> In some community over in Scotland, in Lewis there, when they used to kill their pig and they had no refrigeration—and so they'd have fresh meat, they cut... the family'd kill a pig this week, and they'd cut it up and divide the pieces amongst the whole community. And the next week somebody else'd do the same, and they'd have fresh meat all year round.[48] But this year there was a disease, or an epidemic that killed off all the pigs but two. And there was a fellow there, he was very, very tight, and didn't like to share with the others; and he went to the other fellow that had the live pig, and he told him: "You know," he said, "it's not going to be fair for us -- we've got the only two pigs, and when we kill them and divide them up amongst the people we're not going to have enough for ourselves."
>
> "Ah, well," the fellow says, "keep it then."
>
> "Oh," he says, "we can't do that. They'll think we're awful stingy. Well," he says, "I don't know what to do. What would you do?"
>
> "Oh," he says, "I thought of an idea. You kill your pig, and hang him up, and announce you're going to cut him up in the morning, and," he says, "some time during the night hide him, and you can have the meat to yourselves."
>
> Well, he thought that was a good idea. But this other fellow, he went and he told all the neighbours what he was going to do. And after he had gone to bed, he went, and all the neighbours went and they took the pig, cut him up, and handed him around.
>
> And anyway, early the next morning the fellow got up and he was going to go and hide the pig, and he went and his pig was gone! Now he was in an awful stew, and he ran over to this fellow that had advised him to cut it. "You know," he said, "somebody stole my pig, during the night."
>
> "Oh," he said, "that's a good story." He said, "You keep telling that and people are going to believe you."
>
> "Oh, yeah!" he said, "but they did! They did!"
>
> "You just keep on telling it just like that," he said, "people'll believe every word you say!"
>
> My father always used to use that expression when he'd catch us telling a lie, or when he thought we were. He'd say in Gaelic: *"Cum sin a mach, agus creididh daoine."* [Tell it like that, and people will believe [you].] [BEK 5:B]

A more serious discussion of food preparation will follow in Chapter 6; meanwhile, we shall return to the considerations of caring for animals. As far as domestic animals were concerned,

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48 The story implies a belief that all the crofters in Lewis kept pigs, whereas very few actually did, as it was more commonly kept by the tacksman.

there appears to have been very little difference between the routine work of Highland crofting and that of Quebec farming, apart from the necessary adaptations to a harsher climate and the proportionately larger tracts of land. There the similarities cease, and a new experience of animal husbandry appears.

One stereotypical image of Canada which has been projected for more than two centuries is that of the fur-trapper. Usually he himself is clad in fur, is pictured in the snow, far from civilization, and preferably near to native peoples. School-book accounts tell of how he makes a modest living selling his furs at the end of the winter. A lesser known side of the fur trade was part of community life among the Scots in the Eastern Townships, as several individuals ran their farms especially for the fur trade.[49] As a boy and as a young man, Duncan McLeod was well acquainted with the "fox men" as they were known, for he and his boyhood companions used to enjoy their own small part in feeding locally bred silver foxes:

> Well, the Mathesons, they had the big one... 1920, that's when Jimmy [Matheson] first got his breeding stock... But when he started his business here in town... people complained. So then he bought this farm about half a mile out the road... Well, he kept say 250 or 300 females, and he had so many males to service them, and then first of all in the spring they would be more, probably 750 to 800, up to a thousand[50]... Then there was Walter MacDonald up in the woods, just above Lois there, he had the second largest. And then there was some who kept just one or two or three.[51]
>
> Well [the furs] were sold out of Montreal fur market, New York, and possibly in the London fur market... Oh, right after the Second World War, oh, 1947, 48 [the bottom dropped out of the market]... Yeah, once in a while I see an article on the silver fox fur...
>
> Well, [to feed them] when we'd catch rabbits we'd bring them to [Jimmy], and he'd give us anywhere from 15 cents to 25 cents... Yeah, we'd trap them with snares....And eh, well, he

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49 The fur trade was flourishing in Canada in the 1920s. For example, the silver fox industry in Charlottetown, P.E.I. was described as a "generator of instant wealth..." See Gillis, Heather M. and J. Estelle Reddin. "Tapioca Pudding—Food's Interconnections", in *Canadian Folklore canadien*, p. 47.

50 In his book, *The Milan Story*, Duncan had estimated this number to be 2000, but his brother, Roderick, said that 750 would be more accurate. (It is details such as this that Duncan is correcting for his second edition.)

51 Harvey MacRae in Gould had a small farm of around twenty foxes. Fieldwork notebook, from his daughter, Miriam MacRae Holland, August 1992.

> used to buy meat from the meat packers, the red meat that wasn't fit for humans, I s'ppose. Then there was the "fox-feed", that's what they called it. It was, eh, I don't know what was into it, but little pellets. But then I used to hear them say that in 1946 or 47 it cost them $45 to feed a fox, and that's all they got for the furs. So that's when they went out of business.[52]

Russell MacIver also recalled snaring rabbits, and very much regarded it as part of the way of life for adolescent boys. He was reminded of a misadventure which, more than sixty years later, amused not only Russell but one of the other "boys" involved:

> We used to set snares for rabbits, and we'd sell the rabbits to the fox men,[53] and sometimes an owl would come along and he'd eat half of a rabbit, and we'd set a trap[54] and he'd get caught. And we had two big horned owls at home one day, and Alex Campbell from Dell,[55] he thought he'd like to have them. So he asked if he could have them, and we said "Yeah, you can have them". So he took them home and he put them in the hen house, and they killed all the hens! [Laughs!] Last time I saw Alex it was a few years ago, when Danny died... He asked if there was any deals going on with the owls yet! That was about sixty years ago [since the owl incident].[56]

Besides fox farms, Duncan recalled that there were also mink farms, although they operated on a much smaller scale:

> [Jimmie Matheson also] had a mink farm, yeah. There was only two of them in Milan that had a mink farm, Jimmy Matheson and the fellow next door to him, Johnny Dan [MacLeod]... I don't remember too much about [how they were kept, but] oh yes, you'd have to have their own quarters [pens].

In addition to commercial ventures, there was generally an opportunity for independent trappers to make a few dollars to

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52 Duncan was recorded in Sept. 1991. This section of transcription is re-arranged in order to attain a better sequence of information than the original.

53 Russell generally sold to Matheson's Silver Fox farm in Milan, about five miles from where he lived.

54 In many of the old barns can be seen a variety of metal "leg-hold" traps (gin-traps) of different sizes, many of which are now banned by law. For a more detailed account of snaring and trapping, see P.A.L. Smith, *Boyhood Memories of Fauquier*, pp. 130-132.

55 Now a retired minister who has moved out to Seattle.

56 Recorded Aug. 16, 1992.

supplement the family income. Russell MacIver's family were all keen sportsmen, and as adolescents they not only snared rabbits but also learned to trap small animals:

> One winter my father had a box-trap[57] set for weasels—Oh, the fur was worth something—and the weasels'd go in and of course something'd come down on em. One day, going to Milan, Murdo [Matheson] was ahead with a team [of horses] and we were behind with the other team. When he came down and he looked in and he yelled *"Tha squirrel agad!"* [laughs "You have a squirrel."] So, they let the squirrel go...I used to catch a few of them—a dollar, and a dollar and a half. That was big money you know, for a young fella! [laughs]...There was a fellow from Sherbrooke used to come around, a fellow Gilman, and then there was another Gilman in Megantic. And they used to make money themselves too. They'd buy hides... Oh they'd call here. [Aug. 16, 1992]

The image of the Canadian hunter, though stereotypical, nevertheless reflects an aspect of life, which, from an early age, became part of the Eastern Townships identity. As may be gathered from the accounts from Duncan and Russell, young boys grew up with an aptitude for hunting. Starting with small game, they quickly progressed to the largest and most exciting possible, learning from their elders how to use guns as easily as they had learned how to snare and trap. One of the main differences between shooting and snaring, however, is the accuracy that is required for marksmanship, whereas snaring and trapping depend more on knowing where to locate the wire-loop snares and the various kinds of traps. In the context of an afternoon visit, Russell MacIver and Duncan McLeod looked back over the years when hunting was not only a way of life, it was also one of the most interesting topics of the *taigh-céilidh*. Sitting around Russell's kitchen table on a summer's afternoon in 1992 may not have been a traditional setting for such a céilidh, especially considering the fact that both men had been well acquainted with customary *céilidhean* of the past. Times had changed, however, and it had been many a year since either of them passed a long winter's evening listening to stories and songs and sharing such

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57 This is a simply made, rectangular wooden box with a trigger device inside that releases a sliding door, which, when set, is suspended over the opening. It is a common device used in many part of Canada and America. For a photo of a box-trap for a rabbit, see H. Glassie, op cit, p. 169, Fig. 49.

anecdotes. Although I asked a few questions, it was not, by any means, an interview situation; it was simply a spontaneous and lively exchange of anecdotes. During the two-hour visit, the two men returned to the topic of hunting no fewer than three times, and I had the impression that if we could have returned on subsequent days or evenings, there would have been no shortage of stories to sustain the interest of an enthusiast.

Duncan: I used to hear that old Rory's father, or Rory himself, with the Indian, Archie Annis,[58] they'd hunt the moose on the snow-shoes all the way between Milan and the mountain. And the moose would play out, floundering around in the snow, and they'd kill it then.

Russell: My grandfather and Wild Alec they used to do that, they'd run the moose down in the deep snow—just cut their throat.

MB: They'd be on snow-shoes themselves?

Russell Oh, yeah.

MB: Who made the snow-shoes?[59]

Russell: Themselves. Some of them were real good at it.

MB: Where did they learn that?

Russell: Oh, just learned it, I guess.

MB: Did they get the idea from the Indians, or the French, or—?

Duncan: There was Indians in the country in the early days; not many of them, but some; they might have learned it

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58 Muriel Mayhew's husband, Herbert, also knew Archie Annis, a full-blooded Indian, who lived in a cabin in the woods near Canterbury. According to Carl Mayhew (brother of Herbert), *History of Canterbury, Quebec*, p. 60, Archie Annis was "supposed to be a Chief of the St. Francis Indians...and [when] game was plentiful...he used to come to the Canterbury Section to hunt." Although he was a hunter and trapper for most of his life, he was also very well educated, and a graduate from Dartmouth College in New Hampshire. In C.M. Day's book, *History of the Eastern Townships*, pp. 137-8, there is a much earlier account (1869) of the St. Francis Indians, where one man is referred to as "Capt. St. Francis, Chief of that tribe of Indians." Mrs Day also reports hearing about a battle involving the tribe on October 5, 1759 where they sustained great losses at the hands of the white man.

59 Mrs Simcoe described the troops practising walking on the Plains in snow shoes, March, 1792. "the Racket is made of Deer or Elk skins, the frame is of light wood an inch thick, 2 feet long, 14 inches broad." *Mrs Simcoe's Diary*, p. 55.

from them.

Russell: I had an uncle, and my gosh he was good with a knife. He used to fix up deer heads; did you ever see any of them?... Well he'd skin the neck and the head, take all the bones out and then make wood that looked like a deer's head, and oh! He was good! D'you want to see one of them heads?

MB: Yes!

Russell: Wait till you see it! Well, c'mon we'll see it. ... [MB stops tape to go into adjoining room to see the deer heads. Very impressive. Russell also shows a number of photos; all return to kitchen to resume conversation] ... That deer had an old mark on his foot and he had a scar over his shoulder, and he had a new one on one leg too, and my Uncle Dan MacDonald claimed that he shot it that day or the day before; well, he could have because it had that wound on the leg. But my father could hit them where they should be hit! [Laughs] He was a good shot, and it made no difference if they were on the gallop or standing still. He had what they call an autoloading Remington and it had a peep-sight here [at the top of the barrel] and sight here [in the middle] and a sight down at the end. And he looked through, and he could see it was lined up, it took in the three sights, he didn't have to aim, he could see that—***Bang!*** Usually he'd come home and he'd have a whole bunch of partridge tied to his waist—belt—and cut the heads off.

MB: You had plenty to eat then, with him hunting like that?

Duncan: Oh his father was an excellent hunter.

The conversation with Russell naturally shifted to a discussion about how they preserved wild meat. Since this will be included in Chapter 6, it is omitted here, and we resume just as Russell finishes dealing with the subject of salting and preserving:

Russell: Yeah. I remember one time, I didn't see it done, but my Uncle Johnny was fixing up some deer and he used to soak the [skin]— well he made moccasins and everything. To fix up the snowshoes he'd put them in brine, he'd have another pail of brine there, and my grandfather took it out and gave it to the hens. It killed every one of them! [laughs]

MB: Oh, dear me! I hope you ate them!

Russell: Oh, *they* did—I may not have been born then, but— Another time, we used to set snares for rabbits, [Russell tells the anecdote quoted above.]...

MB: You caught the owls alive?

Russell: Yeah. They got trapped .

MB: Oh my, the birds and hens seem to come off rather badly in those stories.

Russell: But salt or brine will kill a hen awful quick, just the least little bit.

The conversation turned to a discussion about the MacIvers' farm. Having lived on it and worked on it for many years, Russell could remember every field and crop, and greatly regretted the decline in farming over the years. He looked back on the days when farming and hunting were their way of life, and recalled the enthusiasm with which his father used to pursue his sport. It is easy to imagine why Russell's father gained his reputation as a skilled hunter:

Russell: We had a hayfield there at that time and then nobody lived there, and we cut hay for quite a few years but then we quit. My father called the farm "Sportsman's Rest"; and he was quite a sportsman. Oh, yeah. Every fall, the same as Duncan's father they'd go out to Woburn and hunt. There was one fall my father killed around a hundred and thirty deer. You could kill two in anybody's name and then ship them, [i.e. send them by post or by rail to that person]. And he'd go to the Post Office with a list and he'd give it to the post-master. And those that'd come in he'd save them for me; get him to check back, you know, any name at all. There had been a fire went through in the spring, and then by fall oh, there was a lot o green stuff, you know, and the deer just came pouring in. And you could see them up against that black stuff with the green. He said one day he was just standing there and he killed five. Never moved out of his tracks, and before he got home that night he had two more.[60] He had seven, [then he'd] make up some names [for the requirements of the licences]. And then he'd come home with a big sleigh full of deer; he came to Milan and Norman Doak and Norman McLeod, Duncan's father—

Duncan: And George D.A. [Muriel Mayhew's father] and Walter.

Russell: Yeah.

Duncan: I can remember as a kid, eh, on the railway, at the railway station there'd be, oh, two or three, five or six, seven or eight deer ready to be loaded on the first train that came through going to Montreal.

MB: Yes—

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60 Christie MacKenzie made similar comments about the profusion of deer that surrounded her family home at *Yard na Féidh* after they first cleared the land. See also, David Kennedy's *Pioneer Days*, pp. 131-132.

Duncan: There was no restrictions on killing deer the way there is today.[61] (MB: Yes.) Well, there might have been restrictions, eh, like he said that you had to have a name to ship them out. But you had to have somebody to buy them from you.

Russell: Johnny Doak, he used to put his father's name on, and his father never shot a gun in his life! [laughs] But Johnny shot a lot.

MB Yes.

Duncan: He was Ruth's uncle, brother of her father.

Russell: Yes, my father'd come home with a pung sleigh[62] full of them. We couldn't eat em all, he'd give em away, you know. Eat them.

MB: And sell the hides?

Russell: Yeah. And my Uncle John, he'd make up a lot of [stuffed] heads. In that house we had at the farm we had a shed, we had a good shed, and all this way [pointing down the length of the adjacent wall] all deer heads, down that way, and back this way, and that way [indicating the four walls of the room].

MB: All four sides.

Russell: And there were some of them in the velvet yet. Do you know what that is?

MB: Yes.

Russell: And boy, there was some good ones.

MB: I guess it would be OK to have a bit of deer meat now, still. Do you ever get any, any more?

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61 By comparison to Scottish game laws, restrictions are minimal. All adults can, for an affordable fee (between $5 and $10), apply for a licence to hunt bear, deer, moose, etc., with "rifle, flintlock, or bow and arrow." The restrictions are more on the season and use of weapon, rather than the cost, with fines levied for hunting "out of season", or with the wrong weapon; for example, bow and arrow season for deer precedes rifle season because the noise of the rifles would scare too many of them and thus spoil the bow and arrow season if the order were reversed. Flintlocks are still used by a few enthusiasts during what is commonly called "black powder season".

62 See note 36, above. The runners of the pung were sometimes of wood, rather than steel. Across the border in New Hampshire, the same term is used for a vehicle that slides on small skis rather than full-length runners, a system not unknown in Scotland, such as in non-mechanized woods operations. (Demonstration of log-hauling by an Argyleshire team, Royal Highland Show, Edinburgh, 1994).

Russell: No, I haven't hunted for a long time.

MB: You used to go hunting yourself too?

Russell: Yeah. I killed a few of them. I never got one of the real big ones. I got some of the ones that—

Duncan: Well, the big ones were all killed by your father and his friends!

Russell: I guess so.

Duncan: By the time you came along there were just small ones left! [laughter]

Russell: Oh, I've seen some big ones, yeah. I never could get them.

Whether or not Russell "could get them" may never be known, as the men who hunted with him are mostly all gone. In all probability his account of his own skill as a hunter was more in keeping with his reputation for modesty and understatement as well as his wry sense of humour. During our afternoon visit Russell gave the impression that even in his old age hunting and trapping were, in his mind, still a way of life, though perhaps not as necessary to his psychological well-being as it had been for one of his uncles, known locally as *Alec Fiadhaich*, or "Wild Alec":

Russell: I saw my father, he used [the mechanical seeder] one time when Wild Alec had cleared a spot, and he went West, and my father went up and used the Cyclone Seeder. That was over next to that Mrs MacArthur's farm. My great uncle Alec, they called him "Wild Alec".

MB: Why did they call him Wild Alec?

Russell: Oh he was a hunter and a trapper. He used to claim he could put the *buisneach* on somebody! Did you ever hear about the *buisneach?*[63]

MB: I did, yes.[64]

Russell: [Laughs] Like, put the *buisneach* on a fellow's

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63 See Chapter 3, footnote 73. I recorded other references to the *buisneach* in Quebec; see Appendix E and BEK5.

64 It was not my intention to divert Russell from his story, which, from the previous statement I erroneously surmised was about to lead to another familiar topic among the old-timers, that of belief in the supernatural. Russell himself was able to weave in the little diversion while keeping his mind on the story. Both are retained here to give a more realistic impression of the dynamics of the conversation.

cows and they wouldn't give any cream. I never put much stock in that, but you used to hear a lot of stories.

MB: Were people a little wary of that?

Russell: Oh, I don't know.

MB: Did anyone ever put the *buisneach* on someone making butter?[65]

Russell: Oh I've heard doing that, so it wouldn't churn. But those stories, you know, whether there's any truth—

MB: Who knows?

Russell: And that poor old fellow, I think he was about eighty-seven, or eighty-five, one fall, after he was losing his eyesight, and he took a bunch of traps out in a storm to the Black Lake out near Spring Hill [towards Bosta]. The Rosses tried to stop him, but no, he wouldn't stop. He didn't come back, 'n they went looking for him and found him dead in the woods, frozen stiff.

MB: Eight-seven is pretty old to be going trapping.

Russell: Yea, and especially when he was going blind.

MB: Maybe that's the way he wanted to go?

Russell: Oh I suppose, that's just what he'd like. First thing they found was his bag of traps, then they found his hat. And where they found him, he had a hatchet and he had been chipping at a tree, just like he was a little kid, and he was there. [to Duncan:] Were you there then?

Duncan: I was pretty young. But my father took me with the Star car[66] out to Bosta, top of, Bosta Hill.[67] I thought it was Bosta Hill, brought him out of the woods. He put him in the back of the cart, and I rode there with him on the way home. I was only eleven, I guess; 1927.

Russell: Yeah. I remember that fall, we went to his funeral in a pung sleigh, and the next day we went in a cart over to the town line, to Alex Murray's [funeral], you know

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65 I recorded an account from Donald MacLennan, BEK: 5A.

66 "Star" was a trade-name for a type of automobile made by the Durant Auto Company. It had an enclosed front cab (similar to Hackney cabs) and the roof at the back could be removed, like a modern pick-up truck. Duncan's father had removed the back for this trip, and on the return journey Duncan had to sit in the back with the dead man.

67 Like many of the local names in the area, Bosta was named after the Lewis placename, near Bernera, Uig.

The image of the hunter has always been close to the hearts of the old-timers. It is not, however, in keeping with the modern American image of "huntin' season", when lines of pick-up trucks topped with gun-racks appear along the backroads in New England and Quebec. To old-timers like Russell MacIver, it was as much a part of family tradition as hunting the *guga* had been for their forebears in Lewis. The Quebeckers knew the woods and surrounding territory as well as Nessmen knew the seas around the Butt of Lewis; they knew when to go out, and when to recognize approaching "white-outs", just as their people had learned to forecast Atlantic gales.[68] Furthermore, a good supply of wild meat ensured a winter of plenty, and if the men enjoyed the sport and the yarns in the *taigh-céilidh*, then all the better. The Old and New World hunters experienced one major difference apart from the size of their quarry: in the New World they enjoyed the kind of freedom to hunt the deer that was afforded only to the landowners of the Scottish Highlands or wealthy European sportsmen.[69] Not even today could it be considered a birthright of disenfranchised crofters who, lacking the considerable wealth required to be able to pay for privilege of hunting, can only dream of the liberty Russell's people enjoy, or risk severe public prosecution if they transgress the boundaries of their class.

Lumbering

Cutting wood and moving stones was all part of the settlers' farming routine, for without these activities they could neither improve their land or maintain an acceptable degree of self-sufficiency. To attain a better standard of living, however, which

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68 The *guga*, solan geese, nest on the cliff face of Suilisgeir, forty miles off the coast. The Nessmen have to haul their boat up a sixty foot cliff for safety, and usually stay on the island for three weeks. Photos from the 1960 hunt can be seen in Donald MacDonald's book, *Lewis*, Plate numbers 39-43, with notes p. 128.

69 In Canada, provincial game laws have changed from the days when Russell's father hunted; nevertheless, the rules governing the easily obtainable hunting licences are the same for all Canadians, regardless of social status.

was the ambition of most families, required a steadier income than the summer haying could bring in. As a result, many of the men opted to take part in seasonal wood-felling operations or to cut and sell wood on their own land. The Morrison homestead at Cruveg, Marsboro, had extensive stands of timber, and after they had cut what they needed for house and barn building, they began to work at cutting trees, both for themselves and for other businesses. As a young man, Angus worked in the woods for several years before he and his wife, Mary, moved to Montreal. In 1992, they looked back over the years the family were involved in lumbering before they sold the family farm in 1943. Angus began:

> Anns a' choille? *Well*, bha mise 's mo bhràthair—bha dà bhràthair agam—bhiodh iad a' gearradh na *logaichean*. Bha each agamsa, 's bha each aig mo bhràthair, 's bhiodh sinn a' tarruing na *logaichean*. Bhiodh sinn a' cuir ann am pìl iad. Bha siud mu Samhainn. 'S an geamhradh nuair a thigeadh an sneachd', bhiodh sinn 'gan tarruing le *sleighichean*. Bhiodh sinn 'gan tarruing ochd mìle 's naoi mìle 's— [Aug. 8, 1992]
>
> *In the woods? Well, my brother and I were—I had two brothers—they would be cutting logs. I had a horse, and my brother had a horse, and we would be hauling logs. We would put them in a pile [cut to measured lengths, and stacked neatly in the woods]. That was around Hallowmas. And in the winter when the snow came, we would be hauling them with a sleigh. We'd be hauling them eight or nine miles—*

Angus and his brothers sold their timber to a big company in Megantic which made both paper and boards. Their father, R.E., had already established a link with the company, having realized that a steady income would be the only way to raise their modest standard of living. As Mary joined in the conversation, Angus reverted to their common language, English, and continued. (Mary's words are included here in italics here):

> Yes, yes, yes. To a company in Megantic. And my father was jobbing for years, jobbing for a company in Megantic, a big lumber company, they had lumber limits all over Marsboro. And my father jobbed for this company for years. We were the first family in Marsboro to buy a car—and a radio. My father bought the car, and my brother bought the radio. *It had a big horn like coming out of it, and—* Earphones.

Canada's timber trade was fed by lumber operators of all sizes, not only in Quebec, but right across the country. Men could get a

job in the woods so long as they were willing to work hard and live in spartan conditions. Lumber camps were established in many remote locations, and when word got around that men were needed, either for cutting or for the "drive", there was no shortage of labour. For a people who claim to have scarcely seen an axe,[70] far less made a living with one, the Hebridean settlers took their places beside the more experienced French-Canadians, and joined crews all over the Eastern Townships, "down across the line", and into Maine. According to other accounts of Maine lumbercamps, they were manned largely by Canadians from Quebec and the Maritimes.[71] According to Donald Morrison who grew up in Red Mountain and spent most of his adult life in Scotstown, "at that time, if you were a man, you weren't supposed to be *considered* a man until you'd done either a stint in the woods, on the drive, or you'd worked a couple of years in the quarries in Vermont."[72]

Training for this "stint" began early. Even today, young boys scarcely old enough to go to school are taught to swing an axe, and within a very short time, the routine of how to stand, how to hold the axe, how to aim, and how to use it safely all become second nature.[73] Although many young men in the Eastern Townships still work in the woods for a living, "times have changed" (partly due to mechanization, and partly due to choices in further

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70 This is also claimed in Cape Breton, despite the fact that there are Gaelic stories in oral tradition mentioning axes. For example, I recorded a Gaelic nursery tale, "Murachan is Marachan", in Newfoundland which mentions *tuagh,* an axe, suggesting that the word at least as known; see *The Last Stronghold,* pp. 130-136. As mentioned in Chapter 1, David Kennedy notes that the early settlers had a few tools, including "hammers and chisels, but not a saw." (*Pioneer Days*, p. 17.)

71 Edward D. Ives's book, *Larry Gorman, The Man Who Made the Songs*, tells of the life and songs of a Prince Edward Islander who was famous for the satires he composed in lumber camps in Maine. Ives's second book, *Joe Scott, the Woodsman Songmaker*, is about a New Brunswicker who worked as a lumberjack. Two very different characters and life stories, both books describe life in the lumber camps in Maine.

72 The late Donald Morrison worked as a customs official; he was a very keen local historian with a lively interest in every aspect of Gaelic tradition in the Eastern Townships. He was recorded in October, 1976.

73 In 1976, a neighbour, without any prior consultation, taught my five-year-old son to swing an axe so that he would be able to chop logs for the fire "like all the other men". The lessons were very successful, though the sight of a very small six year-old swinging an axe caused considerable alarm in Scotland the following year.

education) since the days recalled by men of Russell MacIver's generation:

> Yeah, there was a lot at one time. They'd go in the logging camps in the Fall and there was no way they'd get out till the spring. There was a lot o them. My father used to go in and he was head [chief] "chopper" there. He'd notch a tree, and [the loggers] they'd just come along and look at the notch, and then they'd cut it down, because they wouldn't have to find out where it'd go [i.e. in which direction it would fall]. He had it all figured out where it wouldn't get lodged. There was a French fellow one time, he came home and [we] asked him if he had a good job in the woods. "Oh yes! I chop head first in the tree all winter!" [laughs]

At this point Russell touches on an aspect of lumbercamp humour that pervades every discussion on the topic. No matter who tells the story, no matter where the lumbercamp happened to be—Quebec or Maine—no matter if the men were felling trees or on the drive, sooner or later an amusing anecdote at the expense of the French-Canadian is told. Like the one told by Russell, the humour is usually based on *double entendre*, either due to a mispronunciation of a word, or an incomplete grasp of English grammar. (Interestingly, Russell did not seem to notice the *double entendre* within his own part of the story—his father was the "head-chopper"[74]?) It would be too easy to leap to the conclusion that this type of humour is a manifestation of some kind of ethnic put-down, like the Polack, Newfie, Kerry or Teuchter joke, depending upon where it is told. We must also consider the fact that these same people, the Eastern Township "Gaelickers", (as school-teacher Myrtle Murray called them) told similar jokes about their own people. The scenario is familiar in Scotland, where favourite subjects for these "jokes" are often elderly Gaelic-speakers unaccustomed to speaking English, who make naive and amusing mistakes; there is an element of warm affection in many of them, just as there is in the re-telling of the amusing linguistic irregularities of small children. While most of these types of jokes can also serve to remind us how illogical English grammar is, seldom do the tellers acknowledge that they

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74 "Head chopper" was the official title of a woodsman who was good enough to take on the job, such as "Big Neil", Russell's father. [Duncan McLeod, July, 1994.]

notice these idiosyncrasies.[75] Of even less concern to the tellers of lumbercamp jokes is <u>why</u> people tell them; lumbercamps aside, why do people tell Auschwitz, Abervan, Space Shuttle or Chernobyl jokes?[76] It is no more because they are pleased that such dreadful disasters happened than because the "Gaelickers" are pleased that many of the French-Canadians cannot speak fluent English. To a large extent they enjoy the fact that they speak it with such colourful and memorable idiosyncrasies. And like the above categories of "black humour", the lumbercamp jokes help alleviate some of the tensions generated by the dangerous, arduous work and the inhospitable living conditions.[77] There was, in short, little else to joke about, or to remember with pleasure about the lumbercamp way of life.

Johnnie A. MacLeod from Dell recalled his winters of working in a lumbercamp in the late 1920s. As far as the woodsmen were concerned, he said that logging was a fairly miserable job, whereas there was "real prestige" attached to the river drive. When Johnnie, a Gaelic-speaker, joined the camp crew, he found that he was the only fluent English-speaker among a crew of eighty-five Frenchmen, all brought in for the woods operation. Regardless of what the dominant language in the lumber camp, he was to discover over the years that the routine was fairly

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75 The subject of why we laugh at jokes has been discussed at length by behavioural psychologists whose methods of observations are useful to folklorists. Of particular relevance to this context is Mihály Hoppál's discussion on "folk humour" in Transylvania at a village gathering. Hoppál examines the social setting of certain types of humour and identifies the "comic feature" using concepts of modern linguistics. See M. Hoppál, "Genre and Context in Narrative Event: Approach to Verbal Semiotics" in *Genre, Structure and Reproduction in Oral Literature*, edited by Lauri Honko and Vilmos Voigt, pp. 107-128.

76 Two articles in *Western Folklore* Vol. XLV, No. 4 discuss the subject and give a large number of examples; see Willie Smyth in "Challenger Jokes and the Humour of Disaster" 243-260, and Elizabeth Radin Simons, "The NASA Joke Cycle: The Astronauts and the Teacher", pp. 261-277.

77 A number of recent studies deal with this issue; see, Robert Cochran, "'WHAT COURAGE!' Romanian 'Our Leader' Jokes", *JAF*, Vol. 102, No. 405, pp. 259-274 and Mary Beth Stein, "The Politics of Humour: The Berlin Wall in Jokes and Graffiti" in *Western Folklore*, vol. XLVIII, pp. 85-108.

standard.[78] They all slept in the one bunkhouse, years later memorable for the bed-bugs, lice, body odour, and stifling atmosphere. "Day" began when they all had to get up at 3.30 a.m. and go outdoors to eat breakfast of beans, bread, and tea. Then began the work of preparing for the drive by putting pulpwood into the river. At 9 a.m. they stopped for the next meal of the day—beans again. Work resumed immediately, tree after tree after tree, till they stopped for lunch at 2.30 p.m.—same as breakfast.[79] Back to work then, till nightfall, and the fourth meal of the day, a welcome plate of boiled beef and potatoes, which was eaten at the camp, again outdoors. Back in the bunkhouse, and in spite of their fatigue, the men enjoyed their own entertainment of songs, stories, jokes and the occasional fiddle tune and step-dance. It was their only respite from a hard, unsafe, stressful and often lonely way of making a living. Despite the warmth from the bunkhouse stove, they often went to bed wet, and always with their clothes on.

Decades later, Johnnie Bard still exchanged lumbercamp stories with friends, such as the ones that he wrote in his unpublished manuscript, *Memoirs of Dell*: "Joe Leblanc tol' about 'my fadder was two years a policeman an' a haf', and another man used to like to speak about his horse, saying things like 'You tro' de hors' over de fence som' hay'."[80] It was only stories like these that made life more bearable.

Nevertheless, the stereotypical image of the Canadian lumberman reflects none of this discomfort to the world in general. He is still seen as the epitome of the outdoorsman—strong, tough, healthy and happy. Young men were, and are, still

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78 J. A. MacLeod, known locally as Johnnie "Bard", wrote a number of letters to his family which, in 1971, comprised his *Memoirs of Dell.* See *Memoirs of Dell,* pp. 191-193.

79 Descriptions of lumbercamps invariably include the mention of beans as the staple food. As with the bothymen of the North-east of Scotland, the repetitive daily routine is described in many songs of the lumbercamps. For comparative examples, see song texts and Hamish Henderson's notes to the Scottish Tradition record, *Bothy Ballads: Music from the North East,* 1971, reissued on compact disc with booklet by Greentrax, Edinburgh, 1993.

80 Op cit, p. 193.

attracted to the life, ever hoping for adventure and wealth as they set out for camp. For some families, however, one man's winter in the lumberwoods brought no financial rewards, but instead cost them dearly. Inevitably, tragedy struck, and many a young man was "cut down in his prime", as the songs tell it. Incidents and individual are remembered long after their generation has passed away. Russell and Duncan continue:

Russell: And that used to be a long winter too.

MB: Oh I bet. When would they go in—October or November?

Russell: Oh, at the first cold weather.[81]

MB: And they wouldn't get out till when? [pause] April or May?

Russell: Yeah. And then some of them'd stay for the drive on the water [when the ice broke]. There's a first cousin of my grandfather MacIver, Donald MacIver, same name, he came over from Loch Garvaig, and he just came over in time to go on the drive in spring. And he went up to Connecticut. He didn't know anything at all about handling and stuff, you know, and he got drowned. He's buried in the MacIver cemetery. He was thirty years old. He was a nice fellow, strong and healthy. But there's quite a knack in handling them logs in the water.

MB: I bet.

Russell: There's some fellas could walk on them, and drive them, and ride them down the river. 'Course there's a lot of them got drowned too.

MB: Yes, they had dangerous work.

Russell: Yeah.

MB: Were there many accidents felling them? — cutting them?

Russell: Oh sometimes. Cutting the trees? Yeah, there was a Tormod Matheson... he got killed by a tree.

Duncan: I think it's marked on the gravestone that he was killed by a falling tree.

Russell: And I think there was, there's maybe a Beaton in the MacIver cemetry there got killed by a tree, a young fella. He was out with MacKenzie in Marsboro. Oh there's quite a

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81 In 1976, my only personal experience of all the seasons, the first snow fell on October 10; we never saw the ground again that year, as it got deeper and deeper as winter went by.

few.

MB: A hard life.

Russell: Yeah.

Duncan: That was, eh, a lot of people went down across the line into Maine to work in the woods. There was more men went down there than there was here, I think.

Russell: Oh yes.

Duncan: And then down what they call the Connecticut River, eh, down through New Hampshire. The Connecticut Valley Lumber Company was quite a big outfit there. [Sept. 16, 1992]

Alex MacIver who now lives in Sherbrooke remembers the attraction of the river drive in 1935. Although he did not work in any of logging camps doing the "miserable job" of getting the trees to the river, he joined the next stage of the work:

*When I was nineteen I used to hire on for the log drives. And some of the drivers were younger than that. You'd pack your lunch and work for ten cents an hour for ten hours a day. [Fieldwork notebook, August 5, 1992]

After he married Jean MacKenzie, daughter of Christie and John, they both moved to Maine where Alex became cook in a camp at Holeb. "Once you were in there, that was you—you couldn't get out till next spring," Jean added. Both Gaelic-speakers, today they are among the very few who are still completely fluent. When they lived in Maine, Alex found himself as much in the company of Gaelic-speakers as he had been at home in Quebec. "Oh, yes, everything was in Gaelic." He joked about "one fellow" who used to pretend he did not speak Gaelic, projecting the notion that superior beings spoke English. "He tried to let on that he couldn't remember it!" Jean, added "I'm sure he must have heard it all his life at home, the same we did."

In Alex's experience, the songs in the camp at night would, as often as not, be in Gaelic,[82] with some in English, and a few in a

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82 A fuller, though by no means complete, discussion of Gaelic songs in the Eastern Townships, along with examples of texts, is contained in my paper "Gaelic Songs of Quebec", in the Proceedings of the Conference on

mixture of the two.[83] Though seldom does he have an opportunity to sing nowadays—he also says he "can't sing any more"—Alex could still recall many verses of locally composed songs, some anecdotal and amusing, a few satirical, and others nostalgic, that he had first heard in the lumberwoods. One was known locally as *Oran Holeb*; and though the title might seem confusing nowadays, since the name "Holeb" never appears througout this song of nostlagia, Alex explained that it was *composed* in the lumber town of Holeb, where so many Quebeckers worked all winter. [See Appendix F for the text of *Oran Holeb*.] Alex recalled the camp céilidhs and several of the men who knew verse after verse of poems and songs. Some of the songs were almost epics,[84] if the singing of Alex's contemporary, Donald Morrison, who did more than one "stint in the woods", was anything to go by.

Growing up in Red Mountain [Map 4], one of Donald's main interests was in the songs he heard at local céilidhs, either in people's houses, the "old-style" visit, or in the village-halls of the district which held regular céilidhs and dances between the 1920s and 50s. Before he was old enough to work in the lumberwoods, he had plenty of occasions to listen and learn, and to sing when the opportunity arose. Though his parents were both Gaelic-speakers, Donald, like many of his contemporaries, was "made to speak English at home, so that he would get on better."[85] As a result, he was one of the first generation of Hebridean settlers whose repertoire of stories and songs was all in English, though, unlike many second generation Scots-Canadians who adopted the repertoires of Victorian songbooks, the songs to which Donald was drawn were almost all composed by Eastern Township songmakers. Among the songs and poems he heard in his teens were a number of compositions by a local song-maker

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Folksong, *Association for Scottish Literary Studies*, held in Aberdeen in August 1993. Forthcoming, 1994.

83 I have discussed the occurrence of macaronic songs elsewhere. See "Gaelic, French and English: Some Aspects of the Macaronic Tradition of the Codroy Valley, Newfoundland" in *Regional Language Studies...Newfoundland*, pp. 25-30.

84 The longest noted was over 250 verses long.

85 The language issue will be dealt with later.

who went by the name of "Oscar Dhu" (sic, pronounced like *dubh*). His name was Angus B. MacKay, and he gained a reputation throughout the Townships and beyond for his topical compositions.

Born to Lewis parents in 1864 in Red Mountain (the same settlement as Donald Morrison), MacKay was, naturally, a Gaelic-speaker. From his writings, it seems clear that he had no opportunity to become literate in his mother tongue,[86] and less opportunity to use it daily after he left Quebec in 1899 to settle in Seattle, Washington where he regularly wrote for a local newspaper. Like the Scottish-born poet, Robert Service, whose compositions about the Yukon goldrush were in a style that instantly appealed to the goldminers and a much wider section of the population beside,[87] Oscar Dhu had the ability to capture the imaginations of the lumbermen, and the Hebridean Townshippers in general. Also like Service, who was a banker and experienced the goldrush through the bar-room stories of the hard-living miners, Oscar Dhu wrote at a certain distance from the people who were the subjects of his poems, as he left Quebec "for good" at the age of thirty-five. Nevertheless, it is highly likely that he had experienced work as a lumberman in Québecois camps, as most young men of his time did. Clearly, he had listened acutely to the speech patterns of French-Canadians trying to speak English, as he mimics them, sometimes wickedly, in several of his poems. Unlike Robert Service, however, Oscar Dhu could be scathingly satirical in his treatment of his subjects, and while he was, and still is, immensely popular among the Eastern Townshippers, this may be one of the reasons why he did not gain the national and international acclaim that Service did.

Biting satire is nothing new to Hebridean song-makers; it has

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86 In his introduction to *Donald Morrison: The Canadian Outlaw*, p. 2, MacKay writes "The orthography of the Gaelic words in the present work may be defective from a literary standpoint, as I have followed the style of the late Josh Billings, rather than the correct one." (Josh Billings was a Canadian humourist who used to spell phonetically.)

87 For example, I have heard "old-timers" in Newfoundland recite long poems by Service that they had learned orally.

attracted comment for centùries, such as from Martin Martin, who, in 1695, remarked on the Lewis people's "gift of poesy" and their ability "to form a satire".[88] Nearly a century later, the Rev. John Lane Buchanan observed while living and working in the Outer Hebrides that the inhabitants

> have a fine vein for poetry and music, both vocal and instrumental... One may meet, not only with studied, but even extemporaneous effusions of the most accute and pointed satire, that pierce to the heart, and leave a poignant sting.[89]

As Alan Bruford states, it has been the "stock-in-trade of most local bards since [Rob Donn's] time, and satire without truth or clarity cannot bite: they show much more of society than the eulogies of earlier bards."[90] It is, therefore, essential to view the satire in the context of the society in which, and for which, it was composed. Since the scope of this work cannot include a major discussion on the subject, it will be dealt with elsewhere.[91] Later in this chapter, I will, however, include a relatively mild example from Oscar Dhu, "Christmas in Quebec", which was popular in the lumbercamps, and finally, in the Conclusions, where it fits best, I will include the most biting of all local satires, "Oran nam Frangach", composed by a local bard who remained in the area all his life.

In the Eastern Townships, Oscar Dhu was undoubtedly the most prolific of a number of song-makers whose quick wit entertained at many a céilidh, at home with family and friends, or in the bunkhouse far from any other habitation. Donald Morrison had the good fortune of acquiring some of Oscar Dhu's publications as a young man, though by no means did he think that his collection was complete:

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88 Martin Martin, *Description*, p. 13.

89 John Lane Buchanan, *Travels in the Western Hebrides: from 1782 - 1790*, p. 80.

90 Alan Bruford, Review of Ian Grimble's *The World of Rob Donn*. See *Tocher*, No. 35, p. 351.

91 "Gaelic Songs of Quebec", forthcoming, 1994, has a few examples, and my forthcoming book based on the entire fieldwork will deal with the subject in greater depth.

> There were hundreds and hundreds of songs [in both Gaelic and English] that were never even published. They were written about the lumberjacks and stories like that. They're completely forgotten, now there's no connection at all [with today's songs and the ones we used to hear], like "I'm John Bouillant with big trapeau, I come down from Chi-ca-go" [recited in the stacatto rhythm of the song]—stuff like that they had in the lumbercamps. But if you ask anybody about it, these songs are just completely written off...
>
> My uncle was the agent for [--?] who had these books published—all but *[By] Trench and Trail*, and that was published in Seattle, Washington. But Angus Mackay, Oscar Dhu's poems [published in his book, *By Trench and Trail in Song and Story*, in 1918] which was one of the big sellers, and he'd sell amongst the Scotch people that went to, eh, Vermont.

Both Donald Morrison and Alex MacIver spoke of lumbermen who could sing, or recite by heart, poem after poem by Oscar Dhu, including his longest composition, 259-eight-line verses, "Donald Morrison, the Canadian Outlaw". Having heard Donald spontaneously sing 116 lines of it in the context of a house-céilidh in Milan in 1976 [see Appendix F],[92] I asked him if he used to "sit down and systematically learn them." His animated reply was quite emphatic:

> *No*, eh! I used to ***hear*** those songs when I was young, up here—father, Donald MacRitchie, different ones used to sing parts of 'em, and I'd listen; we'd ***hear*** them. But, eh, Oscar Dhu, although a lot of people didn't realise it, a lot of the stuff that he wrote away from here was never published... but he was a great patriot as far as Quebec was concerned. And when he was away he often wrote poems, which you know, I've got more, probably two or three of them I don't know of anyone else that has them. But I remember seeing them published, but they were published in papers in Seattle,Washington.

In 1993, almost two years after Donald Morrison's death, Alex MacIver recalled hearing him sing all of "the Outlaw song" on a

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92 Donald introduced his song by saying he would "sing a bit of it", and gave the impression that the present company would probably not wish to hear all of it, as our time was not limitless, as it had been in the lumbercamps. Recorded October, 1976; the quality of the tape is fairly poor, as there was a great deal of extraneous noise, and to avoid spoiling the informal atmosphere of the céilidh I did not set up an external microphone. Unfortunately I am unable to discuss this song in the present study as the subject of the Megantic Outlaw would require a complete chapter. I have already published the material from my earlier collection in "Folkways and Religion of the Hebridean Scots in the Eastern Townships" in *Cultural Retention*, pp, 68-75. See also transcription of Donald Morrison's song in Appendix F.

number of occasions,[93] and added that there were "a few of the men" knew it. As it was well over two hundred verses long, it is little wonder that Donald had, in the setting of the modern céilidh, declined to sing all of it. In the old-style lumbercamp bunkhouses, however, the men enjoyed the epic entertainment just as today's camp-dwellers enjoy a two-hour film on video.[94] The chosen topics also covered a wide range of subjects, from nostalgic homesick themes to biting satirical comments on political or social situations. And from Alex's brief example of bawdry, recorded in 1992—a verse in Gaelic, which elicited his wife's comment, "I thought we'd get onto that sooner or later"—it is quite certain that the Hebridean lumbermen were no different from bothymen, oil-rig workers, or any other group of men in isolated situations.[95] The majority of these songs stayed at camp, and certainly did not get aired at the local village céilidh, as this one, sung by Donald Morrison, did. He began by saying that "Oscar Dhu had a little song about Christmas in Quebec" and, telling us that he would "sing a few verses of it", Donald sang all of the text that

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93 Donald's widow, Annie, also confirmed this in conversation; fieldwork notebook, July 30, 1993. It was a well-known fact that the song is over 250 verses long, as it had been published as a book, *Donald Morrison, the Canadian Outlaw: A Tale of the Scottish Pioneers*, 1892, reprinted in 1965, 1975, and had a wide distribution in the area. It was still easy to buy a copy during my fieldwork in 1976, though I am told that it went out of print very quickly afterwards. Many of the book-buyers were visitors coming "home" on holiday, and, according to one enthusiast, Thomas A. McKay from Virginia, who was trying to buy a copy in 1990, "you couldn't get one for love or money." His interest in the poem stemmed from the fact that he had traced his family genealogy to the area and had discovered he was a grand-nephew of Angus B. MacKay, Oscar Dhu. He then decided to publish an "Enhanced Centennial Edition" in 1993. In an advertisement for this new edition, McKay refers to it as "the book that several copied out by hand". While searching for a copy he had come across a number of families who had hand-written the entire poem, so popular was it at one time. [Personal communication, 1992.]

94 Hungarian-American folklorist, Linda Dégh, discusses the prevalence of long tales among the men of "certain non-village communities" such as workingmen's hostels and barracks accommodating migrant labourers. "Men exhausted by a day's hard work find listening to [long] tales a welcome recreation..." By way of contrast, she observes that the same storytellers finds themselves telling shorter tales at informal gatherings where "the village young are too impatient to listen to a long drawn-out narrative." Introduction to *Folktales of Hungary*, pp, xxxiii-xxxiv.

95 Hamish Henderson refers to the North-east bothymen as having a staple of "brose and bawdy ballads"; see sleeve notes to the record, *Bothy Ballads*, School of Scottish Studies, 1973.

follows in a mock-French-Canadian accent:[96]

Christmas in Quebec

I got notice some tam lately [time]
Wrote in Yankee dialec'
Asking Joe how I spen' Chris'mas
On de Ten Range[97] of Kebec;

But ba gosh I don' wrote nottings
Till de New Year pass along.
Chris'mas tam I dance an' fiddle
Eat an' drink an' sing some song!

Yes, ma frien' dis ol' man happy.
Jus' lak' little[98] lamb in May!
Ev'ry year I grow lak young one
W'en it come to Chris'mas day!

Hip-hoorah, I feel like dancin'
Play for Joe an' kip good tam,
I'm mos' happy man in Weedon.[99]
On his shanty jus' de sam'.

Come on, Zavier and clear de room off,
An' one dance to you I'll show,
Dat I learn on Lampton Corners
More as[100] t'irty years ago.

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96 The song, "Christmas in Quebec" is published in *Trench and Trail*, pp. 15-21. I am grateful to Duncan McLeod for lending me his copy in 1993. In the transcription I have borrowed Oscar Dhu's spellings for the non-standard pronounciation of words, (e.g. tam=time) and have also kept some of his spellings for words which are only slightly different (e.g. hee's=he's) but which Oscar Dhu seems to have regarded as material for treatment in his satirical approach. I have not, however, changed Donald's version, which, like any song that has entered oral tradition, has not kept strictly to the original printed text. Words that need explanation are glossed.

97 The land was divided into "ranges" which were subsequently used as names. The Tenth Range (on a dirt road) is, today, signposted *"Rang 10"*, and is located at right angles off what is locally called the "Big Woods Road" (a gravel road). It is still very remote and difficult to find, even with a map, as there are so many side paths not marked. Oscar Dhu does not use capitals in his version.

98 Oscar Dhu wrote "leetle".

99 Weedon is west of the St Francis River.

100 Although "more as" is intended to imitate the French, it sounds identical to the Scots idiom for "more than".

It's called criss-cross two-step, quick-step,
Up an' down de centre too;
Right an' lef' and swing you' pardner,[101]
Till de tack fly out her shoe!

Come I'll show you how to do it,
Tak' de one you love de bes',
Den you swing it ro'nd lak swirlwind [whirlwind]
Or dar slyclone in de Wes'. [sic,cyclone]

Whoop up gee! just wash ma dances [watch]
An' hole Paul will kip good tam, [old]
On dis side de Lac St. Francis
I can skunk [?] dem all de sam. [?]

T'ro' dat stool on top de corner,
Push dat cradle from de room,
Joe hee's got dis floor for shak' down
An' he'll swip it like de broom.

Jomp up Jacque! and strak dat ceilin' [strike]
Till de dus' fall on you' head—
Come Lucinda! stop dat squealin'
Or we'll sen' you off to bed.

Dis is Chris'mas an' one good one—
Chris'mas come but once a year;
Ope dat stove an' t'row some hood on, [wood]
An' we'll have one, two, t'ree cheer!

Rig-a-gig-a-gig[102] jus' wash ma moccasin
An' hole Paul you kip good tam!
Pass dat jug aro'nd de grog-is-in,
An we'll have w'at Scotch call "dram".

Pass it ro'nd de room ma Rosie
An' be sure you fill de glass;
Ma Joe sen' me twenty doll-air[103]
Jus' las' week from Lowhell, Mass.[104] [sic, Lowell]

Ev'ry year he sen' me monay
And he sen' some ol' clothes too—
But the damn custom charge me duty[105]
Jus' de same like it was new!

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101 The local village hall dances used to have callers. Recorded from Myrtle Murray, Sept. 25, 1991.

102 Pronounced "jig"; Oscar Dhu's spelling.

103 Oscar Dhu's spelling of "dollar", my hyphen, since it is sung in staccato rhythm, dividing the word. This is also a characteristic that is caricatured.

104 It was common for young men and women in the settlers' families, both French and Scotch, to work "across the line" and send money home.

105 Oscar Dhu's printed version has "But dem duty charge me custom".

Shoo! dat dance has mak' me tire—
Rosie pass de pipe of clay—
Plenty more rat here in Weedon, [of that]
We're Pete Tanguay give it way. [where]

Here's tobac dat's raise in Compton,[106]
Take it too an' pass it ro'nd—
Plentay more way do'n at Lampton
Jus' for twenty cent one po'nd.

Smoke ma frien' an' tak' it heasy, [easy[107]]
Still de fiddler res' his bow—
Smudge dis room till it grow hazy,
Den we'll have one nodder go! [another]

Rig-a-gig-a-gig jus' wash ma feet go,
Put some movemen' in dat tune;
If a man is want for beat Joe— [wanting to]
Mus' get up before it's noon!

Oh ba gosh! de hole man's happy!
Wish you all feel sam' like me.
Canada's de place spen' Chris'mas
Up at Weedon 'mong de tree!

I feel bad for Wilfrid Laurier,[108]
An' for all de beeg Frenchman,
Who can nevair know henjoymen'
In dis worl' de sam's I can.

Troub' is all he gets for breakfas'.
An' for dinnair too I guess—
Charlie Tupper's[109] eat for supper—
An' hee's awul hard diges'!

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106 Compton is the name of the county of Quebec.

107 One of the most common features chosen to make fun of the French-Canadian's way of speaking is the tendency to aspirate all words beginning with a vowel in English.

108 Wilfred Laurier (later Sir), a Liberal, became prime minister of Canada in 1896, a position he held for over fifteen years.

109 Sir Charles Tupper was prime minister before the defeat of his Conservative cabinet in the election of 1896. When I asked Muriel Mayhew to listen to the tape of the song with me with a view to explaining any of the names, she made no comment about the political figure, but remarked upon a local personality: "*Charlie Tupper lived in Whitton for a time; I don't know what happened to him, he possibly went out west and died there. I remember Mrs Tupper, because, as a child, "Tupper" was such an odd name. She was originally a MacDonald from North Hill. She had two children, Edward and Charlie." Fieldwork notebook, Aug. 1, 1993. From the sense of the song, however, I would think that Oscar Dhu was referring to the politician, as he had been involved in a number of tense debates that could be seen as "hard to digest" during his long career. He died in 1915 at the age of 94.

Den de nightmare kick lak blazes,
W'en a little sleep dey foun'—
I can sleep me in dis shanty
Twice as fas' an' twice as soun'.

I don' henvey any rich man,
He can tak' ma house an' lan',
But he can't tak' ma henjoymen' [enjoyment]
Like de res' w'en hee's deman'. [when=when he demands]

Hee's live in one gran' beeg cassil— [castle[110]]
All light up wit' 'lectric lamp—
I am Joseph in dis shanty,
An' my shanty's in de swamp.[111]

But ba gosh I'm far more happies
Dan big man in house of stone[112]—
Byemdy he'll be jus like Joseph— [some day[113]]
Six feet land is all he'll own!

Come here Pierre ma troat's grow wheezy,
Pass de glassware roun' for change—
Wash ma Rosie, ain't she daisy?
She's de bes' cook on de Range.

Ev'ry year w'en it come Chris'mas,
Rosie geeve me lots to heat— [eat]
Pie an' doughnut,[114] cake an' cookie,
But an' two t'ree kin' of meat.

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110 Since there is only slight difference between the pronounciation of cassil and castle, it seems likely that Oscar Dhu was also satirizing the French-Canadian's illiteracy.

111 A number of French and Hebridean settlers were allocated entire "lots" in swampy areas. One Gaelic-speaker was nicknamed "Iain a' *Swamp*" because his farm was almost entirely swampy. While this factor sometimes accounts for secondary migration, some of these settlers concentrated on cutting timber which was still an option to them.

112 Stone houses were, and are, highly valued, as all settler homes were made with wood, the quickest, easiest, most practical method of construction. Only in established towns, such as Sherbrooke, Bury, and Cookshire were there any stone houses; these were usually very large, and owned by wealthy and/or important people, such as the local lawyer or doctor. For the past twenty years, however, more and more French-owned houses are being faced with "field stones" to give the impression of the "house of stone". Even since 1976 I could see widespread changes, starting just outside Rock Island, the Border town and customs station, and extending all the way to Megantic and beyond. To anyone who has grown up in a country such as Scotland with its stone-built houses and ubiquitous dry-stane dykes, the new look in the Eastern Townships is not totally convincing, as some of the examples look as if the stones are cemented on to wood—which they are.

113 Byemdy is a combination of "some day" and "by and by".

114 Oscar Dhu has "stoughnut".

Ev'ryt'ing she's good for cook it—
An' de pork she's good for fry,
She can flip dat buckwheat pancake
Like de twinkle of your eye!

Yes ba gosh! ma wife hee's good wan,
Nevair scold me w'en I'm sick;
An' she raise me twenty young wan
Nevair learn dat "Yankee trick"![115]

Plenty vote to swing de 'lection—
Twenty-one or twenty-t'ree;
But I'm ask for no Protection
For my Infant Industry!

Dat's de cry I like, "all ready"!
Sopper's on de tab' at las'—
Girl an' frien' fall in ma hearty—
Hungry from de midnight Mass.

Come Joseph an' bring Louiser,—
Don' be squeeze her all night long—
Joe, I know is lak' hee's fadder—
Jus' de sam' w'en I was young!

Now I'll pass de jug for luck, me,
Drink de he'lt' of frien' an' foe—
Plenty more at Dudswell Junction,[116]
Ma frien' Gauthier tole me so.

Dis is firs' class liquidation,
Jus' one glass will pay de tax;[117]
Two or t'ree will lif' de mortgage—
All de worl' is mine wit' six!

What's de use for feel downhearted?
Plenty life in barley juice;
Dat's w'at mak' dis ol' man happy—
But some tam it raise de duce.

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115 The stereotype of the Catholic French-Canadian family with over twenty children is the subject of this verse. According to Oscar Dhu's reference, the issue over the church's disapproval of birth-control has been the subject of discussion for most of this century. The "Yankee trick" reference would suggest that the source for such controversial aids was "across the Line". In the next verse, he refers to the "Infant Industry", which is rather ironic, since the records from the Hebridean families from the preceding decades show families of over fifteen children.

116 Dudswell Junction is a rural railway station west of Scotstown.

117 A play on words which, though similar in one respect but entirely different in meaning, (e.g. liquidation) is a popular source of amusement to both English and French-speakers. More subtle is the implication that drinking will help the participant forget his financial worries, and of course create some more at the same time.

Eat an' drink an' feel 'contentmen'
Till de holiday pass by;
Den ol' Joe mus' tackle snow
An' chop de hood an' hew de tie. [railroad sleeper]

I got credit from de storekeeper,
Bean an' pork, an' pea an' flour.
An' I promise pay in cordhood— [standard measure-
An' its tak' me many hour. ments of cordwood]

Scoonkin coat I got from Tanguay, [raccoon skin]
For to make me warm to church,
An' he tole me pay heem somethin',
W'en I haul de spruce an' birch.

Plenty work for Joe in winter—
Brak de road an' haul de hood,
But hole Joe hee's never worry—
Not so long hees he'lt' is good.

Dis is holiday at presen',
I won't cut me one dem stick [one damn stick]
Till I have ma Chris'mas hurrah,
An' it always las' a wick! [week[118]]

Den I'll say good-bye to ol' year
An' w'en New Year come on deck,
I'll tell Yankee how ol' Joseph
Spen' his Chris'mas on Kebec.

Rig-a-gig-a-gig jus' wash ma moccasin
An' ol' Paul you kip good tam!
Pass de jug around de grog-is-in,
An we'll have w'at Scotch call "dram".

Night after night in the lumbercamp bunkhouse, hearing and singing songs such as this, made a lasting impression on the men. A number of them became well-known for their impressive repertoires, and, as is characteristic of other societies, some of them became identified locally by the genre for which they displayed the most aptitude and talent.[119] Donald Morrison is remembered for his remarkable memory of Oscar Dhu's compositions, though he knew many others and had a fine

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118 Although the pronounciation of "wick" is supposed to satirize the French-Canadians, it is also very close to the way Lewis people say the same word.

119 For example, in Gaelic society Joe Neil MacNeil in Cape Breton refers to certain gifted storytellers in his locality by the type of tale they were best at telling, such as Fenian tales which were the speciality of a few tellers. See *Sgeul gu Latha*, introduction.

repertoire of stories also. He himself attributed some of his stories to one of his companions:

> I worked with John Dan MacLeod in the woods in Maine, and he used to tell me all these stories, although there wasn't as much interest [from outsiders[120]] in it then, and he'd sit around at night and we'd tell a lot of stories.

The days of the river drives are over, however, and though there are extensive woods operations of felling and hauling in the Eastern Townships and beyond, huge machinery does the work of teams of men, and the television has taken over from the singers and storytellers.

Today, the yarns of the oldertimers are relegated to summer afternoons on the front porch, the kitchen or occasionally the Hotel. Nevertheless, Russell and his friends are often reminded by the modern media, and by the huge, heavily-laden trucks that drive through the Townships, that lumbering was essential to the economy of most families, and was not just the monopoly of a few well-heeled contractors as it is today:

> I saw them on television this summer. I think it was the Gatineau River; they made the last log drive there... Down at Trois Rivières, they would haul them by trucks.

Railroad Work

Aside from the annual drive, there was, for many years, a continuous local market for railroad ties. The village of Milan is said to be the highest village east of the Rockies on the Canadian Pacific line. No visitor can fail to notice the line that cuts through the top of the village, as every train that goes through blows a

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120 Donald Morrison is referring to my 1976 folklore project with the National Museum which we had been discussing. Several "outsiders" who have written books about the Eastern Townships began by asking locals such as Donald and Duncan about their subject. For example, when Bernard Epps and Clarke Wallace were researching their books on the Megantic Outlaw (published in 1973 and 1977), they "asked around" for stories, as did the C.B.C. researchers who made radio and television programmes about him. Donald was remarking on the fact that the "outside interest" only began after the storytelling had declined.

long, loud whistle that stops every conversation for its duration. I have tape recordings that are suddenly interrupted by "There she blows!" or "Count the coaches! Count the waggons!" Even in the middle of her baking, I have seen Ruth Nicolson stop, go to her window to watch, and smile with pleasure as the train whizzed through. "My, that always makes me lonesome," she remarked on a summer's day in 1993. She reflected on the fact that everybody in the village regarded the railway as a sigificant part of their way of life. To Ruth, her "lonesome" feeling reflected a nostalgia for the ever-busy way of life in Milan that she knew as a younger woman, and also the many times she had stood with her children and grandchildren counting over a mile of boxcars in the heyday of the railway.

Myrtle Murray's memorable first impresion of Milan Station gives a striking impression of the vitality of the community in the 1920s, and of the importance of the railway to the entire village :

> The first time I got off the mail train, the night before our school was to start, here was this sea of faces, mostly men, but some girls, at the CPR station at Milan. And I thought "Good Heavens! What are they doing here?" ... The younger and freer ones, but men too, came to meet the mail train. They all arranged themselves on the platform, and as you came out [of the train] you looked over the sea of faces. If I had my life to live again, I'd teach school among the Scots!
> [Aug. 18, 1982, recorded by I. Loutit and G. Hutley]

Myrtle was to discover that meeting the train was a regular pastime, and had been so since the busy railway first went through Milan. According to Duncan McLeod whose family moved into the area in the late 1870s while discussions on the railway route were going on:

> When the survey crew was going through they had three possible routes and the one where it is now is the central one... the most feasible is where they are[121] at the present time. [Nov. 14, 1990]

For Duncan's grandfather, Duncan Lewis McLeod, already established in a toting business [transporting merchandise] near Tolsta, in the township of Winslow, the coming of the railway was

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121 The Railway is generally referred to as plural.

the main factor in his decision to move to Milan. There he set up a new business, operating under the name of D.L. McLeod, which has been well-known throughout the area for over a century.

> Well, the store was started in 1877 by my grandfather. He had been in business over in the Winslow area, and when he heard that the Trans-Continental Railway was being extended from the Sherbrooke area east to Lake Megantic, and when he knew that they were going to come through some area in the Milan area, he and another man went over there and staked out a claim to some land. He built a store and he built a home for his family, and also it was used for a number of years as a hotel public rooms in Milan, that's when there was nothing but the railway going through there. [Duncan, Sept. 1991]

Christie MacKenzie's family, already in the area, recorded the fact that "it was in 1879 the railroad came through Milan," and although her father did not work on the actual construction, the whole township was affected by it. [Nov. 13, 1990] For many families the choice of route offered an opportunity to earn extra cash while living at home. Men who did not work on the line were generally employed in the woods, felling logs to be hauled to the sawmill, or in the mill where the logs were sawn for sleepers, or "ties", for the railway.[122] Russel MacIver continues:

> And they used to make a little money too. When the CPR was going through here they'd cut ties for the CPR. Oh they didn't make much money but they got a little bit. And near Sherbrooke, and they're still up there—once in a while you can see the top of a tree that had been squared and left the top [lying on the ground after they'd cut a number of 8-foot sections], maybe that much, you know, when they used to level so many feet and then cut it off. [Sept. 16, 1992]

There was extra work for carpenters, as the village expanded to include two hotels, McLeod's, which was a temperance hotel, and a second one which was not. Farmers who sold cattle would ship them from Milan Station, just across from McLeod's store, and often had to spend the night in the village. Duncan continued "Well, when we built the building that's there now I guess anybody going through *had* to stay overnight if they missed the train service."

Memories of those years are vivid, and contrast markedly with

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122 Ties were 8 feet long.

the present day, when no trains stop, but still whizz through several times a day. Muriel Mayhew, whose house was a short distance from the station, recalled the fact that the village was busy enough to support two hotels:

> That was because the drovers were coming through with the cattle, from one place going to another—they had to stay overnight, at a hotel.

To the children of the village, there was never any shortage of excitement. Duncan reflected on times spent as a boy when he and his friends would go "just across the track from where I lived" to the railway platform:

> I remember when we were kids I used to, like on Friday afternoons, when people'd drive their sheep and their calves and cows and we'd go and help them—especially the sheep! You know Christie Belle MacArthur? ...she was the first woman I ever saw with rubber boots on!

For years after the line was established, the cutting of lumber continued to play a vital part in the economy, as Milan became one of the main shipping stations for the area. D.L. McLeod expanded his business ventures and became agent for the export of locally cut timber. To this day, the expertise of local men "who could swing an axe with the best of them" is recalled with admiration. Duncan continues:

> With the broad axe, eh, I know my grandfather used to buy birch, squared birch, and that used to be shipped overseas to Europe. And they squared it because they could get one or two more logs in than if they left them in the round. And some of the fellows there, Christie MacKenzie's father, Iain Beag Donn, he was one of the best, and he was the smallest man in the town there.

Lumbering was a way of life, with mills of all sizes springing up all over the Eastern Townships. The hours were long, and the men would look forward to the end of the week, when they could enjoy the freedom from the camp and time to socialize. Muriel's father George MacDonald, who grew up in Stornoway, was Duncan's source of the following story:

> He used to tell me about when he was a young man he worked in a sawmill at Reidsville which was a town about half way between Stornoway and Springhill. It was named after a Mr Reid who owned the sawmill and he was doing a bit of

> lumbering in that area. He used to tell me he worked ten hours a day, six days a week, but on Fridays they got off an hour early and they'd walk to Stornoway which would be six miles, I suppose, and they had their pay—I don't remember he ever told me how much they earned in those days, but— A lot of fellows were drinkers; they'd head right for the hotel, and they'd buy a tumbler full of whisky for ten cents, and you could buy the whole bottle for a dollar. But they probably didn't have more than two or three dollars a week pay, so there weren't too many [men] that bought the bottle, but a lot of them were going by the glass. [Nov. 14, 1990]

No-one doubts the fact that there were several family heart-aches caused by the Friday night sprees, and while little is mentioned of the women waiting and wondering, much is made of the fact that it was "a man's world". As Donald Morrison said, "at that time, if you were a man, you weren't supposed to be considered a man until you'd done either a stint in the woods...or you'd worked a couple of years in the quarries in Vermont."

Quarrying

"Crossing the line" to work in a quarry was not actually necessary, as there were also local quarries, such as the one in Scotstown. No doubt the idea of going to the States where wages were higher appealed to many of the young men, some of whom married and settled there. It was dangerous work, no matter where it went on, and despite safety precautions, fatalities happened. The one that is best remembered is that of a young man from Scotstown, Peter MacRae, who was killed. His death is generally recalled in the context of discussions on second sight, such as are related here by two separate individuals. Duncan McLeod was remembering "an old fellow by the name of AD Morrison" who was reputed to have had second sight:

> The day that [Peter MacRae] was killed, he walked into the post office on his way to work, and the AD [sic] was in there talking to the postmaster, Jack Scott, and he saw a halo around Peter's head. And after Peter stepped outside he told Jack that there was going to be a death, a tragedy of some sort... I don't know what his job classification was, but he worked in a quarry, and he was down in the lower depths of the quarry when a stone, a loose stone, hit him on the head and killed him. [Sept. 1991]

The second account is from Donald MacLennan of Scotstown. He recalled how a friend had visited their home in Scotstown, and told them of an incident he could not explain at the time:

> The time that Peter MacRae was killed—he was in home [sic[123]] about two weeks before that, and he said he saw a funeral procession coming down through Watson's field. And that's where they carried Peter after he was killed. [BEK 5:A]

Donald's account of the accident agreed with Duncan's, which was told fifteen years later.

Bill Young of Lennoxville, who mentioned no names in his story about a stange encounter which turned out to be a forerunner of an accidental death, similar to the one just told about Peter MacRae:

> There was a fellow walking home one night from Scotstown out to Lingwick road where he lived. Now, I think he was sober; he never had a record of being inebriated. And right on the road, just outside the town limit, he stopped—he heard a train coming, and, you know, the railroad runs on the other side of the river, and he thought, "Oh, it's a train." But he looked down, and he couldn't see the track. Suddenly this train went right by in front of him, right on the road! What that meant or not, nobody knows, but it was only a month later than that, his brother was killed in a quarry, eh. That happened right up the quarry road. This train came out of the quarry, and he swore to it. He swore to it. [BEK 3:A]

Where possible, the granite was split by hammering in various wedges along joints which occur naturally in the rock. In order to extract or fracture enormous sections of granite, gunpowder was used. Apart from the blasting operations for which the workers needed to learn specialized skills,[124] many of the men who

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123 The expression "in home" is fairly commonly used, meaning "in our home"or "in the home community". For example, during the summer, when many family visitors return to the area, Duncan McLeod remarked that a lot of people "were in home this month."

124 For most of this century, Lewismen have operated a fairly large quarry at Marybank, outside Stornoway. In the 1950s and 60s the foreman of the quarry was an Aberdeenshire man who had gained his expertise in the huge granite quarry at Rubislaw. Though I have found no descriptions of quarrying methods from Lewis dating to the nineteenth century, in his book published in 1858, *Buchan*, the Rev. John B. Pratt describes the use of "plugs and feathers" in a granite quarry near Peterhead. He notes that

worked in the quarries had learned the techniques of splitting rocks during their land-clearing operations. Rock drills, wedges and "feathers", which were the tools of the trade, can still be seen in antique shops or at local auctions. To the men who actually used them, however, they represent heavy labour, sweat and toil. Johnnie "Bard" MacLeod recalls how they used these same implements to break up enormous boulders on their farm:

> We would drill holes in it and split it. We borrowed drills, feathers, wedges and hammers. When the drills got dull we would take them by horse and buggy to Milan, to James MacKenzie, the blacksmith to have them sharpened. Papa would sit on the rock and turn the drill after each wollop. We used two hammers, [my brother] Donald and myself striking alternately[125]

Quarrying in is no longer in operation in Scotstown, though the towns of St. Sebastian and Lac Drolet still have huge operations that have adopted more modern, and hopefully safer, methods of work.

Milling

After the end of summer, when the year's crops had been harvested, autumn, with its blaze of red maples, was the time to prepare for the hard winter that could set in as early as the first week in October. With the help of an itinerant threshing-machine that did the rounds of the farms, most of the grain crops were threshed in preparation for the annual visit to the meal-mill, or "grist-mill" as it was called locally. Threshing day called for all hands to help, not just those of the family and neighbours on the field, but, as Ferne Murray remembers from her childhood in Marsboro, the women would spend days cooking and baking so

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when blocks are too large even to be removed by cranes, such as those "above twenty feet square and eight feet thick," they are "cut by iron wedges, and *plug and feather*, a little gunpowder being used where no joints can be found." Op cit, p. 124 and Appendix CC, pp. 376-377, P. For a modern description of methods and techniques, see the *Blasters' Handbook*, produced by Canadian Industries Limited. (Thanks to my father for making his copy available to me.)

125 John A. MacLeod, *Memoirs of Dell.* p. 23.

that they would have plenty to feed as many as eighteen or twenty helpers on the day.[126]

For nearly a century and a half the name "Legendre" has been synonymous with milling in the Eastern Townships. As already mentioned in a discussion on saw-milling in Chapter 3, "Homesteading", the Legendre brothers had their first saw-mill built in 1853 by a Lewisman, Donald S. McLeod, who was, in those days, well-known for his skill as a mill-wright. According to Ellen Legendre (born 1897), daughter of the first Legendre, a retired nurse whom I interviewed as an elderly woman in 1976, the first grist-mill was built in 1862. The site was fairly close to the family home, by the Legendre River which was the source of power for all their mills. Although the first grist-mill burned down in a serious fire in 1883, it was rebuilt on the same site.

It was not the only grist-mill in Stornoway, however, as Russell MacIver recalls that "there was another one just as you got into Stornoway on this side—Layfield, he owned that for a long time." Yet another one was known to have been built by Layfield & Palister in 1857, affirming that there was enough business to keep two mills going in the Stornoway area .[127] The Legendre family were eventually to gain monopoly of the milling business, however, as the Layfield & Palister mill, which first changed hands in 1914, was bought by Alphonse Legendre in 1929.

Alphonse's daughter, Ellen, described her recollections of the days when their grist-mill was in great demand. They produced several kinds of flour according to what customers requested: barley , buckwheat, wholewheat, and occasionally rye. She

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126 Noted in conversation, Lennoxville, July 1994. Johnnie "Bard" also recalls the threshing machine coming to their family farm in Dell; op cit, p.145. For a more detailed discussion on the subject, see George Ewart Evans, chapter 13, "Threshing", in *Spoken History*. Although set in Ireland, the account is similar to that on Scottish farms. Evans includes tape-recorded reminiscences of threshing day, pp. 196-203.

127 Guy Lalumière et al, *Stornoway 1858-83*, pp 30-31. See also J.I. Little, *Crofters and Habitants* p. 161 for a map of mill sites in the area. Although by no means all the mills that once operated are on this map, it nevertheless affirms the importance of milling in former days.

remarked that the wholewheat flour of modern times, formerly known as "graham flour", does not compare with that of earlier days which was milled with more of the germ and bran left in the flour than in more recent commercial products. Of the two most common flours, barley and buckwheat, the French people preferred to have buckwheat while the Scots liked both.[128] Ellen's brother Alphonse, locally called "Pit" [written thus, and pronounced like "Pete"], who had spent many years working in the grist-mill, recalled some aspects of its operation. [BEK ll:B]

They kept several different kinds of grinding-stones, each set for its own special purpose: one set for barley, one for buckwheat, one for wheat, one for oats, and another for cattle and pig feed, which was usually milled from oats. The stones themselves were made of very hard granite, which Pit thought might have come from Vermont, rather than from local quarries. As already mentioned, many of the local men worked there and may well have arranged for blocks of granite to be shipped by train to Quebec. The method of making mill-stones was apparently well-known in Lewis before the first emigrants set sail, as Donald MacDonald states that, not only were the skills exported with some of the men, but a mill-stone was sent from Lewis to Megantic.[129] To this day, the nickname "A' Mhuilear", as in the family of Johnnie MacKenzie, "Seonaidh A' Mhuilleir", still testifies to the trade of his forefathers.[130]

On closer examination of these massive mill-stones, it can be seen that a series of grooves have been cut into them, giving the illusion that the actual mill-stone is composed of wedges..[131] The

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128 According to J.I. Little, in 1852 Scots in the Eastern Townships grew three times more buckwheat than the French. *Crofters and Habitants,* table 5.5, p. 139.

129 Donald MacDonald, *The Tolsta Townships*, p.148, and *Lewis: A History of the Island*, p. 78.

130 John MacKenzie's grandfather had been a miller in Gress, Isle of Lewis, before he emigrated. J.I. Little states that the Lewis Scots did not produce "a single successful miller". *Crofters and Habitants,* p. 168.

131 In his book, *Mills and Millwrighting*, which deals mostly with English examples, John Vince refers to one type of millstone as the "French stone" which "was made up from several sections of stone, cemented together and bound with an iron band." Op cit, p. 17-19, with photograph on p. 18.

grooves are, however, cut into a solid piece of stone in order to give "bite" to the grinding surface as the stone turns . A great deal of care had to be taken in using the mill-stones, as failure to adjust them properly for the amount of grain being used meant unnecessary wear on the grinding surfaces. Most of the business was in producing flour, though occasionally they were asked to make buckwheat groats.[132] As Pit said, "All they had to do for that is to not to put the two stones too close together, so it wouldn't crush the grain [more than was required for the groats]." [BEK II:B]

Through experience, the Legendres perfected their methods of production.[133] Barley flour could be ground coarse, medium, or fine, according to the request of the individual customer, but buckwheat flour was always the same. Pit said that "there should be no black specks in it," for their presence indicated that the miller had the stones too close, or "too sharp":

> If the stone is too sharp, it will cut the buckwheat, and that's what will make those little black spots. If it goes through the screens it will be in the flour.

This was to prove to be a very significant statement which would explain a comment about "little black specks" that I frequently heard. It also indicated that the Legendres had perfected the method of milling which pleased the taste of their Scotch customers. When the grist-mill closed down—"Il cessa de servir en 1945 quand les cultivateurs cessèrent de sémer des grains"[134]—the Legendre mill was greatly missed. Nearly fifty years later, it is still regarded as a loss to the surrounding communities, where the taste for good buckwheat flour has not lessened at all, as will be seen from the next chapter. Try as they may, the devotees of the old-style milling cannot seem to find any

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132 Hulled buckwheat.

133 The technology involved in building and operating mills was of concern to all frontier communities in North America. See Janice Tyrwhitt, *The Mill*, Marion Nicholl Rawson, *Little Old Mills*, and Ivan C. Crowell, "Little Old Mills of New Brunswick", in *Collections of the New Brunswick Historical Society*, No. 19 (1966), pp. 79 - 87.

134 It stopped working in 1945 when the farmers stopped sowing grains. *Stornoway 1858-83*, p. 31

buckwheat that compares to the Legendre milling.[135] People send for miles around, each time hoping that a new source will measure up to their expectations, but so far the Legendres have no rivals.[136] Local people have come to refer to the product they buy today, "which is full of little black specks", as "French buckwheat". While it is certainly true to say that it is grown and milled in Quebec, that was not a term familiar to Ellen Legendre in 1976. As far as her family was concerned, the milling process was the same for Scots and French Canadians customers alike. In 1992, when trying to locate a supply of the "old-style" buckwheat flour, Ruth Nicolson commented that the type of buckwheat plant, or species, greatly affected the final product:

> The one is the silver-hull—that's the French buckwheat and the texture isn't the same; it's more of a floury type, the silver-hull. And the other is the beech-nut ...but I may not be able to get any now. [August, 1992

Until the end of the Second World War, people travelled to the Stornoway mill from villages as far away as Milan, Dell, Scotstown, Gould, Victoria, as well as from Marsboro, only five miles away. Christie MacKenzie from Milan remembered when a trip to the mill was part of the family's annual preparation for winter, as it was for most families. Here, her husband, John, who grew up in Marsboro, supplemented her description by adding a few comments of his own (shown here in italics):

> Well, we used to raise our own barley flour, and our own buckwheat flour—take it to the mill. We had to drive all the way from Milan to Stornoway when I was growing up. And we'd have a barrel of the barley flour, and maybe a barrel of the buckwheat flour. Oh boy, that'd be a sled full of bags, and then the flour was gotten into some bags, and the outside of

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135 In a more detailed discussion on the millwrighting, Stanley Freese observes that dressing and balancing mill stones is a "fine art on which much of the efficiency depends... the work should be so finished that the 'nip' or closeness of the stones will only permit a piece of brown paper being placed between them and the centre, and a piece of tissue paper at the periphery." *Windmills and Millwrighting*, p. 49.

136 See, for example, my Fieldwork note of Thursday, July 29, 1993, where Ruth would like "the real old kind" of buckwheat. Also, I have brought buckwheat from different sources (one as far from Quebec as a watermill in North Carolina) to Milan, and each time it has precipitated a serious discussion on the subject of milling. The subject will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter 6.

> the grain.—*[The middlings and the shorts*[137] *were]* —was kept for the cattle—*[coarser, would be for feed].* Oh, it was very nice, and fine—white. We always used to get it very nice. I seen some of it since I, we've been here in Scotstown that you'd buy, that would have the black specks in. We used to call it the "French buckwheat". It wasn't as nicely done as they used to do it. And the barley flour the same—lovely.

In Victoria, near Scotstown, Russell MacIver had similar memories. From a Gaelic-speaking family though unable to speak Gaelic himself, he shared the admiration of most of the community that the Stornoway millers were totally tri-lingual:

> And those old Legendres, they could talk Gaelic just as good as anybody else. And the second generation and the third generation they could talk a little.

From all accounts, the Legendres had a very good relationship with the Scots, as there are many warm-hearted memories of going to their mill. As Isobel Stewart of Dell put it: "Oh, they were lovely people."

A near-neighbour of Isobel's, Johnnie "Bard" MacLeod, while sharing the community's esteem for the Legendres, had one childhood memory which convinced him that there was more to cultural understanding than language alone. He recalled that even though the family had to rise very early for the annual fifteen mile trip to the mill, so that they would be there by nine o'clock, "the boys loved it." One year, however, they reached Stornoway only to find everyone dressed in their Sunday best. Unknown to them, it was All Saints' Day, a Catholic holiday, and no work could be done. They had to go all the way back home to Dell and return the next day.[138]

Payment for milling grains in those days was, like many business transactions of the time, on an exchange system. For every load milled, an agreed percentage was left with the

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137 The "middlings" referred to partly ground grain, and "shorts" to the husks or bran, the outside part of the grain. Both were suitable for cattle-feed. S. Freese refers to "middlings" as "an intermediate product from the flour dresser." Op cit, p. 161.

138 Op cit, p. 146.

Legendres, who in turn had a market outside the area. As a child, this way of doing business was always a great mystery to Ellen, who later found it amusing that she took so long to realize just how the system worked:

> I always wondered why keep a mill going if they didn't pay! But they'd measure so much for each bag... we'd keep that for ourselves.

Although the Legendre mills had closed many years before I interviewed her, Ellen still recalled with pleasure the autumn days when the family's grist-mill operated at full capacity:

> I can remember when there were teams and teams at the grist mill there, and there were also teams that would come to the carding mill at the same time, but they weren't able to go back home the same day—they'd sleep here. And the good Scotch people had barley scones. And father would invite them to the house, and they'd be with us, and they'd give us the barley scones, and we'd enjoy those. I remember that very well. [BEK II:A]

Even today, Duncan McLeod recalls hearing the old people talk of when there were teams and teams of horses lined up, waiting to have their grain milled, and many of them would not get home till the next day.

Carding Mills

As well as operating timber and grist mills, the Legendre family had a carding mill, also water-powered, which served Stornoway and the surrounding communities in much the same way as the other mills. According to Ellen, the carding mill was built in 1862. A brief history is given in *Stornoway 1858/1983*, which states:

> Les premiers moulins à carde et à foulon furent construits en même temps que le premier moulin à farine à même la maison des frères Legendre peu après leur arrivée en 1853. Après l'incendie, ils seront reconstruits en 1883 et cesseront de fonctionner vers 1950.[139]

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[139] *Stornoway 1858-1983*, pp. 30-31, based on interviews with the present generation of Legendres. [I do not know why the future tense is used

[The first carding and fulling mills were built at the same time as the first grist mill beside the home of the Legendre brothers a little after their arrival in 1853. After the fire, they would be rebuilt in 1883 and would cease operation around 1950.]

When I visited the Legendres in 1976 it had been only about twenty-five years since this mill beside their family home ceased to operate. Once in great demand, the carding mill is also remembered by all the older generation who had dealings with it. Also by the Legendre River[140], the mill still has a large water wheel that once powered the two carding machines inside. The equipment for the mill came from the United States, and, according to Pit Legendre, in its day was the biggest and best equipment available.[141] The carding machines consisted of a number of drums, about three feet wide, which rotated against one another when the machine was set in motion. The drums were clothed with small, curved metal teeth, similar to those on the hand cards, but set in leather instead of wood, so that they could be easily replaced when worn out by simply winding on new cladding. There were two exceptions among these drums: the first drum of the series, situated at the back, had large metal spikes, about an inch and a half long, and it was called the picker. The final drum of the series, situated at the front where the carded wool came out, was clothed in velvet, and was called the "doffer". The picker did the work of teasing the wool as it entered the machine to be carded, and it could be removed from the machine at this stage if anyone wished to have the wool for a quilt batting[142] rather than for spinning. The majority of it, however, went through the entire process, and when it came off the doffer, which was always kept sprinkled with water to make sure it was smooth, the rolls were long and fluffy, and ready for the next stage in the process, which was spinning. The domestic side of

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here.] On my tape-recording, Ellen Legendre said that the mill was built in 1897 after their first carding mill was destroyed by a fire.

140 This is a tributary of the St. Francis River; see Chapter 3.

141 Although I did not see the machines described here, I was taken to a similar carding mill in the Codroy Valley, Newfoundland; see comparative description and photographs in *The Last Stronghold*, pp. 148-149.

142 "Batting" is the commonly used term for the filling or padding used in quilt-making.

these crafts will be discussed in the next chapter, "Mostly Women's Work".

Wood-Carving and Snowshoe-Making

The oft-quoted phrase "A woman's work is never done" tends to create an impression of men whose hands become idle the moment dusk falls and they can no longer work out of doors. Meanwhile, the women continue to attend to all the domestic chores that are indeed never-ending, and when they finally do sit down, it is not without knitting, sewing or darning needles, or the likes, in hand. No doubt there were, and are, domestic scenes that fit the stereotype, but equally, there is plenty of evidence that many of the men had hands that were far from idle. In every kitchen can be seen examples of work that would fit Russell MacIver's expression, "my gosh he was good with a knife." Such impressive skill was probably quite characteristic of the earliest Hebridean emigrants, since a similar observation was made by Martin Martin as far back as 1695:

> Some of the Natives are very dextrous in engraving Trees, Birds, Deer, Dogs, etc., upon Bone, and Horn, or Wood, without any other Tool than a sharp-pointed Knife.[143]

Aside from the highly-skilled carpenters in the Eastern Townships who are remembered for their meticulous work in the home and on the farm, most of the men would "turn a hand" to maintenance work and small woodwork projects.[144] In Aunt Annie's kitchen, for example, one only needed to pull out the cutlery drawer to see this: there was a variety of wooden utensils, such as hand-carved spoons and spatulas of different shapes and sizes, each with its own use.[145] There was one little

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143 Martin Martin, op cit, p. 200. (Quoted from the facsimile of the second edition, 1716.)

144 For a general reference work on the subject, see W. L. Goodman, *The History of Woodworking Tools.* More relevant to pioneer settlers and their skill is Erwin O. Christensen's *Early American Wood Carving.*

145 I. F. Grant discusses hand-carved wooden utensils such as ladles and spoons in *Highland Folkways*, pp. 192-92. She refers to the care taken to make these utensils, and, having noticed a heart carved on some of the

gadget which was neither spoon nor spatula, which Muriel informed me was her mother's syrup-stirrer. It was only six inches long, handcarved, and shaped like a little spade, complete with a "hole-in-the middle" handle. Next door, in Mary MacLeod's kitchen, was another unique range of well-used utensils, including a doughnut-lifter that had been made for her by a neighbour. It was about fifteen inches long, fashioned rather like a fencing sword, but entirely of wood, and perfect for the job: when held by the handle, its shaft was long enough to keep the cook's hand a safe distance from the extreme heat, and the pointed end could single out a cooked doughnut to lift it out of the hot fat, while the guard at the top of the shaft prevented it from rolling onto the handle and burning the hand that held it. Not only ingenious, but also decorative, the handle of the doughnut-lifter was carved from a single piece of wood, and had a two-link chain that was used for hanging it up after use. It was this feature that attracted me to enquiring further, as it seemed to display skill and care that were well beyond the basic requirements of a functional kitchen utensil.

The ability to carve chain-links out of a solid block of wood requires geometrical precision, concentration and skill that would test any craftsman. Referring to the examples of wood-carving I had seen I asked Russell MacIver "Was there much of that?" Enthusiastically he replied:

> Oh, yes! that's about all I ever saw! There was two [very skilled wood-carvers] anyway.[146] There was one [example] hanging in Duncan's store for a long time, and it was a cousin of mine that made that—Murdo Matheson. By gee, that was fine work and all. [How did they do it?] Oh, jack knife. Took a long piece of wood and you had chain lengths [that were carved out of this one piece, without join or break]. And [just for an interesting variation], you had one place and you had a

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older items, suggests that some may have been betrothal gifts. The examples she gives confirms that wood-carving was practised throughout the Highlands in the nineteenth century. See also Mary Earle Gould, *Early American Wooden Ware and Other Kitchen Utensils.*

146 According to Johnnie "Bard" MacLeod of Dell, his brother, Roddy, was another man who was good with a jack knife as he even carved a violin out of a hollow, dry block of spruce. (He adds that he bought catgut strings from store in Scotstown, made the bow using horse hairs from their own two horses, but admits that the "final sound was pretty bad!") *Memoirs of Dell*, p. 28.

> little "house" [?cage] like, with a ball loose in that, on a swivel. He [Murdo Matheson] was good with a knife. Boy!

Duncan McLeod was able to tell Russell what happened to the wooden chain that had so often been admired in the family store, and recalled a second example of Murdo Matheson's work which he later showed to me:

> That one, the long one—it's Bernice [Laurila, née MacDonald] who has that, Ruth's sister up in Nipigon, Ontario. He [Murdo] took a six foot length of white birch, and when he'd finished the chain, the chain measured seven feet two inches... The chain that he gave my father measured about three feet. He was going right along when he hit a knot in the wood and it broke off there, so he gave it to my father.

In response to my question "What did he do for a living?" Russell continued: "Oh, he was a woodsman and he was a cook. And a little while like that, he'd work. One winter my father had a box-trap set for weasels..." and without pausing to draw breath, Russell went on to tell the anecdote that is already quoted above. Such was his style, that for every discussion on a serious or practical subject, Russell would have an amusing story to tell. There would be no hint to the listener that Russell was about to light up the conversation with one of his stories, as his facial expression would remain serious until well into the story. With only a slight hint that his eyes were beginning to smile, he would complete his story and laugh.

Continuing his conversation about the weasel and the fact that "a fellow Gilman...used to ... buy hides..." (quoted above), I asked Russell if he ever cured any of those hides himself.[147] The flow of the conversation reflects how seamlessly Russell is able to weave in his amusing anecdotes:

> Russell: No, I never did.
>
> MB: And was it deer-hide that they used to put in the snow-

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147 In a recording made in 1976, eighty-two year old Ontarian Jesse Saunders talks of how he learned to make snowshoes. He says "There's a secret to rawhide," and gives the details of the tradition he learned as a boy. See *For What Time I Am in the World,* edited by Bill Usher and Linda Page-Harpa, pp. 131-133.

shoes?[148]

Russell: Yeah.

MB: Did they just use it green [uncured]?

Russell: It was pretty strong stuff, that deer-hide, and they'd slice it into laces. Oh, I've seen my uncle make it.

MB: Did he have a special wood for the frame? [repeated]

Russell: Oh, I don't know. I think it was hardwood anyway. I suppose it may be maple or birch.

Duncan: And beech—beech would bend, you know.

MB: And then just thread them up with strips of hide.

Russell: I had a great uncle, John MacIver, he married a, I think she was part Indian—of course she had no Gaelic—and there was a bunch of em making snow shoes, and they were talking away there, and *bròg*an *sneachda*—you've heard the name *bròg*an *sneachda?*

MB Brò--? No? [not sure if heard correctly]

Russell: No? Well that's snow-shoe[149] in Gaelic.

MB *Bròg*an *sneachda!* Oh yes, yes!

Russell: And they were talking away there—"Bròg*an* sneachda, bròg*an* sneachda—" Well she woke up [having dozed off in her chair], she says "Who broke his neck?" [laughs]

Despite the fact that Russell claimed not to speak Gaelic— "Well... my mother made up her mind that we'd speak English when we went to school so we didn't learn Gaelic. Well, that was a mistake; a bad one too—" Russell had enough Gaelic to allow him to enjoy such jokes which rely upon word play between the two languages.

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148 I recorded Bill Young talking about making snow-shoes using cow-hide (1976). He said the Gaels learned the techniques from the French-Canadians. They would soak the cow-hide first, then do the lattice work with the wet strips, and when it dried the tension would be suitably tight. BEK 4:A.

149 Scots settlers in Canada frequently recount stories about first encounters with new concepts or words which are new to them. David Kennedy tells an anecdote about an old Scots setter who, on seeing prints of snow-shoes in the snow for the first time exclaims "D'ye ken what kind o beast it is?" D. Kennedy, *Pioneer Days,* pp.63-64.

Having seen most of thè twentieth century, Russell and his contemporaries have witnessed enormous changes. Gone are the days of gruelling, hard work, of mending and making do, of communal labour that involved neighbours regardless of the language they spoke. Everyone completely understood the importance of co-operation within their community. Over the years the standard of living has increased far beyond the original hopes of the first settlers. Perhaps it is not quite as high as that of their wealthier neighbours "across the line", nevertheless the standard of living far surpasses the crofter-fisherman level that those who have travelled to the "Old Country" have seen when visiting their ancestral island. As far as the old-timers are concerned, however, money had little to do with it, for, as Russell pointed out, he receives more in government pension in the 1990s than he ever did when he worked for his living and earned a wage. Scarcely a conversation about the "old days" goes by without someone expressing regret at the passing of an era, when "making a living" was synonymous with community cohesion and vitality.

CHAPTER 5

MOSTLY WOMEN'S WORK

Soap-making

Whenever a domestic or wild animal was killed for meat, after the butchering was over, there was always more fat than could be used for cooking.[1] Most of it was from the suet, with some of it from layers of fat, depending on the condition of the animal. While there were a few families that kept a small amount aside to make ointment for medical use,[2] most people used the remainder for making soap.[3] In between times, housewives would save the fat drippings from day-to-day cooking in a jar or crock, and, when soap-making time came around, most of it would be surrendered from its use in cooking and added to supplement the basic supply.

In preparation for soap-making, all the suet and fat was slowly rendered down in a very large pot on the stove. When it had melted, all the pieces of tissue and other impurities were skimmed off, or caught in a sieve. Sometimes, if it was more convenient, this was done days or even weeks before hand, and the fat left to harden in a block. Not only was it ready for use, but the rendering process also prevented it from becoming rancid as quickly as it might otherwise have done.

The soap itself was generally made outside over an open fire in a very large cast iron pot, such as the one given to the first emigrants for maple syrup.[4] While many of the older people

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1 In connection with the butchering trade, A. Fenton notes that tallow was a "frequent export item" but does not say if it was rendered from suet, how or where it was exported, or for what purpose. *Country Life in Scotland,* p. 163.

2 Details of this have been recorded from Ivy MacDonald, August, 1992.

3 I did not encounter anyone who knew of making candles from fat, though the first settlers undoubtedly did so. See Annie Isabel Sherman, *History: The Families of Sherman-MacIver with Stories of People and Places on the Eastern Townships*, p. 31, quoted in Chapter 3.

4 C.P. Traill gives a brief account of making soap, though she is uncertain if her information is correct, since her servant made it for her. What she

mentioned soap-making in passing, the most detailed account was from the late Isobel Stewart of Dell, then in her sixties, whom I recorded in 1976. When she began making soap as a young woman, Isobel used a commercially available product, Gillet's Lye, to add to the melted fat, but during her childhood and adolescence, she helped her mother and grandmother "start from scratch" with their home-produced lye.

In the early days of land-clearing, when the settlers used to burn the wood and sell or exchange the ashes (as described earlier), they were also accustomed to using them at home as part of the soap-making process.[5] For many years after the selling of ashes ceased, they used the wood ashes from their kitchen stoves for the extraction of lye, as Isobel described:

> I can remember my mother, and my grandmother— everybody—they used to put all the wood ashes in a barrel, and they'd have it up on a little table, like, made outside, and they'd make a hole in it, and have a bucket underneath. And every little while, you know, [water would be poured on it]— if it rained, that was even better; rain water's beautiful! Put that in, and soak down the ashes. And the lye would come out of the ashes, just in this pail, and you used whatever amount you wanted, and made your soap. [BEK 9:A]

This process, known industrially, though not locally, as "lixiviation", leaches the ashes to make a lye solution. On a commerical scale, the solution is then evaporated to make crystals for the potash market.[6] For domestic use, however, this reducing stage is not necessary, as it is just as effective to use the liquid

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describes, however, fits the basic steps recorded here. See *Backwoods,* Appendix A, pp. 259-259, 1989 edn.

5 According to Marjorie Plant, ferns and bracken were the most commonly used in preparing "salts" for soap in Scotland, though "other possibilities were oak, ash, beech, thorns, juniper, whins, nettles, thistles, "stinking weed" [ragwort?], hemlock and seaweed." See *The Domestic Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 148. Her description of the preparations involved, where women had to go out and gather the plant first, then light the fire, etc., suggests that the entire process of soap-making was more difficult in Scotland because the availability of suitable ash was not part of the domestic routine in a coal- or peat-burning society. In Quebec, the women needed to look no further than the kitchen stove.

6 For a summary and diagram of the production of soap on a commercial basis (an entirely different process), and additional bibliographic references, see *The Harmsworth Encyclopaedia*, vol. ix, pp. 448-450.

collected after percolating water through the ashes. With the basic ingredients ready, and a good fire under the pot to melt the fat, the soap-making could begin.

The liquid lye was added to the melted fat, and stirred thoroughly to produce the soap.[7] While in this liquid stage, it was poured into moulds that had already been prepared. Isobel said that they frequently used small cardboard boxes for moulds, and would line the bottom and sides with paper, just like preparing a cake-pan, so that the soap could easily be removed when set.

No two people turned out identical soaps, and indeed no two batches made by the one person would be the same either. Weight, colour, and smell varied according to the kind of fat, the amount of lye, and the presence of additives. The natural colour of the soap usually varied from light to dark beige. If ammonia was added, it would produce a much lighter colour, and would also increase the dirt-removing properties of the soap. Isobel recalled one amusing incident when she added so much ammonia that she produced a pure white soap, just to tease a neighbour who had never heard of this method but always wished to have white soap. Some people used to add perfume or cologne when they wanted to make a fragrant toilet soap. A very light soap could also be made by whipping the mixture with a whisk before pouring, so that air was trapped in it. This was simply a matter of choice, however, as there seemed to be no particular advantage in doing so. The strongest soaps, such as those used for housecleaning and heavy laundry, were the ones with the most lye added. After the use of commercial lye became more common, the user had to be careful not to add it indiscriminately, as it could produce a soap which was very harsh on the skin.

> And it would really take the dirt out; and of course we had the old scrub board, [and on laundry day we used the bar of soap like that]. Oh yeah! We didn't know what soap powder was in

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7 Marjorie Plant quotes five pints of lye of the ashes to four pounds of tallow. Op cit, p. 148. She also suggests that the entire operation was thoroughly unpleasant, though I sensed none of this feeling from Isobel Stewart or any of the other women who actually made soap. For the method quoted by Plant, see J. Dunbar, *Smegmatalogia; or the Art of Making Potashes and Soap, and bleaching Linen.*

> our day; maybe some people had it, but we didn't, but oh, it did a beautiful job. [It was a lot stronger than the soaps you buy] Oh, yes. Sometimes your hands would be really sore and cracked afterwards, but of course that depended on how much lye they put in it, I guess, but it took the dirt out, I can tell you. Yeah, and we used to have our Saturday night baths in it too, I've seen us—but I remember my mother used to get Baby's Own soap, and oh, that was really something. And that was kept in a little corner by itself so it wouldn't be used. But just washing our hands at the sink or something we had to use this.

Wool Working

> My mother, even in her day, she did the complete job from the sheep to the bed. She used to make all her own [blankets]. [BEK 3]

This remark from Kay Young (née MacLeod),[8] who was born after the First World War, and brought up on their family farm in Milan, could sum up the situation for most of her generation. When the subject of wool comes up, the women today still talk from experience, although theirs no longer extends "from the sheep to the bed", but is now only in their memory, apart from knitting and crocheting, the only stage of wool-working still practised.[9]

As already mentioned, many farmers kept between a dozen and two dozen sheep,[10] more than enough to provide the wool

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8 Although the quotation is from 1976, I also interviewed Kay in 1991-93, and photographed a selection of old photos from the family's collection (now deposited in the archives of the School of Scottish Studies).

9 From 1990-93, recordings on the subject were made of Ruth Nicolson, Muriel Mayhew, Ivy MacDonald, and Kay Young. In 1976, I summarised the processes involved, as recorded from Christie MacArthur, Christie MacKenzie, Maryann Morrison, Isobel Stewart, Jessie (MacLeod) Turner (Kay's sister, unrecorded interview), Bill and Kay Young and Muriel Mayhew; see "Folkways and Religion of the Quebec Hebrideans" in *Cultural Retention and Demographic Change*, pp. 72-81.

10 Usually in Scotland sheep are numbered by *scores* and not *dozens;* this is not a term I came across, probably because today's English-speakers in the Eastern Townships have no Lowland Scots to influence their speech, and also, very few people kept large numbers. I did not come across anyone who named a definite breed, although sheep breeders were established in the Eastern Townships, outwith the "Scotch area", by the time Belden & Co. pubished the *Illustrated Atlas of the Eastern Townships and South Western Quebec,* (1888), as there are several farmers listed, with

needed for one family. Since there was generally no need to process the entire number of fleeces, any surplus wool could be sold to a neighbour, bartered for goods at the local store,[11] or exchanged for other wool products such as machine-carded wool.

Shearing in the early summer was "men's work", and was followed soon afterwards by washing, generally regarded as "women's work"[12] Since all the washing was done outdoors, a suitable place to build a wood-fire was chosen by the older women of the household. Helped by the teenage girls, they began the day's work by lighting a fire to heat up the water in big pots. Families who lived near a river would, for the sake of convenience, carry the wool there, as it was much easier to light their fire there that than to carry all the water which needed to fill the wooden tubs. The fleeces were washed in warm water which had been lathered up by homemade soap, and, employing the same method that had been used in the Outer Hebrides for generations, the young girls gently tramped the raw wool. Maryann recalled recalled the carefree atmosphere of her younger days, when her mother was in charge of the procedure:

> She'd wash the wool in tubs, and I for one would go into the tub and wash the wool. And talk about nice clean feet when we'd come out of the tub! That was the best way to wash the wool—and that was our shower![13] [BEK 18:A]

Afterwards they would either rinse the wool in the river, or, if it flowed too quickly, in tubs of fresh water. Then, having squeezed out as much water as possible, they would take the fleeces home and spread them out to dry, in the traditional manner that long pre-dates current garment labels dictating "Wool: Dry flat".

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notes such as "breeders of Cotswold sheep". Johnnie "Bard" MacLeod from Dell noted that they kept the sheep stock good "by the pure-bred ram bought from a breeder in Canterbury." *Memoires*, p. 151.

11 The barter system will be discussed in the next chapter.

12 Since women in the Highlands and Islands often "kilted up" their skirts to tramp washing, especially woollen blankets, men were not welcome on such occasions.

13 Descriptions of washing clothes, wool or linen in the Highlands are mostly written by English visitors who were surprised, or even shocked, to see the women with their skirts kilted up, tramping the washing. For example, see Capt. Edward Burt, *Letters from a Gentleman in the North of Scotland to his Friend in London,* Vol. I, p. 47.

Adolescent girls learned simply by watching their elders that woollen fibres can easily be over-stretched and damaged by hanging, and that flat stone surfaces are preferrable to grass, which may itself be damp, or may stain the wool.[14] As the years went by, the young men of Angus Morrison's generation began to help with the wool washing, and though his father might have adhered strictly to the traditional division of labour, all his sons willingly helped out.[15]

Although washing the wool removed dirt and grime and much of the excess oil from the fleeces, it did not get rid of the little twigs and burrs that tend to stick to sheep. A separate task, often requiring more time and patience than the women could afford, this was usually done with the help of the children, as Isobel Stewart recalled:

> Then, in the evenings, we kids had to help. After the wool was washed, it was full of little bits of hay and twigs, and all. I remember evenings we used to have to sit and pick this wool... Kids all had to do that. I had six sisters. [BEK 3:A]

Dyeing

Although some of the wool was used in its natural shade, generally for blankets, and some was turned into grey, (either by carding the black and white fleece together or by twisting it after it had been spun), there was always a quantity to be dyed in order to meet the requirements of weavers and knitters.[16] Christie MacArthur grew up in a household where everyone was thorougly familiar with the range of activities surrounding wool:

> My father always kept twenty [sheep], shear in the spring, and then if there was a black sheep [you'd] keep the wool from the black sheep and p'rhaps two of the white ones. Then take it to the mill and it was made into rolls. Well, now, if the

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14 Margaret Fay Shaw describes the process of washing wool; see *Folksongs and Folklore of South Uist.*, p. 6.

15 This was very close to the pattern in the Codroy Valley, where in the 1970s the task was done by men or women. Gaelic-speaker George MacArthur is photographed washing wool outdoors, and the wooden boards on which he dried the clean wool are also in the photo; *The Last Stronghold,* p. 148.

16 For a brief history of dyeing, see Judi Palmer, *Dyeing with Natural Dyes*, pp. 9-10.

> black sheep was quite black it was all right [??]. Black, and mix it in with the white which also made grey, and other times they'd dye the wool... Yes, yes, they used to make it out of goldenrod, the flower in the wild... but as far as I can remember they bought [a lot of the dyes]. [BEK 14:A]

The newly washed wool was usually dyed before carding and spinning, although it could also be done at a later stage. The techniques and skills attached to the work were undoubtedly part of the traditional knowledge of the first immigrants, who adapted them to suit the availability of materials in the New World. Although many Hebridean dyeing recipes exist,[17] only a few plants seem to have retained popularity in homemade dyes among the Eastern Township settlers. The women who had most recent memories of the Old Country favoured the use of the most common Hebridean dye of all, crotal,[18] which is the name given to the russet-brown colour produced by the lichen, stone parmelia, *Parmelia saxatilis*.[19] Maryann Morrison, whose family had been accustomed to gathering it from the rocks in Harris, was pleased to be able to do the same in Quebec:

> Och, yes, all the crotal we wanted.. Well, they had a big pot, you know, to dye in... and my mother used to be outside with her fire on under it and... poke the clothes down there, and the yarn that she wanted to dye. Oh, she made all the dye she wanted... [BEK 18:A]

Here, Maryann briefly described how her mother dyed "clothes", meaning "bed-clothes" which were generally her hand-woven blankets. To dye raw wool, the method was also fairly

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17 Margaret Fay Shaw has twelve recipes using common plants, and one using commercial substances. Crotal is given first, and some of the recipes use this basic method as a reference, such as "proceed...the same as you would for crotal." See op cit, pp. 53-55.

18 Two photos from the Werner Kissling collection (1930s, School of Scottish Studies Photographic Archive) show part of the process; one is of women washing wool and the other of a woman dying a fleece using crotal; they are published by Su Grierson, in *The Colour Cauldron: the History and Uses of Natural Dyes in Scotland,* facing p. 122. For an earlier account of dyeing with crotal, see also N. Morrison, "Vegetable Dyeing in Lewis", *Scottish Field*, June, 1929, p. 28.

19 Alhough the russet shade is the most common, there are many kinds of lichen that can be used, producing a range of shades of reds and purples. For an informative description of the many uses of crotal, including the procedure for producing the rarer, more difficult reds and purples, see Jean Fraser, *Traditional Scottish Dyes and How to Make Them*, pp. 41-46.

straightforward, and very similar to one known throughout the Highlands and Islands of Scotland:[20] a layer of wool, a layer of lichen, alternating till the pot is almost full. Water is then added to cover the wool (which then reduces in bulk so that it no longer reaches the top), and then it is slowly simmered on the open fire.[21] When the wool has taken on the desired shade, it is removed from the pot, rinsed in clean water with salt in it, and, as before, squeezed gently and dried flat.

Although crotal may have been the favourite in Maryann's day, as far as wild plants and flowers are concerned, goldenrod is best remembered by most Quebec women, Scotch and French, as their most popular for the dye-pot.[22] In her comprehensive study of the use of Scottish plants in dyeing, Su Grierson records that "wild goldenrod", *Solidago vigaurea*, was used for dyeing in the Highlands, and although she notes that it grows in Lewis, finds no reference to its use.[23] In either case, the use of the plant, or absence of use, is more reassuring than surprising, as it points to the practical approach adopted by the women no matter which community they inhabited.[24] In Lewis, the plant is comparatively scarce, and there is a profusion of others to choose from, whereas in the Eastern Townships goldenrod grows in such abundance that, no matter where one lived, it could be easily obtained from roadsides, pastures, and waste ground.[25] [Plate 27] As a young woman in the 1930s, Isobel Stewart had seen it used for dyeing in her family:

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20 This was also practised in Nova Scotia and among the Gaels in Newfoundland. Recorded from Mary MacArthur, fieldwork tapes, 1972.

21 Margaret Fay Shaw gives the basic recipe for crotal, very similar to the one Maryann used; op cit, p. 53. Hetty Wickens, *Natural Dyes for Spinners and Weavers*, pp. 31-33, discusses dyeing with lichens and gives details of the best way to gather them as well as how to use them.

22 From recordings of Christie MacArthur and Isobel MacIver in 1976, and from conversation with a number of older women in 1992-93. The fact that both groups favoured goldenrod is based entirely upon the availability of it, and not on any suggestion of either one copying the other.

23 Su Grierson, op cit, p. 114.

24 I have discussed the general use of plants in the traditions of the Outer Hebrides in "Plant-lore in Gaelic Scotland" in *Flora*, pp. 56-60.

25 For a comprehensive study of plants adopted for natural dyeing in North America, see the United States Dept. of Agriculture 1935 publication, by Margaret S. Furry and Bess M. Viemont. *Home Dyeing with Natural Dyes.*

> My grandmother used to [dye the wool], but I don't remember just how much of anything she used. She used to use the goldenrod.[26] That was a very prominent colour, it was a kind of a, och, a *mì-chàilear* [unpleasant] kind of a colour! [laughs] Kind of a golden colour. And they used other herbs and things I don't remember what they were, but goldenrod I remember.

The colour, which was a matter of taste, nevertheless seems to have been pleasing enough to retain its popularity as a dye. It is quite likely that the youthful Isobel had a taste in colour that did not agree with her grandmother's, for, depending on the method used, goldenrod can produce a range of shades, from pale lemon to a brownish-yellow.

As with all dyeing, the work was done out of doors on a fine day in summer, and the same large pot was again used on the open fire. It was more than half-filled with water, and a quantity of goldenrod plants, just according to what could fit, were pressed into the pot, which was then brought to the boil and simmered to extract the dye. The plants were then skimmed out of the liquid, or it could be strained, though this was not usually practical. Next, a quantity of alum (according to Scottish home-dyers and spinners of today, about four ounces to every pound of wool[27]) was stirred into the dye to act as a mordant or "fixer" so that the colour would not fade.[28] All additives were obtained from the general store, and according to local merchant Duncan McLeod,[29] alum was the

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26 Violetta Thurstan gives instructions of how to dye with goldenrod in *The Use of Vegetable Dyes,* pp. 21-22. See also Hetty Wickens, *Natural Dyes for Spinners and Weavers,* p. 46.

27 I could record no actual amount from the Quebec women, as they generally did not measure, but added it as they had seen it done by their seniors. Four ounces is the consensus of opinion expressed by all the references cited here. I am also grateful to hand-spinner Jean Burnard, seasonal demonstrator at the Highland Folk Museum in Kingussie, for showing me wool samples and for discussing her craft with me.

28 V. Thurstan suggests chrome and cream of tartar as a suitable mordant for goldenrod; op cit, p. 22. A change of mordant results in a change of shade. I did not, however, record any mention of using chrome as a mordant in the Eastern Townships.

29 J. I. Little, op cit, p. 167, suggests that 70 lbs of alum listed in Leonard's stock must have been used for medical purposes. While it is true that small quantities of alum were occasionally used as an astringent (confirmed by Ivy MacDonald whom I recorded in Aug. 1992), such a large quantity as 70 lbs was more likely to be destined for the dye-pot than the medical cabinet.

most common, which was also the case in Scotland.[30] The addition of mordants was especially important because of the unstable nature of most of the dye pigments.[31] Finally, the wool, already wet to obtain the best results, was added to the solution. The fire was kept stoked to keep the contents of the pot simmering, but never boiling, as too much heat spoils the texture of wool. From time to time it was stirred and the wool pressed right down into the solution with a stick to ensure thorough saturation of all fibres. As with other dye recipes, the length of time taken depends on the depth of shade required: the longer it remains, the darker the shade becomes. At last, it was taken out, squeezed to remove excess moisture, and dried in the air and sunshine (again, preferably on stones or dry wood, and not directly on the grass). The pot on the fire was then ready to accommodate the next batch, which would be paler in colour than the previous one. Even if a completely new dye-pot was prepared using exactly the same recipe, as every woman knew, the resulting colour would not be the same shade as the previous one, no matter how closely she followed the method.[32]

Commercial dyes were also available at the general stores,[33] and popular brands such as Sunset Dyes or Diamond Dyes were

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30 Alum has been used as a mordant in Scotland for several centuries. For a full discussion on the use of mordants and on the production of alum in Scotland, see Clow & Clow, *The Chemical Revolution*. One of their reference sources is a publication from 1702 by W. Petty, "An Apparatus to the History of the Common Practices of Dyeing" in *The History of the Royal Society of London*, but I have not been able to locate this work.

31 Hetty Wickens discusses why mordanting is necessary and gives a range of common mordants and their methods; see *Natural Dyes for Spinners and Weavers*, pp. 34-43. See also, J. Palmer, op cit, pp, 11-14, S. Greirson, op cit, pp. 46-52, and J. Fraser, op cit, pp. 8-16.

32 This is common knowledge in dyeing, and knitters are always cautioned to obtain all their wool for a garment from one dye lot, whether home-made or commercially purchased.

33 Although he does not give commercial brand names, in *Crofters and Habitants* J.I. Little quotes lists of commodities available at Leonard's shop in Stornoway, and includes a number of dyes (venetian red, cochineal, madder, copperas and others). He presumes that sulphur was used for dyeing, though I have recorded references to it being used as part of a spring tonic (mixed with treacle and given to children). Little seems surprised to conclude that "Scots clothing would not be entirely drab, despite their church's fulminations against the vanity of colours." Op cit, pp. 167-168.

generally used for bright colours including indigos[34] and scarlets[35] as these can not be produced so easily with natural ingredients. While the directions on the packets were usually followed fairly closely, the procedure was basically the same as for natural dyes. As far as the women were concerned, they had at their disposal the means for producing wool in any colour of the spectrum, and, aside from preparing wool for spinning and weaving, their skill with the dye-pot was also used creatively in home-crafts. For example, in "Aunt Annie's" house, the patchwork quilt on the day-bed had a predominance of scarlet pieces cut from various fabrics that had been dyed especially for the quilt, and I have also seen home-made rugs with splashes of bright colours that turned out to be old longjohns and other underwear dyed purple or red. Even if the homemaker had used the standard navy-blue dye for many of the original items of clothing, she could use these dark shades creatively by placing beside them a range of colours dyed specially for the purpose.

Carding

For the raw wool, dyed or natural, carding was the next stage.[36] The earliest group of settlers spent many a long winter's evening at this task, and while they enjoyed the comfort of the wood-stove, the scene was familiar enough to those who had known the same routine beside the peat fire. The men might be occupied at an indoor task such as mending boots, or sharpening tools, while women and girls worked at their wool. And no matter what the activity, they could all take an active or passive part in the stories, anecdotes, riddles, weatherlore, medical knowledge, songs, or whatever aspect of oral tradition happened to arise. It was very much in the pattern of the *taigh-céilidh* especially if a neighbour

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34 Indigo was very popular, especially for men's suiting and women's skirts. There were various recipes using indigo and other natural ingredients, such as stale urine, and certain plants. See Margaret Fay Shaw, op cit, p. 55.

35 Although a range of reds can be made from lichens, none of these appear to have been made in Quebec.

36 Margaret Fay Shaw describes carding as she saw it in the late 1920s and 30s; see *Folksongs and Folklore of South Uist*, p. 6.

or two happened to come by for the evening.[37]

Before the carding began, the fleece was teased out manually by pulling the closely clinging fibres apart. Using a pair of hand cards, it was then combed out between the metal teeth, a small piece at a time, in order to leave the fine fibres separated and all running in the same direction in preparation for spinning.[38] These pieces of soft, carded wool, rolls or *rolags,*[39] as they were called, were then laid aside in a basket till there was a sufficient quantity for spinning. Carding requires continuous, repetitive, hard work, and although it may appear to be as simple as using a hair-brush, it requires considerably more skill to get into the rhythm of carding and to assess the resistance required to use the fine metal teeth on the various parts of the fleece.[40] Maryann Morrison recalled that "Many's the time I was very tired carding wool." [BEK 18:A]

There were times, however, when this work was not so tedious or monotonous. It took on a completely new aspect when a number of women organized "carding bees" to work on their wool. Isobel Stewart recalled carding bees which took place when she was a girl in Dell, over sixty-five years ago. Then it seemed as if the whole kitchen floor would be covered with wool to be carded, but with the help of willing neighbourhood women the work was much more enjoyable:

> We used to go when they'd have bees, like, at different places. And I remember being at Murdo A.'s, that's one of the places I really remember best—Murdo A. MacDonald's. They were neighbours of Danny's. And oh gosh, it seems to me there was tons of wool! We were little kids, but they had it in the kitchen, on the kitchen floor, like. All the women were round

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37 I have discussed very similar traditions of the *taigh-céilidh* among the Gaels of Newfoundland in *The Last Stronghold,* pp. 55-81.

38 For a comprehensive discussion of carding, a step-by-step description, and excellent photographs, see Patricia Baines, *Spinning Wheels: Spinners and Spinning*, pp. 193-198.

39 Among the Gaelic-speakers the plural *rollagan* would have been used. *Rollags* is an Anglicized plural.

40 In a single fleece there are many different grades of wool, for example, the softer belly wool is an entirely different quality to flank (traditional knowledge). Patricia Baines gives a full discussion along with a diagram of wool grades on a fleece; op cit, pp. 229-231.

> like this, and they had the—I've got a pair of them—cards. And we were down in the middle of the floor, having a ball, pulling this apart, and they were all sitting here, gabbing away. Mrs. Murdo A., she was Scotch, but she went to the States when she was young, and she didn't talk Gaelic. But the rest were all gabbing, something else! And someone else would break into English every little while because she didn't speak it. We were having a ball, we were enjoying it all! And of course they'd have lunch,[41] and she was a beautiful cook, Mrs. MacDonald was. And she'd have all kinds of goodies. And we used to like to tag [i.e. follow] our mother round [to different carding bees].

The opportunity to socialize was a welcome break from household routine, and no doubt the special treats served by the hostess were an added attraction. Bees of this kind were a common feature of pioneer life, as already mentioned with regards to barn-raisings. Food, which will be discussed in the next chapter, was an important part of the work-bees, a pattern which was well-known to many European immigrants before they ever emigrated. In her article, "The Social Aspect of the Popular Diet in Poland...", Zofia Szromba-Rysowa points out that this type of "neighbour's work" was a common feature of early rural communities in Europe.[42] With reference to house-building, mowing, threshing, spinning, and stripping feathers, she describes the general pattern in some detail, noting that:

> this work...was always connected with hospitality, and usually with the consumption of alcohol. This was the only pay for the work, which was dependent on neighbourly help... People who were invited to do communal work were received as

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41 "Lunch" does not usually refer to a meal in the middle of the day, as that was generally known as "dinner". A lunch could be served at any time, from mid-morning till late at night, and generally consisted of sandwiches, or rolls with a variety of cold meats, homemade scones, oatcakes, butter, jam, cakes and plenty of tea.

42 There are parallels in Scotland, such as in the Highlands and Islands when neighbours helped with sheep-clipping or planting, they would be offered food and hospitality. If the occasion was a *luadh* or waulking a roll of tweed, when the women were finished the work the men would join in the hospitality of the ceilidh that followed, sharing the food and drink as well as the singing and dancing. Also, in the Shetlands, cardings and spinnings were held in one home with the aim of accomplishing work; afterwards they would have a meal followed by a social gathering and a dance.

> guests. The value of the food, which was significantly better than everyday fare, often exceeded the value of the help.[43]

While the women at the spinning, carding or quilting bees drank only tea or coffee, with absolutely no question of alcohol being served, they prided themselves in serving their best home-baking, which always included a variety of kinds of scones made freshly that morning.[44] As a child, this was no doubt the highlight of Isobel Stewart's day out with her mother: "But I can remember that, and oh my, that wool was so beautiful and white." [BEK 9:A]

While most of the wool carded in former times was destined to be spun, occasionally some of the women would card it as a quilt-batting.[45] Ruth Nicolson in Milan, who was born about fitteen years later than Isobel, remembered her grandmother buyng a neighbour's wool for this purpose, and as a young woman helping to card it:

> Oh I've done a little bit of it, of the carding.... [In my day] nobody spun it, because we [carded] usually with Mrs MacArthur's wool, to make quilts—the batts. [By yourself or with another group of women?] Oh no! I never did that by myself; there'd be two or three get together because it's a long tedious job, and you have to work against the little needles that are on them. [Sept. 1991]

Such a practice was a matter of economics, however, as Isobel Stewart recalled:

> I've seen them [card for batting], but we never made any ourselves. Well we didn't have the wool—everybody didn't have sheep, and the ones that did, they'd either sold it or keep it for *stocainnean* or *miotagan* [socks and mitts] and all that stuff. We considered it a waste [to use wool for batting] but there was a few that did, that had enough of it or that could afford to make it. Oh, they were beautiful and soft.

As the years went by, almost everyone who had wool to card

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43 See Zofia Szromba-Rysowa, "The Social Aspect of the Popular Diet in Poland with Special Consideration of Eating Customs and Nutritional Prescriptions and Proscriptions" in *Food in Perspective*, p. 268-269.

44 Choice of food and the importance of its preparation will be discussed inthe next chapter.

45 The "fill" in a quilt, whether sheep's wool, commercially fluffed cotton, or modern polyester, is always referred to as "batting". Quilting will be dealt with later in this chapter.

began sending it to one of the carding mills that operated in the Eastern Townships. There was one at La Patrie convenient for those who lived in Scotstown, while the people of Milan, Dell, Marsboro, and surrounding areas took their wool to the Legendre mill at Stornoway. Christie MacKenzie remarked, "It was fun to spin it after being at the carding mill, because it was always so nicely done. 'Twas much less work." [BEK 16:B]

Spinning

The spinning wheel was already well established in Lewis and Harris long before most of the emigrants departed, as it was introduced into Lewis by Lady Seaforth in the 1830s.[46] Although women were still spinning with the hand spindle until much later,[47] according to the Crofters Commission, most had adopted the spinnning wheel by 1884.[48] Maryann Morrison remembered it to be among the few household items which they brought over from Harris in 1888, and remarked that this was the case with many of the first settlers. Thus, the treadle spinning wheel[49] became a common feature of Quebec homes, and to this day is valued, though it is no longer in use by the descendants. Occasionally one is brought back into use when it is bought at an

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46 See D. MacDonald, *Lewis,* p. 63. Also, for a comprehensive discussion on the introduction of spinning wheels throughout Scotland, and the teaching of home-spinning (from 1633), see I. F. M. Dean, *Scottish Spinning Schools.*

47 Sometimes the hand-spindle is called "drop spindle", a term which is thoroughly discouraged by instructors of the Guild of Spinners and Weavers. (From Jean Burnard, Laggan, former student of master-craftswomen Mabel Ross and Patricia Baines, 1983.) P. Anderson reports that Hebridean women were using it in 1850, *Guide to the Highands and Islands of Scotland*, p. 645. During fieldwork in the Outer Hebrides and the Shetlands in the 1870s, Arthur Mitchell encountered two basic kinds, one requiring a whorl, which was either a weight or a potato (described on p. 8, "...I carried off the spindle, yarn, and potato and they are shown in Fig. II") and ones which were "formed as to make the use of a whorl unnecessary", which were most common in Lewis. Examples are in the National Museum, Edinburgh. See A. Mitchell, *The Past in the Present*, pp. 1-24.

48 *Crofters Commission Report,* 1884, Vol. I, p. 145.

49 Referred to by I. F. Grant as the "Saxony wheel" (the generic term for similar flyer-type spinning-wheels with sloping table and foot-treadle, though the Saxony is double-banded, whereas the spinning wheel which is nowadays referred to as "Hebridean" is single.) See op cit, p. 225.

auction by a keen craftsperson,[50] as there is still a strong interest in spinning and weaving in the surrounding areas.[51]

The treadle-style spinning wheel was not, however, the only kind in use by the Gaelic-speaking population. According to various descriptions, they also used what is known in Scotland as the "muckle wheel" and in the Codroy Valley, Newfoundland, as the "French wheel".[52] This type of wheel has no treadle, and is used standing up, with the spinner stepping back a pace or two every time the fibre is drawn out, then going forward again to let it run back on the spindle. It is quite likely that the earliest settlers, (approximately those who came between 1838 and 1850), who did not bring spinning wheels with them, obtained whatever type of wheel was available in Quebec.[53] Isobel Stewart's family had had both kinds, a fact which she attributed to intermarriage between a Gaelic and a French-Canadian family. There was no history of intermarriage in the MacDonald family in Milan, however, though their wheel was of the walking type, as Ruth Nicolson recalls:

> Oh well, my grandmother used to spin... She came from Lewis—I guess likely up around Uig that she came from— she came with my—her grandfather came with his family and she was about nine years old when she came... Ishbel MacDonald [was her name]... As far back as I remember we never had sheep, so they must have bought the wool. We'd go to the the mill, to the carding mill, you know and we'd buy, the *"pi -eh"*

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50 Many spinning wheels have been moved out of the area; for example I recorded Harria MacLeod of Scotstown saying that her daughter had taken the wheel to Montreal, and another woman said that her daughter had gone to the States and taken it there.

51 Several Quebec spinning wheels turn up "across the line" in Vermont, and are highly valued; I have seen a few examples over a hundred years old at the Spinning and Weaving School in Calais, Vermont, which is run by Norman Kennedy, a master-craftsman from Aberdeen. Fieldwork notebook, August 14-15, 1992.

52 See I. F. Grant, p. 224; description and diagram in *The Last Stronghold*, pp. 150-151. Also known as a "walking wheel" this type is listed as the "Great Wheel" by Mabel Ross in her *Encyclopedia of Spinning*, p. 93.

53 I found no reference to anyone who brought a muckle wheel from Scotland. While visiting Maryann Morrison in Montreal, in order to try to identify the types of wheels, I brought her G.B. Thompson's booklet, *Spinning Wheels (The John Horner Collection)* which, though from the Ulster museum, has Scottish wheels. See also the publication of Royal Ontario Museum of Archaeology, by Dorothy K. Macdonald, *Fibres, Spindles and Spinning Wheels.*

> what did you call that? The long strands...they, eh..*[rolags?]* No, what it the world—? [Already carded, fluffed up?] Yes, but in strings, like, you know, about that size—[about an inch in diameter] and you just...take it up of this lump of, pile of, ehm—[Ruth suddenly remembers the word] A *peard* is when you take the cards and card the wool—a *peard!* They would be 8 or 10 inches by 3 and a half or 4 inches wide. Oh I've done a little bit of it, of the carding.[54]
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> [When you carded, who spun it?] Nobody spun it, because we did that usually with Mrs MacArthur's wool, to make quilts—the batts.... And she had a large wheel, you know, the great big wheel, and she used to do a lot of spinning when I was quite young. [Walking back and forth?] Well, you pull the yarn away, way back, 'cause it's the spindle is up that high, you know— you can't get that on tape! [laughs, as she demonstrates with a hand] [About four feet off the ground.] And she'd stretch it, and then it would go back as it spun around, and you do it—...Oh yes, standing up![55]

Ruth agreed that "You'd be on your feet a lot to do it," but when asked if her grandmother had ever given her or her sisters a chance to spin her immediate response was similar to that of other women of whom I have asked the same question:

> Oh no! That was a no-no for us, for the kids. Oh no, we weren't supposed to touch that. But she had it out in the shop, what we called the shop.

So important was it to keep the spinning wheel in good working order, that many of the girls who were attracted to learning felt that they were not encouraged to do so. Although the reason was seldom, if ever, given, it is not that spinning makes people impatient—from my own limited experience, it can be very relaxing— but it is the fact that even the slightest adjustment in the tension of the spinning wheel can cost the spinner a great deal of time trying to regain the most suitable setting for her wheel.[56]

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54 The word that Ruth remembered using is given by Dwelly as *peurda*, "first card in carding wool" and *peurdan*, "the first tufts of wool off the cards in the first carding. Ruth pronounces it with the *"a"* sound, *peard*.

55 Recorded Sept. 1991, transcription re-ordered (to place the name at the beginning instead of at the end of the interview).

56 Similarly, I recorded an expert spinner and weaver, Lucy Cormier, a Newfoundland French woman who used the "Scotch wheel". She told me that her mother wouldn't allow the girls to touch the wheel for fear that they would spoil the tension. As a result, she did not learn till after she left home. (Memorial University Folklore Archives, 1971.)

Christie MacArthur (born 1888), whose mother and mother-in-law used the Hebridean wheel, had similar memories to Ruth's, although, being of an older generation, she was still expected to learn spinning as part of her housework routine:

> Oh, I suppose I tried it a lot of times, and my mother always told us—she didn't allow us to use it, we'd always upset it... It was after I got married that I was spinning... my mother-in-law did hand spinning... and after she died I had to, I did it for myself. [We used] a small spinning wheel... [you sat down to do it] Oh yes. [BEK 14:B]

Ruth's close friend and aunt-by-marriage, Ivy MacDonald of Milan, who is less than ten years older than Ruth, remembers Ruth's grandmother working on mill-carded wool late into the evening:

> [Ruth's] father's mother was eh—she had a big family of boys, and she used to have the wool sent to a mill and make these, what do you call them, strings, you know—and she never had time to spin that wool while they were awake, you see, and so when all the children went to bed she'd spin. [Aug. 11, 1992]

Women of Ruth's and Ivy's generation (both born a few years before the First World War), consider the older women such as Christie MacArthur and Maryann Morrison to have been among the last of the generations of hand-spinners. Considering that Christie was thirty and Maryann in her early forties at the end of the First World War, they were, as far as today's women are concerned, of another era. For them, such work was all part of the household routine, time-consuming and demanding, though generally made lighter either by singing, or by working communally, or both. Isobel Stewart recalled that her grandmother "used to hum tunes when she'd be [spinning]—all the time they used to sing hymns, she'd be humming hymns when she'd be spinning." And although Maryann admitted that it could be very tiring, she also recalled that it could be very enjoyable, especially when one of the women organized a spinning bee.

Such an event was usually planned when someone intended to weave a length of tweed, or blankets, which require large quantities of wool, too much for one person to spin. On an appointed day, the neighbouring women would bring their

spinning wheels to the house, usually travelling by horse and cart, and would spend the day spinning in the company of friends. Rather than being looked upon it as a day's work—which it was—it was regarded as one of the rare opportunities of socializing enjoyed by the women.[57] And once again the preparation and sharing of food played an important part in the day's enjoyment.[58]

When she looked over her long life and considered all the changes she had seen, Maryann found it difficult to understand why some of the crafts she enjoyed had disappeared. "They got lazy; they wouldn't spin, and they wouldn't card," she concluded, in her hundred-and-second year, forgetting that there were also other reasons, and that the women of the following generation—Mary (Angus's wife), Ruth, Muriel and Ivy's generation—were anything but lazy. True, times and technology had changed, but Maryann knew that the coming of electricity did not affect spinning in any way. Nevertheless, there were several other changes that began to take place in the Eastern Townships, which, combined with other factors, brought about changes in the lifestyle of the second and third generation of Scotch settlers.

From 1915 onwards, the Eastern Townships played a very significant role in Canada's woollen industry, as it was in Lennoxville that the nationwide co-operative, the Canadian Co-operative Wool Growers Association, was first established. It

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57 A more detailed description of spinning bees among Gaels in Canada can be seen in *The Last Stronghold*, pp. 150-152. There is a photograph from 1898 of a Cape Breton "spinning frolic" in Florence M. MacKley's book, *Handweaving in Cape Breton,* p. 21, with descriptive notes on the p. 20. In Gaelic Scotland older generations recall social events for working with wool, usually carding rather than spinning.

58 The food was prepared by the hostess, the same as for a carding-bee. One of the main differences between the Quebec and Newfoundland events was that in the Codroy Valley the meal was a sit-down dinner, held when the husbands, brothers, or fathers of the women returned to fetch them home. They all ate together, then had music and song before the evening ended. I have no reports of this from Quebec, although that does not necessarily mean that it did not happen. There was, however, the consideration that music and dance were often discouraged among the Presbyterian settlers, whereas it was very much a part of every social event among the Catholic Highlanders who settled in Newfoundland.

began with the founding of the Sherbrooke County Sheep Breeders and Wool Growers Association in 1915 and continued to be a centre for woollen products until 1993 when wool prices dropped to their lowest level for fifty years, and the Co-operative closed its outlet wool shop.[59] With the standardization of quality and the centralization of wool production, it appears to me that small producers, such as the Hebridean settlers and their families, began to rely on factory products and on mechanised spinning from about that time onwards. From all accounts, it was in the1920s and into the 30s that hand-spinning appears to have gone out of favour.[60] By the 1940s, the hand-spinner was the exception rather than the rule, and, just as in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, several decades were to pass before the craft was revived, generally by "outsiders" attracted by idealized images of the traditional way of life.[61]

Twisting and Winding

The spun wool could be destined for several uses, depending on the needs of the household. If it was intended for weaving, the bobbins could go directly to the loom as they came off the spinning wheel; for knitting or crocheting, however, two or three strands had to be plied together to prevent the wool from losing its original twist. There were two methods for doing this,

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59 The shop, which was in operation throughout my fieldwork, closed on June 26, 1993, as part of a national response to the world fall in wool prices. See "Lennoxville: Wool Shop latest victim of the Times", in *The Record*, Sherbrooke, Wed. May 19, 1993. (The price drop also affected Scotland, and many crofters who sold no wool in 1993 still have a backlog from 1992 which they retained in the hopes of a market recovery.)

60 Although none of the women interviewed blamed the foundation of the co-operative for the decline in spinning, the dates they all gave indicate to me a connection between the two.

61 Norman Kennedy's Marshfield School of Spinning and Weaving in Vermont testifies to an enormous interest in the United States and Canada. (While in his teens, he himself learned from traditional craftspeople in Barra and elsewhere, in the 1940s and 50s.) In Scotland it is extremely interesting to survey the origins of prominent spinning teachers. All three demonstrators at the Highland Folk Museum in Kingussie are revivalists; my own spinning teacher, who is based in Ross-shire, is from the south of England; and Patricia Baines, one of Britain's best-known visiting teachers and an authority on the subject, was a professional oboist who learned the craft as a second career. See P. Baines, op cit.

depending on how busy the women of the household were at the time. If only one woman was working in her own home, she would generally twist the newly spun wool using her spinning wheel, with two or three spools making up what then became know as two-ply or three-ply wool. Or, if two women were working together, one would carry on spinning while the other would have the task of plying with the hand-spindle. Christie MacArthur recalled evenings when her mother worked at the spinning wheel, while she used the hand-spindle to twist together two strands of wool already spun. The two-ply wool was generally used for mittens, socks, while the three-ply was made into winter sweaters:

> The spindle—I did it myself... After my mother was spinning ... she'd be busy spinning and I'd be twisting it for her...we used the spindle... There'd be two businesses going on together... you know, I have one at the house, some place... It's just a stick, and you wound it around this end... At the big end. And you could have it around the loom....on here. And then you twist it... And you'd wind that on, and start all over again... We had a pan or something to put it in; if not, just let them run, and see that the cat wouldn't get after them!
>
> I never used it till after I started spinning... And my mother died... and afterwards we used to twist it on the spinning wheel.[62] [BEK 14:A]

Though it is many years since they have been used to twist yarn, several homes still have hand-spindles, either displayed as a relic from the past, or, like the one Christie spoke of, "it's somewhere yet."[63] In the summer of 1992, Ruth Nicolson brought out one that had been her grandmother's, a tapered piece of wood, approximately 3 cms at the base [Plate 28] "formed as to make the use of a whorl unnecessary" as Arthur Mitchell wrote of the ones he saw on a visit to Lewis in 1875.[64] Ruth, who had never used it herself, had only heard her elders refer to it:

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62 Christie was recorded while she was in hospital in Megantic. There is considerable extraneous noise on the tape, a number of repetitions; I have re-ordered this passage of transcription to make clearest sense. BEK 14.

63 Nobody I recorded had any family memory of spinning with the hand-spindle, although they knew that in former times this was the method used. For a clear explanation of how the hand-spindle works, see Mabel Ross, *Encyclopedia of Handspinning*, London, p. 175, and also P. Baines, op cit, pp. 41-44, with diagrams.

64 Arthur Mitchell, op cit, pp. 1-24, in particular, Figs 8 & 10, which are closest to Quebec hand-spindles.

> I call it a *"dealgan", dealgan....* I used to hear them talking; I think it was my step-mother's brother, probably. I don't know where I heard it... I don't believe [I ever saw anyone using it].[65]

If the wool had been twisted on the spinning wheel, the quickest method, the ply on the spools had to be wound into hanks. This was always done on a simple winding device called a *crois-iarna.* Maryann Morrison pointed out that there was no need to bring them over from the old country because they were so easily made. The *crois-iarna* was made out of a stick about eighteen inches long with two shorter sticks attached to each end at right angles to it; but not parallel to each other—viewed end on, the end sticks form a cross. [Plate 28] To wind the wool into hanks, the long stick was held in the middle, and with a deft movement of the wrist and forearm the wool was wound round and across the end sticks to make a hank. The person winding could count the turns if they wished to have hanks of standard measurement, usually to the nearest ounce.

Even when all the previous stages of wool working had gone out of fashion or favour with the younger generations, there were very few youngsters who, from time to time, were not asked to hold a hank of wool to be wound into balls for knitting. Until well into the 1960s bought wool came in only in hanks, which cannot be used without re-winding.[66] Today, the knitter has a choice of buying wool already in balls, or, less commonly, in old-fashioned hanks.

Knitting

Partly because it became part of the school curriculum, and partly because people still valued having home-knitted garments, knitting was one of the crafts that most girls learned at an early age, and women today still practise, though not as much as they

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65 Dwelly's *Dictionary* states: "dealgan, s.m. spindle, *Bible.* Used in ancient times for spinning thread." (The word is still used.)

66 This was also the case in Scotland, as anyone with a knitter in the family will recall; winding the wool was a job that called for a pair of free hands to hold hank after hank to help the knitter.

once did.[67] During the years when homespun wool was common, almost all the women made mittens and socks for the entire family, and many of them also knitted sweaters and even winter underwear. For socks, grey wool, spun from a mixture of black and white carded together, was most commonly used, two-ply for everyday wear, and three-ply for winter boots. The common feature of modern sports socks with a stripe or two of a different colour was long established by traditional knitters who usually knitted a stripe or more of bright red or blue round the ankle or at the toe so that the washday task of mating large numbers of laundered socks would be slightly easier.[68] Because knitting is a task which can be done at intermittent intervals, work in progress was always kept handy in the kitchen for spare moments between other chores.

According to Isobel Stewart, very few of the Scotch women knitted winter longjohns by the time she was growing up:

> The French women used to; oh, yes, they made underwear. My gosh, we had a neighbour, she had a knitting machine and ... she'd knit the stocking legs, you know, and then she'd knit the foot [by hand]... Oh, heavens knows [where she got the machine]— I guess her mother had it. They had it on a table. Of course they had those things, that you could make it small or bigger, you know... She'd knit big round tubes, you know, for underwear... She was French, but some of the Scotch, I guess, had them too.[69] But not so much the machines, they used to [hand]knit them, underwears, a lot of them—That's all

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67 This is also the case in Scotland; in my childhood and adolescence, most girls and women had "something on the needles", whereas today, it is much rarer to see women knitting, especially socks, which, at one time, were perpetually being produced. Even among professional women, in my own experience, it was common for part of the office or staff-room lunch hour to be spent knitting; the complaint that paper-work has taken over every spare moment has taken its toll on the relaxation time spent in needlework.

68 This was also the custom among knitters in the Codroy Valley; for example, Mary MacArthur, in the Codroy Valley, who reared a family of six boys explained the advantage of this, especially when there were only minimal differences in the size of feet for that number of children. (Recorded 1971.)

69 In Quebec the only knitting machine of this kind that I saw was in a small folk-museum in St. Romain, in the former house of the Curé. In the Codroy Valley, I saw one in use, a small circular device with needles and hooks, on which Mary MacArthur made socks, sleeves for sweaters, legs for longjohns. She showed me how it worked, how to increase and decrease by removing needles, and said she bought it via a mail-order catalogue from the States. (Fieldwork notes and tapes for *The Last Stronghold.*)

they had, they didn't have any of the fancy stuff they have today.[70] [BEK 9:B]

The changing customs as regards knitting closely parallel the situation in Scotland: it is still fairly common to see women knitting, but there are considerable differences between the 1990s and the years before the Second World War. In those days, necessity came before pleasure; practicality came before fashion; the dye-pot dictated the colours; and availability of wool, time, and traditional skill determined if a garment was to be made in the first place. Nevertheless, there has always been a strong element of creativity in the craft, as the use of colour and patterns, both store-bought and invented, clearly indicates.

Weaving

While knitting was, and still is, common, weaving is quite another matter. Considerably fewer people learned the craft to begin with, and although the equipment used is much more elaborate and expensive than a pair of knitting needles, even the families that did have looms ceased to use them many years ago, as far back as the second decade of this century. Although the majority of Quebec Hebridean homes have blankets that were woven by Scots in Quebec, when I began fieldwork in 1976, Maryann Morrison was the only person I met who had learned to weave at home. She had, of course, seen plenty of it in Harris before her family emigrated, and remembered the loom that had come over on the "Siberia" in 1888.[71] Although she said that the same loom also produced a good many yards of cloth in Marsboro, her son, Angus (born around 1911) can just barely remember it being used. Dating home-weaving according to Angus's memory, it appears to have gone out of use around the time of the First

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70 Knitting long underwear was still common in the Hebrides until relatively recently; for example, in the 1960s my grandmother still hand-knitted longjohns for my grandfather, using four needles and "wheeling" (2 ply-wool in natural or a pinkish shade) which she obtained at the Portree mill in exchange for some of their own fleeces.

71 I. F. Grant discusses weaving in Harris in the nineteenth century, op cit, pp. 238-239. See also *"The Big Cloth": The History and Making of Harris Tweed*, by Mary Gladstone; for details on the types of looms used, see p. 12.

World War.

Kay Young's mother, born before the turn of the century, was probably among the last of her generation who wove. Other elderly informants of that generation (for example, Christie MacArthur and Christie MacKenzie) grew up as the craft was dying out. Kay, who has several of her mother's blankets, said:

> My mother, even in her day, she did the complete job from the sheep to the bed. She used to make all her own wool—for the blankets it was the natural colour except for contrasting threads. They dyed that in blues and reds. They were done in squares [rectangles, usually two strips], the most of the ones here. [BEK 3:A]

There was a great variety of blankets woven, and though most were the natural wool colour, often with a coloured stripe or two at the ends for decoration, [see Plate 29] some were woven with dark shades such as natural blacks and greys, crotal browns, or mixtures of bright reds and blues. The coloured ones were of the heaviest homespun yarn and were usually known in both languages by the Gaelic word *cuibhrig* [a coverlet].[72] In "Aunt Annie's" house, the bedding was as it had been for decades, with some of the blankets woven in Quebec, and some from Lewis. Her daughter, Muriel Mayhew, recalled the bedding that had been in use as far back as she could remember:

> She brought a *cuibhrig* [from Lewis, in 1910, that] my grandmother had woven, or my grandfather, I guess, for he was a weaver... Some of those blankets [in the house] were from the house in the Middle District that they had; probably some that my grandmother had—my Canadian grandmother. That grandmother was 3 months old when they came over—Annie MacDonald, her people were from Bernera... Oh yes, they spoke Gaelic. Strange, you know, there are so many questions I would like to ask today— [Nov. 14, 1990]

A close inspection of some of the blankets reveals a whitish cotton warp with homespun wool in its natural shade. Apart from the blankets Maryann and her family wove on their loom from Harris, which were woven in a width she called "the double yard", the rest of the blankets were made in two strips and joined up the

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72 Donald MacDonald writes of the *cuibhrig,* a coverlet; see *The Tolsta Townships*, p. 160.

middle. Most of them had a neat herringbone seam which also characterizes the Scottish blankets woven in Cape Breton and Newfoundland, though some were joined with a simple overstitch, not so flat to the touch, but equally serviceable.[73]

When discussing local weavers with Ivy MacDonald, I thought of the blankets on my bed at Ruth's house, and mentioned the "nice hand-woven blankets ... sewed down the middle, just beautiful..." A hint of reservation could be detected in the tone of Ivy's reply:

> Yes, they are, they're awfully heavy, but they're beautiful, aren't they? ...I had a couple that I bought from an old lady and they'd never been used, but to put them on the bed they were too heavy even without anything else on the bed, you know. They were lovely, white...They'd keep you warm, but they're too heavy—I can't stand anything heavy [laughs]. [August 11, 1992]

Similarly, when writing of the Highlands and Islands, I.F. Grant also comments on the weight of the hand-woven bedding and suggests that is one of the reasons why they lost popularity. Though she makes no mention of the current preference, or fashion, for the easy-to-make, lightweight down, feather or synthetic "downies" which was emerging at the time, Dr Grant could well be writing on Ivy's behalf: "The old blankets, although warm, were very heavy and they, and the bed-covers, are now little esteemed."[74] Even master-craftsman Norman Kennedy who dyed, handspun, and then wove a special pair of blankets for a niece's wedding in Aberdeen, was dismayed to find that, in spite of his special efforts and the exquisite gift he had given, the blankets were never used by the young couple.

The general demise of traditional weaving has not, by any means, been confined to the Eastern Townships,[75] though

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73 Codroy Valley weaver, Lucy Cormier, told me that when she won the all-Newfoundland prize for weaving in the early 1920s, she was told that it was the neat herringbone seam on her blankets that swung the judges' final decision. Fieldwork recording, 1972.

74 I. F. Grant, op cit, p. 233.

75 For a comprehensive study and survey of weaving techniques in Canada, see Harold B. Burnham and Dorothy K. Burnham. *"Keep Me Warm*

naturally that was the only area that Maryann Morrison had in mind when she regretted the loss of interest in the craft: "Well, there was nobody wanted to do it." In spite of the fact that it had died out shortly after the First World War, Maryann could still tell about the skills that her mother learned in Harris, weaving *clò-mór* as well as their own blankets. She looked back on the days when not only did she weave for their own family in Marsboro, but managed to meet a local demand for her skill as a weaver, and help supplement the family income besides:

> Oh, the house was big enough. She was weaving for very little [money]. She would give a—make articles—the double yard, that she was making for twenty-five cents for a double yard—the big, big yard. I used to work the loom myself, oh yes. And spin, and card, and do all that work, yeah. Oh, it's a long time ago! You know, nobody has been talking to me like you, that would keep my mind so clear. They never ask anything here about what we had in the old country. They don't care if we had anything or not! ... [Eventually] she sold the loom. [BEK 18:A]

As anyone who knew Maryann would confirm, her mind remained quite clear till her death in her hundred and eighth year. At the age of a hundred and one, she went on to explain how they used to weave cloth in two thicknesses, according to their needs. There was the all-wool *clò-mór,* the heaviest tweed, which was used for winter coats, jackets, pants, and heavy blankets; and there was the lightweight material, sometimes with a cotton warp and a single-strand woollen weft, which was used for skirts, dresses, men's and boys' warm shirts, and even petticoats. Christie MacKenzie, whose aunt used to weave, said she called this lightweight material "flannel":

> She used to weave flannels that made underskirts, and different things like that... I think her husband made the loom, Uncle Murdo. I think he made it; he was very handy as a carpenter. [BEK 16:B]

Clothing was certainly an important part of the planning, especially in the days when the stores carried neither a wide range of materials nor ready-made clothing to suit the entire

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One Night": Early Handweaving in Eastern Canada, and Dorothy K. Burnham, *The Comfortable Arts: Traditional spinning and Weaving in Canada.*

family.[76] Ivy MacDonald recalled Ruth's grandmother speaking of the days when she was obliged to make everything for the family:

> She had a loom—now I never saw this, but she said that when she was married first that she used to make cloth and then make little pants [trousers] and things for the boys. I bet you [said with laughter and a hint of sarcasm in the voice] they were snappy-looking, you know, but they were pants anyway!

Accustomed as we have become to a choice of ready-made garments that extend far beyond our actual needs, it would be easy to imagine the past as an time of universal deprivation. But that would be inaccurate; from the point of view of the Hebridean settlers in Quebec it was a time of plenty in comparison to what their people had left behind. Granted, they worked extremely hard, but they could look back over their years in Quebec, to the first winter when the snow drifted in through the walls, and be absolutely certain that never again would they know such cold, hunger, or deprivation; nor would they have to use every single blanket in the house unless they had a houseful of visitors during Communion season or holidays.

Fulling

After the cloth was woven, the *clò-mór* had to undergo the last of the processes "from the sheep to the bed"—the *luadh*,[77] known in English as "fulling" or when referring to Gaelic Scotland as "waulking", and known in Cape Breton and Newfoundland as "milling".[78] The function of the *luadh* was to make the cloth thicker, warmer and more wind-proof, by repeatedly pounding it on boards; technically, the action re-orders the arrangement of the minuscule particles, which become interlinked like little

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76 J. I. Little notes the limited selection of clothes in Leonard's store: according to the inventory, there were no women's dresses, skirts, or men's shirts or trousers. *Crofters and Habitants*, p. 168.

77 Margaret Fay Shaw describes the *luadh* which was the context for many of the songs she collected in the 1930s and published in 1955. See *Folksongs and Folklore of South Uist;* the setting is described pp. 6-7. See also John L. Campbell, *Hebridean Folksongs*, chapter 1.

78 I have discussed the social setting, the process and the songs in detail in "A Codroy Valley Milling Frolic" in *Folklore Studies in Honour of Herbert Halpert: A Festschrift,* pp. 99-110.

hooks, and make the cloth thicker than the stiffer fabric that comes off the loom. Rather like a celebration of the end of the long process, the activity was happily anticipated not only by the weaver who had accomplished the task, but also by the rest of the family and neighbours who would be taking part. In Gaelic Scotland this has always been an activity associated exclusively with women, but it is clear from descriptions from Nova Scotia[79] and Newfoundland[80] that very soon after their arrival in the New World, immigrants began to share the work between men and women.[81] As far as I can ascertain, one of the earliest accounts from Quebec dates to the 1830s Arran settlers in Megantic County. Equally interesting is the fact that the surviving description tells of the *luadh chas*, the "foot-waulking", which died out in Scotland before the now extinct practice of hand-waulking.

Writing in the 1880s, Dugald McKenzie McKillop looked back over several decades in Megantic County, and recalled the communal work activities, known in Canada as "bees". Whether it was logging, quilting, spinning or fulling, each had its own characteristics, though none seems to have left the sort of impression on him that his kinsfolk made when finishing their cloth:

> Perhaps the oddest kind of bee was a fulling bee. There was a great deal of kicking done in this matter. I have myself watched with wonder the antics of the young men carrying out this process of thickening the web. Perhaps some survivor might write an essay for the local papers on "A Hard Way to Make Thin Cloth thick".[82]

By the mid-1970s, only a few of the oldest Quebeckers had ever heard of the *luadh,* which for some reason had died out even before the weaving did. Although Isobel Stewart had seen as much wool-working as anyone of her generation, she had never

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79 John L. Campbell describes the first example he saw of men at a luadh on a visit to Cape Breton in 1937 in *Songs Remembered in Exile*, p. 43.

80 *The Last Stonghold*, pp. 154-156.

81 I am not absolutely clear if men ever took part at the waulking boards in Quebec; there is, so far as I can tell, no record of them being excluded, but neither is there any record of them taking part, except in the more social aspects of the *luadh*.

82 D. G. McKillop, *Annals*, p. 73.

heard of it. Bill Young, who grew up in Scotstown, could remember hearing his grandmother sing waulking songs, although the work in which the songs had their origin had ceased years before. The significance of her songs was of interest to him, and after he was married, he discovered more about their context from his wife's grandmother. Kay's people settled in Milan, where she grew up, just "two doors down from Aunt Annie's...French people have it now.":

> Now it seems to me that I've heard her explaining that they all sat around and they put their feet on the [cloth]... And eh, I know my Grandmother MacDonald sang a waulking song and a spinning song—I used to hear her sing them.[83]

Not surprisingly, Maryann Morrison was the only one who had ever participated in a *luadh* , and while she had memories of both Harris and Quebec, she remembered the *luadh* of her childhood the best, and immediately recited a ditty she had heard around the boards:

> Oh, na luaidh! Tha cuimhne mhath agam ..Bha òran ann a bh' againn—
> 'S na H'earadh fhuair mi m'àrach;
> Chan eil nàir' orm ga ràdh,
> Cha dheanadh an clò àlainn seo
> [...?] còta-bàn Shasainn.
> Girls used to sing... Oh, it would be lovely to listen to them, girls singing... Wasn't it good? But it went out... [BEK 18:A]
>
> *[Oh, the waulking! I remember well...There were songs we had—*
> *In Harris I was reared;*
> *I'm not ashamed to say so.*
> *This beautiful tweed would not make*
> *[...?] an English petticoat.]*

When I asked if she had any more of the songs, Maryann replied, "No, she sold the loom..," affirming that the two activities of singing and working are closely inter-related. Maryann cast her mind back over ninety years, and gave a description based largely on those she had seen in Harris.

To prepare for the *luadh*, the woman whose cloth it was

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83 Kay's words are from my fieldwork notebook, Aug. 10, 1992, and Bill's from 1976, tape BEK 3:A.

(though not necessarily the weaver) invited neighbouring women and teenage girls to her house on a chosen evening, usually in late autumn or winter when most of the wool-related work was done. With the help of her husband, she arranged three or four planks of wood, about ten feet long, or an old door, across trestles, to make the table for the *luadh*, with chairs or long benches along both sides. The roll of cloth, which could be as long as twelve yards, though often it was approximately four times the length of a blanket (thus enough to make one pair when pieced together) was placed on the boards. It was then opened out and the two ends either tied together by the surplus warp yarn, or tacked together with a darning needle, to form a large loop. When the women arrived they took their places and the work began:

> [You] saved all the pee you could... Just dip it and put it on the boards, but... it was a dirty work for girls, wasn't it?
> [BEK 18:A]

The cloth was squeezed out, though it had to be "good and wet" so that it would shrink and become thicker with the constant beating on the boards. Traditionally, urine was favoured for wetting because it had the added advantages of removing excess oil from the wool and of setting any dye that had been used. It is interesting that the Cape Breton and Newfoundland Scots adopted the practise of dipping their cloth into warm, soapy water, a procedure that eventually took over in the Hebrides, whereas in Quebec the settlers retained the old custom. The lifespan of the *luadh* in Quebec was considerably shorter than that in the two other areas where there are still people in their fifties and sixties who participated in their youth.[84]

Maryann remembered that in Marsboro they used to have the *luadh* in what they called the "summer kitchen".[85] Apart from this piece of information, the description in this composite account is mainly what she remembered from Harris:

> It was in a little place back of the house, but it was attached to the house. You could come in on that door and walk up like

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84 The last *luadh* in the Codroy Valley was in the MacArthur household in the 1950s, much later than most places in the Hebrides.

85 See Chapter 3, "Aunt Annie's" summer kitchen.

> you do here... to another place...
> Apron? Oh, no, I don't think so. I don't remember an apron at all....But they were nice big girls, healthy looking too. Oh, there would be... six or seven on each side... And they were singing to beat the band, there.

As much as two hours later, after many songs,[86] the cloth reached the desired texture and width, traditionally measured with the joints of the middle finger. It was then rolled up on a small board to the singing of a slightly quicker song,[87] and put away till the first dry, sunny day, when it would be washed, stretched out, and dried in the fresh breeze.

Although everyone at the boards had to work energetically, yet it did not feel like hard work in the light-hearted company of the other women. The memory of their singing remained with Maryann for the rest of her life, and as she reflected upon her memories of the very earliest ones that had taken place in their home in Harris, she seemed to imagine the entire scene in her old age: "I never saw anything [so] beautiful like we have in Harris."

Their home in Quebec was bigger and better equipped for the women to get washed and change into other clothes if they so wished, and then enjoy relaxation, good food, and entertainment. At this point, the men joined the company, and after eating, there were usually stories, songs, music, and maybe a dance on the cleared floor, depending on how strictly the family adhered to the Evangelical Presbyterian ways:

> We used to have dances, you know, in houses. Some people—but my father would never allow a dance in the house, and he wouldn't allow me to go to a dance.[88] [BEK 18:A]

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86 Unfortunately the little fragment remembered by Maryann, and recited rhythmically without a tune, is the only waulking song I came across in all my fieldwork in the Eastern Townships.

87 I did not record any information on the kinds of songs used for the various stages; the "rolling" or "clapping" songs, *òran basaidh*, usually finished the work; see examples of songs in *Folksongs and Folklore of South Uist* pp. 226-268 and *The Last Stronghold,* pp. 174-176.

88 While conducting research for the Nordic Institute of Folklore project on tradition and identity, Olav Bø encountered a similar attitude to fiddle music and dancing: they were regarded as part of local tradition, yet were frowned upon by the church as un-Christian. See "The Role Played by

Since it could not be regarded as an organized dance, if the occasion to dance arose, then it was all the more enjoyable for the young people who were forbidden to go to the village dances. The evening's activites were all those that characterized the *taigh-céilidh*, which, fortunately for younger generations, had a much longer life-span than the activities connected with home-weaving.

Traditions of the *luadh* in Canada are well documented in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, where they lasted much longer than they did in Quebec. Only in the Eastern Townships, however, is it reported that men did not join in, that only urine was used to wet the cloth, and that only Gaelic was sung.[89] It is probably the case that French settlers could weave, though in the days that Maryann spoke of, it was quite common for neighbours, Gaelic or French, to share skills, such as engaging the weaver or tailor to do a required task. Muriel Mayhew, whose mother did not emigrate to Quebec till 1910 was of the opinion that weaving was more common among the Hebrideans in those days, though that changed around fairly soon afterwards, to the practice that prevailed throughout her own lifetime:

> The French people did more weaving than the Scottish people. The first generations may have done it, and I imagine they did, but not by the time my mother came to Canada. [Nov. 14, 1990]

Similarly, in Newfoundland, while the Gaels brought their weaving skills with them, it was the French that took over and became the more expert weavers.[90] Today, the only weavers in the Eastern Townships are French, few, if any, of whom have learned through

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Tradition in a Local Community Today and Earlier" in *Tradition and Cultural Identity*, p.146.

89 I have tape-recorded tri-lingual "millings", re-constructed for the enjoyment of the songs, in the Codroy Valley, which were later filmed by the CBC in 1975.

90 For example, Allan MacArthur, whose grandmother and mother could weave, did not learn, but acknowledged Lucy Cormier to be the best weaver by far. And Lucy, in turn, acknowledged that the French acquired much of their expertise from their Gaelic-speaking neighbours. Fieldwork tapes and notes, 1971 and 1972.

family tradition, judging by the number of "revival" craft set-ups and summer courses in spinning and weaving.

Maryann's earlier comment concerning the demise of spinning and weaving—"They got lazy; they wouldn't spin, and they wouldn't card"—might elicit a few objections; perhaps she herself might reconsider, if that were possible, for the women in the succeeding generation were, and are, anything but lazy, if we judge by today's examples—Maryann's daughter-in-law, Mary, or Ruth, Muriel, Kay or Ivy. The decline could, rather, be attributed to a complexity of reasons, domestic, local, regional, and national.

As years passed, and houses were built with better and more efficient heating, people no longer needed to have such heavy blankets. At the same time, lighter-weight materials were becoming available, with factories producing cheaper synthetics that had both fashion appeal and twentieth-century lure. There was also the fact that, when mills were established, women could have the choice between doing all the stages of the work themselves or of taking advantage of time-saving machines which, from the time of the First World War, were beginning to be established on a much wider scale. And there was also the reality that war changes community life. Though Maryann's family did not seem to be affected by the First World War, there were few that could say the same of the Second.

Between the wars, the younger generation of women were leaving home, some to be college-educated, an entirely new idea that had hitherto been reserved for young men who trained for the ministry or medicine. Times *were* changing: with young women earning a living, there was more money and less time for the older crafts. For example, Ruth and Muriel and several of the other "girls" trained as teachers, while Ivy trained as a nurse, and though they returned "home" to work, and later to marry, by 1939 there was the major consideration that Canada "was involved in a war."[91] The young men either volunteered or were

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91 While most people had family memories of the First World War, the majority of the men I interviewed talked mainly of the Second World War.

drafted into the Canadian regiments and and sent overseas. For six years the division of labour was redefined; women did men's work as well as their own, while the men for whom they had once woven *clò-mór* were clad in uniform. Not surprisingly, by the end of the war, changes had taken place that were to remain part of a new lifestyle. Those who had served in the forces were eligible to apply for new land and housing grants in Lennoxville; thus several young families moved out of the rural homesteads and into the suburbs of the town where they were closer still to modern amenities and completely out of range of rural activities such as carding or spinning bees, even if they had continued. Of all the wool crafts, only knitting and crocheting survived, and continued to be practised for economic and practical reasons, though less so as each decade went by. Nowadays women knit and crochet for pleasure and recreation, or simply "to pass the time".

Home Crafts

Sewing

Looking through family photograph albums, several decades of clothing styles can be seen, many of which show the skill of the local tailor or home-sewer. For example, in Angus Morrison's large collection, the oldest portrait of the Morrison family shows the ones who left Harris, then settled in Marsboro, wearing their Sunday best for a professional portrait—"there were photographers used to go around..." [Plate 3] Some of the clothes were probably those they had when they emigrated, as Maryann remembered there was a tailor in Harris who made men's trousers, while the women did the sewing for the rest of the family. In Quebec, however, the women had to make all the clothes during the years when store-bought goods were not

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Bill Young, who is quoted here, had several stories, including supernatural experiences while in Italy [BEK 3:A]. Muriel Mayhew's husband, Herbert, was overseas, two of Christie MacArthur's sons went, and one returned "wrecked from years in a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp". Russell MacIver was exempted, but had his own family stories to tell. Two entire generations were actively or passively involved, in exactly the same way as entire villages in Lewis or Harris still look back on those years.

readily available. The warm *clò-mór* was made into winter coats, jackets, trousers, skirts, while the lightweight material made the shirts, dresses, and petticoats. There was no need for paper patterns, as the women were well practised in cutting their material, and if there was any doubt they could always rip the seams of an old item of clothing, and use the pieces as a pattern.

With all the sewing that needed to be done, a hand-turned or treadle sewing machine was part of the furnishings of nearly every home, a feature still retained by the older houses today. In her day, Maryann Morrison spent many hours sewing clothes for her thirteen children, her husband, and herself:

> I've had two sewing machines in my life. The first one was Ben Hur. And—oh, the boys started to use—to fix horse-blankets on it and that was too big and rough. And then that machine went out of use, and I got another one. Oh, well, it's [advertised] on the television all the time, Singer sewing machine, that's it! I did all the children's [clothes, you] couldn't get any school [clothes] when my children were small. You had to make everything. And going to school, I was making overall-pants for them and a jumper [usually known as pinafore-dress, in Scotland] like a coat, and blouses—print like that, you know. Print for blouses, and a [draw]-string in the middle, and tie it in here [at the waist]. That's what we had—no style [by today's standards].. They looked very good in it to me. [BEK 18:A]

One of the more recent photos in Angus's collection shows a family group photo taken during communion season, when Maryann and Roderick's children were ages ranging from toddlers to teenagers. Angus remarked on the fact that the family would have spent Thursday to Monday going to church, four days dressed in their Sunday best instead of one. During his childhood and adolescence, he recalled that their parents kept them all very well dressed, especially on Sunday, the only day of the week they wore shoes:

> Bha sinn a' coimhead glé mhath le deise bhrèagha 's bròGan, ach bhiodh sinn a' dol dha'n sgoil air ar casan rùisgte—cha robh bròGan againn... Dìreach ach Là na Sàbaid!
>
> *We were looking very good with beautiful suits and shoes, but we would be going to school on our bare feet—we didn't have shoes [on us then].... Only on Sundays!*

Families that did not have their own hand-woven fabrics could either buy from the merchant or exchange wool for them. For example, Christie MacArthur spun only enough wool for knitting, and kept the rest of their raw wool to exchange for cloth when a peddler came around. Similarly, Christie MacKenzie explained what her mother used to do:

> If she had a surplus of wool, she'd sell it to the peddlers that came around, you know, and get—in repay she'd get cloth material. And she used to get some flannel from them for the men's shirts. And then she'd get some cotton for our dresses and things like that... They used to come from Coaticook. There was a fellow by the name of Armitage, and there was three generations of them, Armitages at a woollen mill there, used to come around with a couple of horses and a sort of van—oh, he'd have lots and lots of material. Some people that had small families, you know, would sell all their wool to him and get material... Oh, he'd sell too, but it was mostly for wool, because he took it in and it was made into these flannels. [BEK 16:B]

Former school-teacher, Myrtle Murray, who came to Milan from Birchton when Ruth, Muriel, Kay and Duncan were all at school, could look back to her first memories of moving into this area of "Gaelickers", as she called them. Because of the fact that she grew up in an area of the Eastern Townships that was predominantly English and Irish, she saw everything with fresh eyes, and some of the pictures remain with her into her nineties.[92] She remembered the very oldest women wearing bonnets "of white cotton...the old ladies wore a—I can just remember certain women could launder these *curracs*, say. And they came down [under the chin] and had a frill like this, and these frills had to be ironed. They'd stand out, they had an iron that made it."[93] As far as their clothing was concerned, "well, a good deal of it was in wool, but no, they weren't backward." Myrtle remembered the

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92 Myrtle Murray was recorded at the age of 94 in London Residence Nursing Home in Sherbrooke in August 1992. Because she was extremely deaf, I used an amplifier for my questions. As a result, the tape has a slightly stilted quality; nevertheless, her responses were very clear, and she had many interesting reminiscences.

93 See Plate 3, Maryann Morrison's mother is wearing a *currac;* Mary Morrison remembers her having to have a special iron to fix it after she washed it. Frilled bonnets or "mutches" were commonly worn by older women in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland until the 1920s. The significance of the mutch is discussed by I.F. Grant, *Highland Folkways*, pp. 330-331. Mrs Grant also mentions the use of goffering irons to launder the frills.

women wore fairly long woollen skirts, with flannel petticoats, "they wore them for warmth... whatever they needed for heat." The men wore woollen trousers, usually home-made, and "in the winter they were heavy." For lighter garments "they went into Sherbrooke and got print, and made it," just as Maryann had done with the cotton she bought in Megantic.

Another feature of clothing that stood out to the new school teacher was the strict adherence to custom when a member of a family died. "Well, usually the widows wore black, as I remember, for a year, then at six months they probably wore a little white." Meanwhile, widowers wore a black armband on whatever coat or jacket they happened to be wearing. What Myrtle described seemed to be entirely in keeping with traditional styles of clothing described by Donald MacDonald in his book *Lewis: A History of the Island*, which is not entirely surprising since she was observing many of the original settlers who adhered to the styles they knew. She emphasised, however, that there was an interest in the fashions of the day, a point which is also evident from many of the older photographs.[94]

Naturally, the severe winters required more protective clothing, so I asked Myrtle if any of the women ever wore trousers in those days. Her reply revealed more than an account of winter attire, as she managed to observe the earliest reaction in the village to a woman breaking with tradition:

> MB: Did you ever, in those days, see any *women* wearing pants [trousers], like you do now?
>
> Myrtle: Oh, no! I remember our old neighbour, he was *shocked* when I wore knickers [knickerbockers].
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> MB: To your knees?

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94 Many older descriptions of Highland women and their dress suggest an interest in stylish dressing. For example, Mrs Grant of Rothiemurchus described the women " all in homespun, home-dyed linsey-woolsey gowns...The girls who could afford it had a Sabbath day's gown of like manufacture and very bright colour...generally ornamented with a string of beads, often amber...they all wore the plaid, and they folded it round them very gracefully." See *Memoirs of a Highland Lady: The Autobiography of Elizabeth Grant of Rothiemurchus... 1797-1830*, 1911 edition, p. 206.

Myrtle: You know, knicker-pants.

MB: When did you get them?

Myrtle: Oh, I got them the first or second year I was teaching.

MB: To keep warm?

Myrtle: Well, no, It was just because it became the fashion...they were just comfortable.

While others may not have been quite as keen to keep up with fashions as Myrtle was, eventually the styles did change.[95] One of the biggest influences on this was the fact that young women left home to go into service in the States, usually the Boston area. Occasionally a special gift would be sent "home", such as the one shown in a studio portrait of six-year-old Muriel MacDonald (now Mayhew) in 1920, wearing her best woollen dress in MacDonald tartan with a tartan taffeta sash, sent to her by her father's sister, Aunt Mary Belle, in Boston— "I can still remember that dress". It was to be Muriel's first of many tartan garments.

When the girls in service visited home for holidays they would bring back new fashions or would send surplus clothing to members of their families. The women who were skilled at sewing were not long in copying the styles, and turning out clothing that kept them abreast of the fashions of their day. The stores in Megantic and Sherbrooke were visited for special occasions, such as a wedding. Shortly after John and Christie MacKenzie had celebrated their seventy-first wedding anniverary, Christie insisted that I should see her wedding dress, made for her by her sister. Her daughter, Jean, showed it to me, while remarking that "no doubt she'd have told you she wants to be buried in it." The following note accompanies my photo [Plate 23]:

> Christie's wedding dress is ivory silk and quite beautiful. Her sister, Kate (2 years older), made it; she was a seamstress "she did it for a living". The fabric is very fine, so also the stitching, especially the hand-sewing which is *incredibly* delicate. On the bodice is a design in tiny marcasite-like

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95 For a comparative discussion in Labrador, see Annie Blake, (transcribed from an interview by Elizabeth Goudie and Doris Saunders). "No Pants in My Day" in *Them Days*, 3, 1, (1977), p. 13.

> beads, interspersed with pearls, some of which have a marcasite knotted on top of pearl, like a tiny crown. (The marcasites are so tiny that when Jean tried to sew one on after the dress was at the cleaners, she could hardly find a needle fine enough—no wonder!) Along the neck, sleeve (armhole), and down the side seams are little pearls which also serve as buttons along one shoulder and down one side. The buttonhole loops are minuscule and the dual function of the pearls is almost invisible. The style is mid-calf, and has a neat sash with silk fringing. In all, a remarkable example of exquisite needlework. [Fieldwork notebook, Aug. 5, 1992]

Quilting

The first thing that struck me about the bedrooms in "Aunt Annie's" house, was that every bed in the house was topped with a homemade patchwork quilt. Of different patterns, they all dated from the end of the nineteenth century to the first half of the twentieth, though I was soon to discover that the craft of quilting has carried on into the present day. On top of heavy wool blankets, the quilt, which tended to be much lighter, made sure that the sharp night-time drop in temperature would not affect the family even after the stove had burned down.[96]

Today, almost all homes still keep a wide variety of quilts of various designs and fabrics. The very oldest are not usually the ones that are on display, as they were pieced at random from unmatched fabrics, often of various qualities, as a utility item and are less valued than the better planned ones. Furthermore, they tended to wear out after years of use, and, like most worn goods, lose value.[97] The tradition was practised by women throughout Scotland, though it seems to have had a much shorter lifespan in the Old Country than in North America.[98] Home-made quilts were

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96 Canada has a long and vibrant tradition of quilting; aside from many references in books about pioneer days, there are informative studies such as Ruth McKendry, *Quilts and Other Bed Coverings in the Canadian Tradition*, and Mary Conroy, *300 Years of Canada's Quilts*.

97 Kay Young gave me one her MacLeod grandmother in Milan had made; it was of the very oldest utility style, quilted with local wool. It is now in the National Museum of Civilization, Ottawa.

98 Throughout my mother's childhood in Skye, in the 1920s, all the beds had home-made patchwork quilts. Today, not one is in existence, as my grandmother threw them all out, via bedding for the dogs or cats, till there was not a trace of one in my own childhood. The reason given was that they were so old-fashioned, and no longer needed after they got

pieced together from whatever material was available in the form of scraps left over from sewing, or re-cycled material from outgrown or worn-out clothing. The under-side was always less decorative, as it made use of pieces of sheeting or "plain cotton". They were then filled with carded wool, as Ruth mentioned, or cotton batting[99] which was available from the local merchant, and were quilted or tied with "tags" or "tacks" to keep the batting in place. Christie MacKenzie recalled the older method:

> It was just odds and ends of your dresses and aprons, and so on. They never had material enough of one kind, like. Just hit and miss... And tacks, you know, rolled tacked quilts made... instead of quilting them, they were tacked. [BEK 16:B]

Nevertheless, most were very artistically done, and very decorative, as many of the women had the knack of combining their thriftiness with impressive creativity.[100] A close inspection reveals waistcoat and jacket linings; old suiting; portions of skirts, jackets, and coats; old shirts, dresses, and blouses; and even long underwear that had seen better days—all could be put together in pieced patterns, with colours and textures complementing one another. As already mentioned, items such as underwear were dyed in bright colours producing more decorative, less monotonous patterns which were also more serviceable for the top of the bed or daybed than the original lighter colour.

Although there were established patterns which had names, such as the log-cabin [Plate 31], the Dresden plate [Plate 32] or double wedding-ring, no two quilts were alike. Some women also invented a pattern as they went, while others preferred "crazy quilts" of random-shaped and -sized pieces, stitched together and afterwards embroidered along all the seams. A crazy quilt of velvets and/or silks was especially prized, and those who were

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bedspreads, usually as a gift from relatives who worked in Glasgow. In my teens in Lewis, I saw no patchwork in the homes of my friends, where "candlewick covers" appeared to be much in evidence. (My grandmother did, however, continue to use hand-knitted blankets though these were not generally seen as they were not used for top covers.)

99 Belden's pictorial *Atlas* shows a drawing of a cotton-batting factory in the Eastern Townships. [Plate 32].

100 See also the 1929 study by Ruth E. Finley, *Old Patchwork Quilts and the Women Who Made Them.*

able to acquire enough scraps of these materials were considered most fortunate. A feather stitch using coloured embroidery silk was the most popular seam decoration, although there were variations.

After the decorative patching had been completed, the actual quilting was done on a large wooden frame consisting of two long "poles", and a pair of frame-ends. The poles, which are set across and pegged into the frame-ends to form a large rectangle, are usually covered with muslin so that fabric can be stitched to them. The width of the rectangular formation can be adjusted when required by means of wooden pegs set into holes on the frame-ends, thus, when the quilters, who work from the outside edges inwards, need to move towards the centre, they pull out a set of pegs, tightly roll the quilt on the pole, and secure it again by pegging it into the frame-ends.[101] To begin with, the quilt backing was stretched "right side"[102] facing downwards, across the frame, and nailed, tacked or stitched to it. The entire area of the backing was then covered with batting. If raw wool was used, which was more common in the oldest quilts, the soft brushed-out fluffs of it were placed evenly over the backing. When store-bought batting (which came in foot-wide rolls) was used, it was rolled out in strips until the entire area was covered. The pieced top was then laid over the batting, right side up, and stretched until taut in all directions. This was then tacked to the frame (I have seen drawing pins used) to secure it for quilting. Careful preparation is very important, as the whole purpose of the actual quilting is to secure the warm fill so that the finished product has an even texture, with no "thin spots" that would defeat the purpose of the quilt.

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101 Just as with many home-made gadgets, there are variations on construction and method. There is a photo of a fairly old one in Dorothy Brightbill's *Quilting as a Hobby*, p. 28.

102 If the fabric did not have a "right side", such as printed cotton or a self-coloured cotton with a nap, this point was not significant.

Seldom would a busy housewife quilt an entire coverlet by herself,[103] as it takes many hours to hand-sew every seam in a fine running stitch. Once again, bees enabled the efficient completion of the work in a couple of afternoons, while again providing the women with another opportunity to socialize. Although all the bees were held in the home for many years, in the 1960s a group of women in the Scotstown Presbyterian Church began to organize quilting bees in the church hall, mainly to raise money for church work by selling the quilts. During my fieldwork in 1976, I was able to join the weekly quilting bee in the church hall, which was considered to be a much more practical place to erect a frame, leave it overnight, or even over a week, than one person's kitchen. While the setting had altered from earlier times, the method of quilting remained the same, as did the social aspects of meeting friends, catching up on news, and sharing tea and home-baking together.

By the 1970s, there were a few differences in the craft. Women were able to afford to buy new fabric of their choice, had begun to experiment with pattern books from other parts of Canada and America, producing designs such as the "Texas Star", and were using modern polyester batting as filling. When I returned in 1990, the quilting bees I had known, and which I had seen as part of the "Scotch identity", were a thing of the past, though it was still possible to find a few women quilting at home. As Lauri Honko reminds the folklore fieldworker:

> What we are studying is a process of ongoing identity negotiations with rather open sets of symbol transactions. We may have to go back to the field and check whether our result still holds and what our one-time-spotlight analysis actually revealed in the perspective of an ongoing process.[104]

"Back in the field" in 1992, I asked Ruth Nicolson, whose home has

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103 I have come across only one woman who did this, Duncan McLeod's sister, the late Jean Murray, who lived in Scotstown. She was a very enthusiastic quilter, and after her family had grown up and left home, she used to have a quilt on a frame in a spare bedroom which "passed the time" for her. At other times she would attend quilting bees.

104 Lauri Honko, "Studies on Tradition and Cultural Identity: An Introduction" in *Tradition and Cultural Identity*, p. 9.

generations of quilts on the beds, how she experienced this traditional craft. Again, to retain the context and as much of the atmosphere as possible, and not merely to elicit facts about quilting, I will keep the interview intact. The conversation carries on from the point where Ruth spoke (above) of hand-carding in her grandmother's day:

Ruth: Yeah, and you just take it up of this lump of, pile of, ehm— A "piard" is when you take the cards and card the wool—a *peard*. They would be eight or ten inches by three and a half or four inches wide.

MB: How would you arrange them on the quilt?

Ruth: Just fit them side by side, you know, and close enough so they wouldn't separate after they were quilted.

MB: How did you do it?

Ruth: You put the backing down on the frames, and then lay the *peards* on top, and then the top, whether it was a plain piece of material, you know, or sometimes you'd put the designs on, or even appliquéd them on.

MB: You've used both [hand-carded] wool and store-bought [cotton or polyester] batting—how does the one compare to the other?

Ruth: Well, I found that one with the [hand-carded] batting was pretty hard quilting.

MB: Do you mean hard to put your needle through?

Ruth: Well, not so much that, but it's so thick that it makes a large stitch—I'd rather just the cotton batting, the "queen bat".

MB: The stuff you buy?

Ruth: Yes, that's much easier to quilt.

MB: It was the old-fashioned kind, the hand-carded wool that wasn't easy to quilt, then?

Ruth: Yes. And it wasn't everybody who wanted it, but our houses were never too warm away back then, you know, and they needed the hand-made quilts, were nice and warm and not heavy.

MB: How about washing them?

Ruth: Well, I think that wasn't always so successful, but they did it; but sometimes it would separate and mat, you know, if there wasn't enough quilting. That's the secret of keeping a quilt in good shape, and when you wash it, if you have enough

quilting close enough together to keep the bats, whatever, they wouldn't separate and bunch up.

MB: You also went to quilting bees?

Ruth: Oh, yes, quilting around here, oh, many the one! Huh! Many the one I did help with.

MB: How would they arrange that?

Ruth: Well, it was the ladies, maybe it was the Carry On Society or the Ladies Aid Society would announce that they were quilting. Somebody would let everybody know that we were going to quilt. And we would take three or four days to make a quilt.

MB: Would you do three or four in a row or—?

Ruth: At first when there was room [around the quilt] there was four on each side, and even one or two at the end to begin with, [because we'd work inwards from the edges]. But then you'd narrow it down where there would be p'rhaps two on each side, and the ends would be done. And very often to finish it off there was just two, one on each side to finish it.

MB: There's always a problem when you're quilting that there may be one woman in the village whose stitches you wouldn't want on your quilt—what would you do?

Ruth: Well, I don't know. I think maybe some have been corrected, perhaps ripped out if the stitches were too drastically wide, but it was really just the better quilters that would come.

MB: You wouldn't send one out to make the tea, would you?

Ruth: Well, maybe that would be a good way to ease off the large stitches, but we didn't have much trouble with that. Everybody seemed to be pretty good quilters.

MB: I used to go to quilting bees in Scotstown [in 1976].

Ruth: Yes, I suppose; I never went in Scotstown, just two or three times. By then I thought we'd done enough. We got fed up; we'd done enough on the quilts up here [in Milan].

MB: When the women got together like this in the old days do you think that this was an opportunity to talk and socialize that they wouldn't otherwise have had?

Ruth: Oh, yes, sure, they wouldn't meet any other way maybe all week, and—oh, they'd meet in church on Sunday maybe—but I think that was a good [opportunity to get together]—and tell stories too! [laughs]

MB: Did anybody ever sing?[105]

Ruth: No, not really. Nobody was that much of a singer.

MB: It's not something you need to do to music—but you could talk and converse. I guess the men called it gossip?

Ruth: No doubt! Though, eh, I suppose there was gossip sometimes too. But we used to have fun and have our tea-break, which was very nice. Somebody'd bring—maybe each one'd bring something, or else someone would announce today that they would bring the lunch[106] tomorrow.

MB: It wasn't usually the woman whose quilt it was who would provide the food, then?

Ruth: Not too often, no, because, eh, whether she would have anyone for dinner that day, I don't know, but—[pause]

MB: You need quite a space to put up a quilt.

Ruth: Yes! I've had it in the dining room here, but it's hard; you're having to walk around, no, ***crawl*** under the quilt to get to the bathroom, because it takes quite a space for a quilt.

MB: Did you keep your own quilt frame?

Ruth: Well, at last we had a frame that went around [from house to house], but many people had their own frames. I had frames too, they're still here—or they should be! [laughs]

MB: Where did you get it?

Ruth: Oh my grandmother had it—yes, I'm pretty sure it was my grandmother. They used to tie quilts too, way back—I had one or two of those.[107]

MB: The frame is in four pieces, isn't it?

Ruth: Yes—and each piece had holes bored every, maybe every 3 inches apart, and we used to sew the lining on that. Then we got more sophisticated and had the thumb-tacks

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105 There was no singing at the quilting bees I attended in Scotstown.

106 Home-baking, as before.

107 "Tied quilts" are made with an entirely different technique. Instead of stitching along all the seams, which is "real quilting", tied quilts are made by stretching the same components over the frame (as described above), then selecting points at regular intervals, say every 6, 9, 12, or 15 inches, and securing the quilt with "ties". These are made from thick strands of wool or cotton sewn through from the front to the back with a big needle, leaving a few inches of "loose end" at the beginning. The stitch is repeated over the selected point, then the strand is cut to leave a second loose end facing outwards. The two ends are then tied together and clipped, thus leaving a "tie" as a feature of the quilt. "Tied" quilts took much less time than the quilted ones, and were, therefore, regarded more as utility.

[drawing pins] to punch in on[sic, i.e. onto the frame], to tie it on, which was less work.

MB: And then you didn't have to unpick the stitches?

Ruth: No, but you had to pull all these tacks out, though. Except the end—as you turned the end you'd have to take the tacks out as you rolled up the quilt and you finished that row, whatever width. Some [of the women] could reach in, oh, 'way far, and others couldn't. I could never reach very far. But there were some good quilters here!

MB: Yes, Duncan's sister, Jean, was a wonderful quilter.

RN: Yes, his mother too, and Ivy. They were especially good quilters. I wasn't but I used to quilt just the same!

When the quilting was completed and the women at the bee had gone home, the quilt-maker still had to finish off the edges at her leisure. She usually did this by machine-sewing a self-coloured binding all around, then hand-hemming the inside face. Most were square cornered, though occasionally an expert sewer would tackle a mitred corner.

The scope of the present study cannot extend to tracing the changes in materials and patterns of quilts, or to studying the less obvious features attached to the craft, such as sense of value and attitude.[108] Even in the relatively short time-span I have looked at all of these aspects, I sense changes: now that there is no longer an economic need to piece together left-over or recycled fabrics, as everyone can afford to buy, the circle is coming around full swing. Old dresses or overalls are again being considered, whereas fifteen years ago they seemed to have had a certain stigma of poverty attached to them. Women can afford to spend more time dabbling in new patterns than they could in the past, when they had neither the extra cash to buy the books nor the spare time to browse.[109] Although the emphasis is no longer on

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108 For a well-researched case-study of comparative quilting practices in a British community, see Mary I. Gullick, "The Historical and Social Context of Quilt Make-up in Weardale", unpublished M.Litt. thesis, University of Sheffield, 1991.

109 Books of patterns and instructions were available in Canada long before they seem to have caught on in the Eastern Townships. For example, in 1928 Marie D. Webster published *Quilts: Their Story and How to Make Them.*

the practical use of the quilts but on the decorative effects, I notice a change in value when it comes to choosing between old and new. Only fifteen years ago, the "best quilt" was likely to be one that had been made with new fabric, either cotton or polyester, carefully chosen to suit a selected pattern—for example, a "Texas Star" made with colours that reflected the picture in the pattern book—or a woman's own imaginative sense of colour, and quilted with polyester batting. I have also seen Texas Stars with colours arranged as close as possible to the order of shades in the spectrum, with every single piece matching perfectly—a considerable test of skill, as there are well over 300 pieces in one star.

Returning to the Scotch homes in 1990, however, I noticed that the "best quilt" is more likely to be one that was made by a grandmother; for example, in 1991 and 92, the one on my bed at Muriel's house was a log-cabin design, made by her paternal grandmother, Anne MacDonald who died in old age in 1948. [see Plate 30] It was pieced together entirely from strips about half an inch wide, hand-quilted along all the seams over carded wool that had stood the test of time and the wash-tub.[110] The colours did not come from a pattern book; instead, they reflect the care and artistic qualities of a traditional craft originally practised out of necessity by women who believed that if a job is worth doing, it is worth doing well. Equally as important as the practical aspect is the fact that quilting gave the women one of the few opportunities they had to get away from the ordinary, hum-drum, repetitive daily chores of home and farm. The planning and piecing allowed them to express their creativity, and to use moments of relaxation in a rewarding and satisfying way, while the actual quilting, as already stated, afforded a welcome opportunity to socialize. From time to time, as they reflect upon the function of quilting and other work-bees, today's elderly people now appreciate that the importance of these social occasions was far beyond what they ever imagined at the time. It is only now, when they reflect on

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110 There is a log-cabin patchwork quilt very similar to this one on a box-bed in the Highland Folk Museum in Kingussie.

the past, that they can see how vital a part their communal work played in affirming the cohesion of their community.

Rug Making

If quilting made use of re-cycled materials, then rug-making could use up even scraps of clothing that were too worn or unsuitable for quilts.[111] There were two basic types of rugs, braided or hooked. The former needed no equipment, and any member of the family could, and did, join the activity, either by helping to cut strips or by joining ones already cut, or by doing the braiding. There was no need to match quality, thickness or colour, as any fabric could be cut up, though it was more practical to do so, both from the point of view of convenience and decoration and design, which was limited to concentric patterns of colour.

Before the work began, used clothing was cut into strips (about one inch wide for thick material, and up to two inches wide for thin material). Pieces of the same colour were sewn together to allow sufficient length to give uniform bands of colour around the rug. Three strips were then braided together, and before the braid grew too long to handle, it was either wound into a circle and stitched together, or the end part was bent back on itself and the two edges sewn together to form the centre of an oval rug. As new colours and fabrics were joined on and braided, this sewing was continued, with the braid placed on a flat surface to keep it from warping, then wound around, forming the chosen oval or circular rug. There appears to have been no standard method of joining new colours or of sewing up the rug: some women sewed new pieces together, while others cut a diagonal edge and cleverly twisted the ends together to hide the unsewn join. To sew the braid, some did it with a sharp needle, overstitching the edges at the back of the rug with strong cotton, while others used a bodkin to weave a strong thread back and forth through the loops on the

111 See also the 1927 book by Ella Shannon Bowles, *Handmade Rugs.*

edges of the braid, making an invisible join and a rug which is as neat on the back as it is on the front.

Even within families there were different styles. Muriel's mother "Aunt Annie" made the little braided bedside rugs out of scraps—practical, utilitarian and decorative—while an aunt who had gone to live in the States emulated the local people she had seen dyeing rags for rugs by buying ready-made balls of self-coloured rags, factory-cut by an enterprising company in America who cashed in on the revival of interest in traditional crafts. The result is an enormous carpet, rather than rug, which covers most of the floor [see Plate 30]. Muriel, for whom this masterpiece was made, remembered how it came about:

> *Aunt Helen was the one who made the big braided rug upstairs. I can still see her sitting on the floor upstairs sewing the braids around the edge becasue it was too big to hold. She used to buy mill ends at the store, make the braids at home into great big balls and then make the rug. She made most of it at home, then when it got so big she brought it up here in the car and she'd bring the balls to the house—she finished it here. [Fieldwork notes, Aug. 2, 1993]

Mat or rug hooking was probably just as common as braiding in former days, though it was, for a time, replaced by ready-cut wool rug-hooking kits. Usually fairly small, rarely measuring more than 36 inches by 24, colourful, well-worn, hooked mats can still be seen, often used as a door-mat at the entrance of older homes. Aside from the purely practical, favourite hooked mats are generally kept out of the way of the main stream of household traffic to prevent the design from being obliterated.

Both women and men were skilled at this particular craft, which could make use of the tiniest scraps of fabric, even ones rejected for braiding. Despite the thrifty use of fabric, this was not its greatest attraction, as these mats were often works of art.[112] The base required was usually made from an old hessian bag, such as a washed, opened-out potato sack, generally called a

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112 See Marius Barbeau, "The Origin of the Hooked Rug", *Antiques*, (Aug. 1947), pp. 110 - 113.

"burlap" bag.[113] The rug-maker would sketch a design or picture on this material, and then stretch it across a small homemade wooden frame. For example, Muriel's husband, Herbert Mayhew gave me one he had made with the picture of a favourite horse on it.[114] The burlap could be either attached to the frame with small nails or sewn on with strong yarn to keep the material rigid throughout the hooking. The frame was usually placed across the knee, or resting on the edge of the kitchen table while the rug-maker sat about two feet away, or just the right distance to be able to rest the frame on the lap. The work was then ready to begin: small strips of material, of any length and about half an inch wide (or less if a very thick material was used), were held in the left hand underneath the frame, and hooked into the hessian from above, using a small mat hook which resembled a short wooden screw driver or awl handle with a hook in it. Sometimes the hook was homemade from a three or four-inch nail. Little by little, the pattern was hooked, using colours to correspond with the plan of the design.

Patterns on the hooked rugs varied widely.[115] Many had broad coloured borders with a few flowers inside; some were geometrical; others had a theme which was designed for a specific reason—for example, a child might wish to have a bedroom mat with a picture of a favourite animal. It was also possible to obtain a commercially pre-stamped hessian backing which was hooked in the same manner as the others. No two alike, the results depended on materials available, and the skill of the maker. When the picture or design was finished, the mat was removed from the frame and finished off by sewing a "backing" of strong material, and an edging of fabric, or braid.

There was one other method of rug-making, much less common than braiding or hooking, which made use of recycled felt, mostly

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113 In Skye (as in many places in Scotland) my grandmother made use of opened out potato sacks to back home-made rugs. These sacks were also made of jute, the same as the ones usually referred to as "burlap" in Quebec.

114 Deposited in the National Museum of Civilization, 1976.

115 This is the case wherever they are made. See Ramsay Traquair, "Hooked Rugs in Canada", *Canadian Geographical Journal*, (May, 1943), pp. 240-254.

old or unwanted hats, cut into hundreds of pieces. It may, in fact, have been the innovation of a very creative Scotstown woman, Mrs. Matheson, whose daughter, Margaret, had several examples of her mother's handiwork, including a much-admired velvet embroidered crazy quilt, a great variety of other quilts, cushions, and rugs.

These particular rugs were made by cutting out hexagonal shapes, about two inches across, from felt hats; then two more groups of felt, the same shape and number, but approximately an inch and a half, and one inch across, respectively. Before the rug could be assembled, a great deal of sewing had to be completed. First of all, the one-inch pieces were centred on the inch-and-a-half pieces and finely hemstitched on; then these were centred on the two-inch pieces and hemmed in place. When each group of three hexagons had been joined together in this manner, they were all stitched together forming a pattern rather like a honeycomb [Plate 34]. After completion, this was backed with a strong material and bound around the edges. Though there were several examples of this type of rug in the Matheson home, I have not seen it elsewhere. Not only was it extremely time-consuming, and thus seemed to be an elderly woman's pastime, but also few people had the large amount of felt that was needed to make such a mat. Because of her local reputation as a fine craftswoman, however, Mrs. Matheson's neighbours and friends would save felt hats for her as they knew she would put them to good use.

Quilts and rugs were made long before anyone had heard of "recycling" materials; perhaps the word did not exist, but the concept was certainly part of the local value system. Regardless of who made use of hand-me-downs or the worn-out clothes, it was pleasing and satisfying to know they were not wasted, for the older generation abhorred waste of any kind. Occasionally the women joke about being "Scotch", meaning thrifty, although they would quickly correct anyone who confused thriftiness with meanness. The very suggestion would be enough to chill the atmosphere, for their entire approach to home-making is also characterized by hospitality and generosity.

Little has been said about the role of men in all of these crafts, for they were largely the work of women. From time to time, however, comments from the local men can be overheard, usually in the form of a compliment *about*, rather than *to*, one of the women—wife, mother, grandmother, sister, aunt, daughter—praising her skill and creativity. Sparing as such comments might seem—for the Scotch in Quebec are no more given to gushing compliments than their counterparts in the Old County—a sense of appreciation of the women's role in promoting aspects of identity within the home is still very evident.

CHAPTER 6

FOODWAYS OF YESTERDAY AND TODAY

And bless the hands that prepared it...[1]

A Well-Stocked Larder

> Tha sinn a' toirt taing dhuit, a Thighearna, air son na cothraman prìseil so tha thu buileachadh oirnn. Cuidich sinn air son a bhith dèanamh féum dheth. Cuir sinn air do chùram 's math ur peachdaidhean. Tha sinn toirt taing dhuit an diugh [bhith] comhla ri chéile...Air sgàth Chrìosd, gu sìorraidh, Amen. [Alex MacIver, August, 1992]
>
> *[We give thee thanks, oh Lord, for these precious gifts [opportunities] thou hast bestowed upon us. Help us to use them to thy glory. Keep us in thy care, and forgive our sins. We thank you today for [the blessing of] being together. For Christ's sake, forever, Amen.]*

With heads bowed and eyes closed, familiar words of thanks were solemnly spoken at every table, before and after the "breaking of bread". The custom for generations, even when there seemed little for which to give thanks, "asking a blessing" is, among the Eastern Township Scots, an integral part of mealtimes to this day. As the twentieth century draws to a close, very few tables are blessed in Gaelic, and no table is, by any stretch of the imagination, lacking in the gifts for which they duly give thanks.

After the unforgettable first winter of potatoes and oatmeal, the diet of the Scots settlers improved greatly. Not surprisingly, food preparation continued to be based upon traditional Hebridean practices, with modifications and inventions made out of the necessity to adapt to the climatic and agricultural conditions of Quebec. As already mentioned, fields and gardens were planted every spring with staple crops, and farmers not only kept their own animals and poultry for meat, but, as one would expect,

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[1] During my fieldwork of 1991—3, when I lived at the home of Ruth Nicolson, this was a prevalent phrase which was included in the mealtime blessings at Ruth's table. It was often repeated by guests in the middle of the meal when Ruth, a splendid cook and baker, produced another of her home-made dishes.

relied upon them for dairy products and eggs. All summer long they had a plentiful supply of milk, cream, butter, cheese and eggs, but, as winter approached, the supply gradually diminished, with cows going dry and hens moulting.

> They were laying eggs; but not too much in the wintertime. We had ducks, too.
> [Maryann Morrison, BEK 19:A]

While most families could get by with what milk they had during winter, there was never any surplus that could be made into cheese, or separated for butter-making. Butter, considered the more important, could be bought at a general store, but, if at all possible, families liked to have their own. Russell MacIver's family farm at Victoria was typical:

> Well the most we ever milked was seven, but we had a few young stock... We used to churn and make the butter and put it in the pound mould, push it in, put the wrapper on, [and sell it] sometimes. That's 25 cents a pound. What is it now, three or four dollars? ...Oh! It was the very best. They had a [cream] separator. Sometimes if we didn't have enough milk [to make it worth using the separator] we'd skim it, put it down in the cellar in a pail and skim it off, then churn it. [Then] oh, a little bit [we'd keep for winter], ...yeah, just salt it to taste. Of course it'd keep a lot better, and then they'd have a big crock and they'd put some in there for the winter. [Sept. 16, 1991]

At the height of summer there was always a reference to the long months of winter when there would be no cream to churn. If at all possible, families would try to preserve a reasonable amount, as it was used, not only at the table, but also for baking. "No margarine in those days, only the good butter." The women, who were largely responsible for all household concerns, would therefore make more than they needed during the summer's frequent churning days, and as often as they could, they would save a portion for the winter's supply, as Christie MacKenzie affirmed:

> Oh, that was put away in stone crocks, you know, just packed in.[2] Oh yes, it had to be salted to keep.[3]

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2 Hugh Cheape discusses the storage of butter in an earthenware crock, *crogain*, in Lewis during the nineteenth century. See "Pottery and Food Preparation, Storage and Transport in the Scottish Hebrides" in *Food in Change*, pp.111—121. He also remarks on the fact that a surplus of butter was made during the summer months at the sheiling.

> Towards fall, you know, when the cows would be practically going dry, [there would never be enough cream to churn], but there'd be crocks of that butter. But what we used in the summertime, when they were making butter just to use, it was made into prints, like. But we couldn't keep it like that; it had to be, eh, [salted in crocks]. Oh, about twenty pounds, like. They were big... So the oldest was on the bottom, but it always kept. 'Course it was saltier than you'd have it if you were just eating it right away. But it [kept fresh]... we never had any of it spoil. [BEK 16:A]

On farms where they milked more than one or two cows a day, there was, as Russell MacIver suggested, the opportunity of earning a little extra cash by selling either the butter or the cream. There were two creameries in the area, one in Stornoway and one in Milan, which made butter on a commercial basis from cream produced on farms in the area. Ruth Nicholson and her sister Bernice Laurila, whose father, Norman MacDonald, owned and operated the Milan creamery, recalled aspects of this small business. Extracted from fieldwork notes which were written as they spoke, the following is a composite account:

> Ruth:
> *Everybody around brought cream to the creamery and he made the butter, Mondays and Fridays. And it was open to the public where they could go and buy butter.
>
> Bernice:
> *And on Tuesdays he had to be there himself for the testing of the cream. He had to take a sample of every cream that came in. He took a special course for this in Montreal—while our mother was still alive. He did this himself with a special machine; a round machine that held about forty-eight of the little testing bottles, and it spun round really fast; he read the scale on the neck of the bottle. He had about fifty customers from the area. People used to come from all over, from the States they'd come up and buy butter because they said it was the best tasting butter you could buy. Most of it was packed in 56 pound boxes and sold. [August 11, 1992]

Angus Morrison recalled that their closest creamery operator was in Stornoway. The owner used to drive out to farms in Marsboro and then up to Cruveg to buy cream from the Morrison families

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[3] Writing in the *Stornoway Gazette*, Nov. 1993, James Shaw Grant discusses the fact that merchants in Stornoway bought in supplies of salted butter. It is clear from Grant's explanations that salted butter could last well over a year and still taste like "good butter". Its lifespan was considerably longer than a year, but they specified that any sold must be at least that "new".

who all had cream to sell. Angus's family kept it as fresh as possible by submerging the crocks in their "ice-cold brook" down below the house.

Refrigeration of milk was not considered as crucial as that of cream, since everyone had a liberal supply from the morning and evening milkings. Since a fresh supply was never more than a few hours away, families did not need to be overly concerned about keeping it "ice-cold" as today's taste dictates. If a day's milk turned sour during hot, humid or thundery days of summer, it was never wasted, being easily turned into *gruth* ("crowdie" in English, and similar, though not identical, to cottage cheese). The method is well-known among Scottish crofters, and is regarded as simple and straightforward since this kind of cheese does not need the addition of rennet.[4] A big pot of the sour, usually thick, milk was set on or near the coolest part of the wood-stove where it would gradually warm to blood heat. In the course of a few hours it would separate into curds and whey, and was then poured through a muslin-covered strainer or colander to catch the curds and let the whey drain into a second container. The latter was usually offered as a refreshing drink, or, if nobody wanted it, then it was fed to the dogs or pigs. When the curds were completely drained they were transferred to a bowl, where a little salt was added to taste, and then enough thick cream to moisten the somewhat dry curds, mixed thoroughly until a consistency was attained that would allow the *gruth* to spread easily but not appear runny. Although the *gruth* would keep fresh for a few days, the question of refrigeration did not generally arise, as it usually disappeared fairly quickly once the family sat down to the next meal of scones and *gruth*.

This was the only cheese which was described to me, though it is quite likely that some families would have used the techniques of cheese-making known to Lewis and Harris crofters, as they

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4 I.F. Grant refers to instances where rennet was added, and heat was not, therefore, necessary for crowdie. Op cit, p. 218.

would have been familiar with the methods involved.[5] A strong possibility is that most of the population began to rely upon a cheese factory set up earlier this century by a French family, les Dumoulin, at St. Leon, nine miles from Milan, which provided the local merchants with huge "rounds" of white cheese, similar to cheddar. Duncan McLeod recalls cutting the cheeses into wedges and selling them by the pound at the store. By the 1930s the St. Leon factory had closed, and until another French family in Megantic began to operate a *Fromagerie* named *La Chaudière,* in the 1960s, cheese was imported by the local storekeepers. The speciality of *La Chaudière* was, and still is, a mild curd cheese, which appeals to the taste of most Eastern Townshippers and is often chosen as a gift for former residents who return home for a visit—it has become the "local cheese" of French and Gaels alike.[6]

While farms produced much of their own food, everyone had to rely on the village store for certain basics such as tea, sugar, salt, spices, and other items they could not not grow or raise for themselves. There were several general stores in the villages which kept a stock of supplies to meet the modest needs of the settlers.[7] Since the days of buying and selling wood ashes, virtually all of them operated a barter system where the storekeepers would exchange or give credit on certain goods for which they in turn had another market.[8]

Stornoway, Marsboro, Scotstown, and Milan were the main centres for obtaining supplies. A familiar situation in most towns and villages, family-operated businesses were established during the early years, and the names of their owners became

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5 In *Crofters and Habitants*, p. 144, J.I. Little states that there was "no cheese reported".

6 Göran Rosande suggests that "visits 'home' after many years can reawaken a latent local or regional identity and perhaps even temporarily thrust aside a more recent one. In all probability it is possible to have two or even more regional identities." See "The 'Nationalisation' of Dalecarlia" in *Tradition and Cultural Identity*, p. 96.

7 J.I. Little gives useful details of the history of merchants in this area in *Crofters and Habitants*, pp. 166—171.

8 This was common in most rural communities. For a comparative account of the Gaels in the Codroy Valley, Newfoundland, telling how "the shopkeeper used to mark it down..." see *The Last Stronghold,* p. 85.

synonymous with local merchandising. Until the summer of 1993, the village of Milan had the longest-lived family-store in the area, the well-known "McLeod Bros", latterly owned and operated by Duncan McLeod [Plate 21].[9]

> Well, the store was started in 1877 by my grandfather. He had been in business over in the Winslow area, and when he heard that the Trans-Continental Railway was being extended from the Sherbrooke area east to [?this part] and when he knew that they were going to come through some area in the Milan area, he and another man went over there and staked out a claim to some land. He built a store and he built a home for his family, and also it was used for a number of years as a hotel and public rooms in Milan. That's when there was nothing but the railway going through there.

The McLeods were an enterprising family who served the community in various capacities for well over a century. In the late 1800s and early 1900s the part of the building that operated as an hotel was of vital service to travellers, as there was nowhere for miles around that a visitor could find lodgings for the night, except near the railway station in Milan, where there were two hotels: "McLeods' was the temperance, and the other one, MacIvers' had a license... it burned down just after the turn of the century." It is as a general store that everyone living in the county, whether Scotch, French or incomer, knows the sign **McLeod Bros.** Duncan McLeod's father, Norman M., operated the store until his death in 1967, when Duncan took over. A history of the store and the village of Milan can be found in McLeod's own book, *The Milan Story*.

One aspect of the store's work which is not recorded in Duncan McLeod's book, however, is the meticulous book-keeping that

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9 In August 1993 Duncan McLeod sold the property which consisted of a large country store, the top floor of which was the McLeod home. While I lived in Milan in 1976, Duncan was reducing the stock in order to wind down the business, with the eventual aim of retiring. An active, energetic, and enterprising individual, Duncan began trading in antiques, which not only kept him in business with fewer demands on his time, but also afforded him the opportunity of combining his interest in "old things" with his expertise in commerce. In closing out the business outdoor auctions were held to dispose of the stock. I recall seeing a bi-lingual auctioneer standing on a platform outside the store, and crowds from all over the Eastern Townships in attendance. Small wonder that Duncan McLeod is known the length and breadth of the entire area.

characterised the entire operation. Since Duncan himself was very much involved in this, he took it all for granted. He regarded it not just as part of the day's or week's work, but expected every store to operate with the care that was built into his own business. It is not surprising, therefore, that he skimmed over the details which still serve as a record, not only of the running of a village store, but also of many aspects of the lives of members of the community.

On August 12, 1992, I accompanied Duncan McLeod and his nephew to the store for the last time. It was the day they were making the final clearance of the last few items that had not already been removed on one of their numerous clearances prior to the sale of the building.[10] Although the "regular stock" had long since been dispersed, there were several articles which, at the very last moment, still told part of the story of the country store. Among the items lying on the original, forty-foot-long shop counter were a couple of bags of oakum once used to caulk between the logs of buildings, a few boxes of iron rock drills, pegs and wedges for splitting quarried stones, a baking-board (which he gave me), a fly-swatter, previously used signs from the shop and an old railway sign, **MILAN STATION**, which once hung on the platform near the shop, an old wooden ox yoke, and two buffalo coats, made of very thick buffalo skin complete with felted hair, and lined with wool-quilted flannel. The latter were so heavy I could hardly lift one without help. Last to be removed were two enormous ledgers, divided alphabetically with the biggest section under Mac, and showing three generations of hand-writing which followed the same pattern of book-keeping.[11]

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10 Photographs of the store and the last of the contents are deposited in the Photographic Archive of the School of Scottish Studies.

11 After the clearance of the store, Duncan brought me the account books, two tomes which he was about to burn in a bonfire but which he thought I might be interested in having a look at first. I quickly accepted his invitation, and subsequently asked him to consider depositing them in the Special Collections Room of Bishop's University Library, Lennoxville, as they will remain of interest to researchers of economic history and general information about Milan and the larger area of the township of Marston. [On Dec. 3, 1993 I telephoned Duncan and, in conversation, the subject of the ledgers came up; they were still in his home in Scotsown, and while they are destined for the library, he has been reading through

Since the ledgers themselves could form the basis of a thesis on economic history, I have selected only a few items to indicate prices of provisions in previous years, and also to complement reports from oral tradition about the exchange or barter system which operated.[12] While most customers paid cash whenever possible, credit was given at the store to virtually every family who, in turn, redeemed the debt as soon as they could. According to the entries, there was a seasonal pattern to the exchange of commodities such as pulp-wood, butter or eggs. From the householder's side, Christie MacArthur regarded specific commodities as being important to their household:

> We used to exchange butter and eggs, and even we used to pick strawberries [to bring to the store].... well, butter and eggs went in exchange for tea, and sugar and things like that. [BEK 14:A]

While money was scarce, the exchange system was part of the way of life. It seemed to work well, and those who participated in it considered it to be fair; as Christie MacKenzie put it:

> We were very well off; we were getting money for what you sell, you know... but everything was cheap. A pound of butter, when I was making butter, [years ago] I was selling it for ten cents a pound. It wasn't much going like now. Eggs, fifteen cents a dozen, or something like that. But we managed to live very good. [BEK 17:A]

The following brief excerpts from the accounts ledgers at McLeod's store give an idea of some of the items bought and their prices at the time:

<u>1927</u>	
15 lb salt	30 cents.
cake of cooking chocolate (8 oz)	30 cents.
<u>1928</u>	
1 pr mitts	$1.00
4.75 lbs haddock	48 cents
<u>1936</u>	
1 lb butter	28 cents
5 lbs sugar	30 cents.

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them at his leisure, now that he is free from the pressure of quick decision that is inevitable with clearances such as the one the previous August.]

12 I have chosen to ignore all names attached to records as it is not relevant to my work, nor is it necessary to expose family debts from another era.

1 pr shoes	$1.85
1 pr rubbers [overshoes]	60 cents.
half pound tea	33 cents.
3 glasses [i.e. tumblers]	48 cents.
1 cigar	10 cents.
1 bag oats (one bushel)	$1.35

The inclusion of the cigar is a reminder of a certain "fondness for tobacco" which has been commented upon over the centuries, since the days of Martin Martin.[13] While it is possible to grow tobacco in this part of Canada, the climate is not ideally suited to cultivation on a commercial scale. Nevertheless, several farmers managed to raise a few plants for their own use, which they then hung in an airy barn to dry. When needed it was cut with a tobacco cutter, an implement, which, to this day, can regularly be found in Eastern Township homes, or, as is increasingly the case, auction sales. More people kept cutters than grew tobacco, however, as the stores sold their imported Virginia tobacco unprocessed.

Alex MacIver, originally from Marsboro and now living in Sherbrooke, had a grandfather who was nicknamed "the Bugler". (This was the same individual already referred to by Alex as *"duine gun dùthaich"* because he had been born on the emigrant ship.) So great an impression did the old man's addiction to tobacco make on Alex's grandfather, that he not only told his children and grandchildren this story, but influenced their decision not to smoke:

> *The Bugler and his brother had to go after tobacco for the old man. His father, Iain Dhomhnaill Bhàin, used to smoke and he said "chaidh e mach as a cheann" *[he went out of his head]* without a smoke, so he sent the boys 17 miles for it, walking through the snow to Cailean Noble's store in Winslow—he kept it. The Bugler said they used to carry it half a mile and then stop. It was the leaf tobacco; people would cut it with a tobacco cutter at home. And none of them ever, ever smoked since. [Field notebook, August 5, 1992]

To this day, neither Alex's grandfather (the Bugler), nor his father, nor himself, ever smoked. Alex's only dealing with tobacco was

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13 Martin Martin, *Description of the Western Isles*, p. 91. See also, Donald MacDonald's more up-to-date reference to a fondness for tobacco, *The Tolsta Townships*, p. 26.

during a brief episode when he worked with the Railway company on a job where "they were ripping up floors and I had to chew tobacco on account of germs."

As Alex's story emphasises, only those who lived in the heart of the towns and villages could enjoy the convenience of proximity to a local merchant. While a day's outing to the nearest store could prove pleasant in autumn, in the depth of winter it could be positively dangerous. Little wonder, then, that towards the end of autumn one of the main concerns of every household was to procure supplies for the winter, as the vast majority of farms were too far away from the merchants to risk travelling. There could be as much as eight months of snow, several months of deep drifts, and a perpetual threat of "white-outs" from blizzards. Even towards the end of winter the risks were high, with thaws followed by sudden freezing temperatures adding to the many dangers. Farmhouses all had to be stocked with basic supplies to feed large families through more than half of the year, a situation which prevailed until the appearance of snow-clearing equipment after the Second World War.

At their home in Cruvag, the Morrison family prepared each year for a major expedition, as Maryann recalled:

> We'd go to the store that was ten miles from us. My husband had team of horses—we had a car [in later years], but when we first went there [it was always horses]... He'd go to Megantic in the fall, you know, before the winter sets in, and he would buy about, oh, about ten or eleven bags of flour—that's a hundred pound bag. And we raised buckwheat on the farm. They never saw buckwheat here in Montreal [where Eva and I live], they don't have it. We made pancakes like Jemima's.[14] But it's not the buckwheat that we used to have. We had barley flour; we had oatmeal flour; we had buckwheat flour... and beans, lots of beans. We used to buy beans by the bushel.
>
> Well, we had to have a—we had a closet in the house—it was for flour, and there was a—oh, the house we had at Marsboro there, it was a beautiful house; five rooms—my husband built that himself, five rooms upstairs. There was one closet for flour, bags of flour.

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14 Maryann jokingly refers to the widely advertised pancake mix, "Aunt Jemima's Pancakes", which has taken over from home-baking, especially in modern, urban homes. In 1992, it had not, however, gained any credibility in the Marsboro home of Marryann's son, Angus, as his wife still baked all their supplies from traditional recipes.

> [And we'd buy] a bag of sugar, a hundred pounds; but we used to get more than that,because you could go to Megantic with a—little sleighs, you know, horses and sleighs, and get what you wanted [if you ran out of anything]. And there was always a road across the way to Megantic.
>
> And molasses, great big jugs of molasses. They used to love the molasses—with beans. A gallon, but we didn't use it all but just on beans, that's all.
>
> We bought raisins, tea, sugar—a box of raisins, wooden, oh yeah, nothing but wood, and twenty pounds apiece.
>
> Tea—a box, wooden box. Oh, I suppose there would be ten, fifteen pounds [in it]. But we'd drink [sic] a lot of milk, you know. The children was all milk drinkers.
>
> But when we'd get out of little things like raisins, and tea, and sugar, they would go with a team, a little team, anytime. [BEK 19:A]

It might have been a slight exaggeration to suggest they could go *anytime*, for, even when a cautionary eye was kept on weather conditions, things could go suddenly wrong. In 1992, when well into his hundredth year, John MacKenzie from Marsboro recounted an unforgettable experience of just such a trip he had made as a young man:

> In the narrows between the two lakes, that's where the ice usually broke up in the winter. It would heave up in the middle, in the narrowest place on the lake. ...I remember going to Megantic with my mother... my father used to have some young horses, and one by the name of Polly, and he used to keep her in colts all the time ...He was working, and I was driving one of these colts, and my mother was going over, and we were going to bring my father home that evening. So when we got to the narrows in the lake, the ice had bursted up in the middle. So [in order to get through this], I'd have to get out of the sleigh and just hold on to the sleigh until the horse would break the [surface]. I'd have to get out and raise the sleigh out of the [hole and onto solid] ice [again]. I had my feet soakin wet and it was, oh, about three miles from there, till when we used to get to Megantic. And Malcolm Smith who was running the store in Megantic at that time—he had a game leg and he never kept any help in the store—and he never had anything in the store more than he had to. When we got there my feet were freezing in the wet socks. Of course I wrang them out, or my mother did, but they were frozen, still wet—they weren't dry! We got to Malcolm Smith's and he didn't have a stocking I could buy to put on dry. He just had the necessary things, just groceries and things... But that day, oh boy, did I suffer with cold feet! And all I could get [by way of relief] was get them off, wring them out, and put them back on. But before I got to Megantic on the sleigh and horse...boy, did I suffer with cold!
> [Nov. 13, 1990]

After he and Christie were married, they shared the winter food-shopping expeditions, no doubt with care taken not to repeat John's unforgettably cold feet. Reflecting the universal roles in every household, with the wife as home-maker and her husband as provider, Christie recalled the sort of list that formed their essential winter supplies. I have tried to recreate their spontaneity and interaction by including Johnnie's comments in italics. Christie began by contrasting today's diet with that of their first forty years of marriage, when all the Scotch people "used to buy a lot of herring, you know, the salt herring." Two thousand miles from the sea, and more than a century away from their crofter-fishermen forebears, the Quebec Gaels still regarded salt herring as an essential part of their diet.[15] While they occasionally included salt cod on the list,[16] there was always a keg of salt herring for the MacKenzies' comparatively small household of five. Most of the list was "dry ingredients", and although they had already taken their own grains to the grist mill, they still had to buy the flour they could not produce:

> We never raised wheat—*you wouldn't raise wheat in this part; the season's too short.* In the western provinces they raise it. Oh... we used to buy the wheat flour... I think a barrel. *Oh, it would hold two hundred, and two hundred and fifty pounds.* It would last the winter, with the barley and the buckwheat—*with other things.* The rest of the winter's supplies consisted of—not any more than tea and soda, and different things like that, you know. Oh, yes, and that's one thing they used to have in them years—green tea. I hated the taste of it! I do to this day, but some women were crazy about green tea. Oh the regular black tea, oh, five-pound packages would do us. We didn't use coffee as much as we did tea, but we used to have some. We used to have molasses. We used to have a, like, a twenty pound pail, wooden pail, a keg, they called it. We used to get that full of molasses. And oh, we used to get that full twice in the wintertime, in the stores in Milan. Raisins, once in a while, but they were a luxury. Sugar, yes, we used to have sugar, oh,

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15 I.F. Grant refers to the "monotonous diet" of fish and potatoes, including herring, as being characteristic of the nineteenth century. op cit, pp. 299—300. Most islanders would extend that statement well into the twentieth century, though far from regarding it as monotonous, they now lament the fact that herring is difficult to get, and "good salt herring" even more scarce. During my own childhood and adolescence on Skye there was always a barrel of salt herring in my grandparents' house, and it was still regarded as a staple in the 1950s and early 60s. Despite the drastic decline in the Scottish herring fishery, in the 1990s my mother and uncles still eat fish (usually herring or mackerel) once or twice a week.

16 Salt cod was easily obtainable from Newfoundland by the merchants.

> ten pounds at a time when I was growing up. 'Course when I was grown up, we used to buy a hundred pound bag. [BEK 16:A]

As one can imagine, such a shopping day was a major event in every household. The children expected to do their share of carrying in the supplies and helping to store them. Angus Morrison noticed that his mother had forgotten to mention a barrel or keg of fish— "Of course that was so long ago"—and concurred with the MacKenzies that salt herring and salt cod were an important part of their diet. Maryann did, however, say that they were always glad to have fish, and they occasionally caught local trout, although apparently not as often as she would have liked "because it was just little rivers, you know. But it was nice trout, they called it 'lake trout'. But they were small, but very sweet when you cook them." [BEK 19:A]

In the 1990s, the Morrisons continue to have trout on their weekly menu, as Angus and Mary's brother are now able to fish regularly from a well-stocked, artificial pond which the two families created a few summers ago. The making of man-made ponds has become a fashion of the 1990s, almost entirely carried out by French families, except for Angus who shares the hobby with his brother-in-law. He remarked how drastically times had changed, and as he reflected on the items his mother had included on her winter list,[17] Angus seemed pleased that she had included beans. Just as they are today, dried beans were generally baked in an earthenware crock with pork fat and molasses.[18] And whatever they ate for breakfast, dinner, or supper, there was always tea[19]:

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17 I sent him copies of the tapes I had made of his mother in 1976.

18 Scots settlers in Newfoundland also bought dried beans for the winter and baked them in this way. A fifty-pound bag is the quantity recorded; see *The Last Stronghold,* p. 85. The first time I ever encountered beans and molasses with salt fat-back pork was in 1967 in Newfoundland. Bean feasts were, and still are, popular in many parts of Canada, including the Eastern Townships, where they are held in the village hall.

19 I.F. Grant emphasises the importance of tea in the Highlands, "a universal drink" by the nineteenth century, and "in spite of the dire poverty of some of the crofters... they managed to buy and drink it." Op cit, p. 305—6 (erroneously cited in the index as p. 205).

> ...*barley flour*—min eòrna, *and oatmeal,* and pònair —*beans*—*gee whiz!* [laughs] A h-uile làtha! Biodh sinn ag obair anns a choille, ceithir bràithrean, trì bràithrean 's mi fhéin. Agus bhiodh sinn a' toirt ar dìnnear, dhan a' choille, ann am poca, 's mu mheadhon-làtha dheanadh sinn teine anns a' choille, agus dheanadh sinn peile té—... Oh, bha i math, an té; chuireadh sinn siucar innte, cha robh bainn' againn, oh, bha i math... Oh bha i laidir, bha i dubh! [Aug. 8, 1992]

> [...barley flour—*barley flour,* and oatmeal, and *beans*—beans—gee whiz! [laughs] *Every day! We would be working in the woods, four brothers, three brothers and myself. And we would take our dinner in the woods with us, in a bag, and about mid-day we would make tea in the woods, and we'd make a pail of tea—... Oh, it was good, that tea. We'd put sugar in it, there wasn't any milk, and oh, it was good... Oh, it was strong, it was black!]*

Tea is still the popular drink, and, just as in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, it is offered whenever visitors call.[20] While the outdoor brew in a pail[21] has lost none of its appeal to woodsmen, the tea-pot is still a feature of most kitchens, and often "loose tea" is used, even though short-cut methods of tea-bags in cups has taken over as the prevalent method with the majority of North American tea-makers. The social aspect of tea-drinking has retained its significance, and an occasion does not need to be "special" for china cups and saucers to be used. Many of the women regularly serve tea in the china cups, reserving their very finest bone china for any special occasion that arises. Most homes I visited had china that had been imported from Scotland, many, though by no means all, with tartan, clan crests, thistles and/or heather featured in the patterns. Not only is their fondness for china a reflection of "old world taste",[22] but the

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20 This was also my experience in the Codroy Valley and among Gaels in Nova Scotia, whereas in other parts of Canada and America, coffee is generally offered.

21 Marie Salton reminded me of the popularity among hill-walkers and campers in Scotland of the "Lyle's golden syrup tin" made into a tea-pail for picnics, by fixing a wire handle to the rim. The same importance of having tea is attached to this practice, as it is not simply the fact that participants need something to drink, otherwise water would suffice, without the extra effort and ingenuity. [In conversation, Nov. 1993] Roadmen and other manual labourers also tell of using syrup or treacle tins for tea-making.

22 Despite the fact that she grew up in a modest croft house on Skye, my grandmother, who was typical of her generation, was of the opinion that tea was at its best when served in china cups. The modern fashion of mugs never caught on in her household, or in the homes of her contemporaries,

actual choice of pattern continues to speak of Scotland to those who share in its use.

Angus Morrison's mention of beans as a regular part of the diet is in keeping with the experience of all households in the area, Scots and French alike. It is one item of food which both groups regarded as a staple, and which was (and is) prepared in a similar way throughout the area. This is borne out by the fact that each autumn, just after harvest, the community of Milan holds a "bean feast" to which all members are invited. Individual households provide the food, earthenware crocks of baked beans, and hot, fresh rolls. Apart from the fact that there will be individual differences from one cook to the next, no matter what is being prepared, the methods of cooking are basically standard: a quantity of dried "navy beans" are put into the bean crock and soaked in cold water overnight. (About two cups would serve a family of four to six people, and although that would be considered small, it will be used here to give an estimate of proportions.) In the morning, the swollen beans are rinsed, and covered with fresh water, or stock, and baked or simmered for about an hour. When they begin to get tender, the other ingredients are added: salt fat-back-pork (c. 6 or 8 ounces, diced finely), molasses (c. 4 tablespoons), mustard (c. 2 teaspoon), and in more recent years, a tablespoon or two of tomato puree. The mixture is stirred thoroughly, more liquid is added to cover the beans, and the crock is returned to the oven and baked slowly for another six to eight hours. It must be checked every so often to add a little water if the beans show any signs of drying out.

Both the French and the Scots regard home-baked beans[23] as "local", and every sense that is true, as they are recorded in the

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judging by the number of individuals who give similar accounts of family attitudes.

23 Tinned beans in tomato sauce, so common all over Britain, are *not* part of the regular menu. I have encountered several people who have never tasted them, and who express an aversion to trying, seeing no point, when the "real beans" are such an important part of the diet. Very few Scottish texts appear to discuss the cultivation or preparation of beans. A. Fenton refers briefly to Lord Belhaven's 1699 description of Lowland gardens that included "a few 'Turkie beans' and ordinary beans and peas to go with

observations of Jacques Cartier who reported luxurious crops grown by the Indians in the sixteenth century.[24] Nowadays several varieties of beans are grown, such as string or runner beans (set beside a frame to support them during growth), French or kidney beans (free-standing, like small, low bushes), and, to a lesser extent, broad beans, all of which are usually eaten fresh or bottled, (nowadays frozen) and are never referred to simply as "beans".[25] That term is reserved *only* for baked beans, while other varieties are always described with an adjective, such as "green", "yellow", "waxed" or whatever is appropriate to the legume.

The assimilation of dried beans into the diet undoubtedly dates back over many years, probably to the first generation of settlers who found that they were readily obtainable, kept well, were relatively easy to prepare, and, served with fresh bread, made a nutritious, economical and complete meal for the family. There seems little doubt, however, that around the turn of the century this item of food was still regarded as "outside" the food repertoire of the Scots, and more characteristic of their American neighbours in the New England states. It was not uncommon for young people to venture into this part of America to look for work—for example, Christie MacArthur went as a teenager in response to the invitation of a relative who knew someone looking for young women to work "in service".[26] It is highly likely that recipes were brought back from the States, and found an

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pork" but gives no indication what either variety was, nor how they were cooked. See *Scottish Country Life*, p. 72. Reference is also made to beanmeal in Scotland, though I did not encounter it in Quebec. Op cit, p. 179.

24 Vicki Peterson, *The Natural Food Catalogue*, pp. 72—73. For an informative, general discussion of legumes, see pp. 66—84. I am grateful to Percy and Jean Burnard for introducing me to this book and for lending it to me.

25 For an brief, comparative discussion on methods of cooking beans, see Maria Kundegraber, "Plants and Herbs as a Food of the People: An Example from West Steiermark, Austria" in *Food in Perspective*, p. 174.

26 BEK 14. This was very similar to the pattern established between the Highlands and Islands of Scotland and the cities of Edinburgh, Glasgow, London, etc. when a large number of young women spent several years "in service" as domestics in "big houses" before returning to their native area. Some inevitably remained in the city, only to return home on holiday.

established place in the food patterns of the Scots. This idea is also suggested by Eastern Township poet and satirist, Angus Mackay, better known by his pseudonym "Oscar Dhu", who wrote a song entitled "Guard the Gaelic" about the loss of the Gaelic language which has the following verses:

> Lads and lasses in their teens
> Wearing airs of kings and queens,
> Just the taste of Boston beans[27]
> Makes them lose the Gaelic.
> They come back with finer clothes
> Speaking Yankee through their nose
> That's the way the Gaelic goes,
> Pop! goes the Gaelic.[28]

Written in the first decade of the twentieth century, Oscar Dhu's song had a prophetic quality in its amusing rhyme. The idea of young Gaels leaving for a short time and returning with no pride in their mother tongue was of deep concern to Oscar Dhu, as it has been to many others. He sensed that language loss was not far away from a people who, in their attempts to better their situation might, without even considering the effect, embrace aspects of other cultures, such as food, fashion and language, while subconsciously denying their own. Today the language is all but gone, and beans are regarded as so characteristically "local" that when absent members of family return on annual holidays, at least one day will be chosen to have home-baked beans on the menu. For them, a visit "home" would be considered lacking without the foods assiciated with family roots in the Eastern Townships, for these familiar meals are important symbols of identity.[29]

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27 Boston is known as "bean-town". Traditional stories in America credit the Indians with introducing the Pilgrim Fathers to beans during their first winters in the New World. It is acknowledged that without the kindness of the native peoples who gave them dried beans to see them through, many would not have survived.

28 Recorded from Donald Morrison in Scotstown, October 1976, BEK 7:B. He sang fourteen verses, and told me that the song was also called "Oscar Dhu's exortation to the Gaels" and was published in *By Trench and Trail* which was a very popular book among the Scots. See op cit, pp. 114—115. Unfortunately I will not be able to discuss the entire song in this thesis, but will include Donald Morrison's text in Appendix F.

29 Göran Rosander discusses the question of "territorial identity", op cit, p. 96, and suggests that in all probability it is possible to have two or even more regional identities."

Baking

With every household well stocked for winter, only Sundays went by without the housewife's hands in the baking pan, turning out bread and scones as part of the daily fare. The Morrison household of fifteen was not unusually large in those days, (Christie MacKenzie was one of fifteen children[30]) and, as Angus confirmed, the kitchen was always busy:

> Bha trì duine deug againn... bha teaghlach mór aca—chan eil iad mar siud an diugh... Nam biodh aon *cent* agamsa airson a h-uile sgona a dh'ith mi, bhithinn beairteach; bhiodh airgead gu leòir agam a' dhol dhan t-Seann Dùthaich deich uairean sa bhliadhna... Oh bhiodh gu dearbh! [laughs] Cha robh mo phàrantan, mo mhàthair a' ceannach bid aran; bha i a' dèaneamh briosgaidean, sgonaichean, sgonaichean aran flùr gheal, sgonaichean aran eòrna, sgonaichean—A h-uile làtha. Aug. 8, 1992]
>
> *[There were thirteen of us [children]... they had a big family—not like people today... If I had one cent for every scone I've eaten, I'd be rich; I'd have enough money to go to the Old Country ten times a year... O yes indeed! [laughs] My parents weren't, my mother didn't buy any bread whatsoever; she was making biscuits,*[31] *scones, white flour scones, barley flour scones, scones—every day.]*

Angus's wife, Mary, who still makes scones frequently, recalled her mother-in-law's busy kitchen, and remembered from her own years there that Maryann "had the knack of getting them to help her". The oven was in use daily, some days with scones (though most were made on the top of the stove), other days with bread, for it was all part of the week's work, as Maryann recalled:

> I made plenty of bread, kneading it with my hands. But one of my boys, [Roddy]—oh, he died a long time ago—when he got up in the kitchen he was making the bread for me. He wasn't married then—I have his picture right here. We had yeast, Royal Yeast; it was sold like that, in a box.[32] Just, well, put it in

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30 See also Bill Lawson, op cit, which gives the list names of children in all the emigrant families, confirming that large families were the norm.

31 Angus is referring here to what Canadians call "baking powder biscuits" which, in Scotland, are called "plain scones". The other scones he mentions are, as will be described later, much flatter than those they call "biscuits".

32 That Maryann should recall the use of yeast over all of this century indicates that the local merchants had access to supplies. In contrast to this situation, the Scots settlers in the Codroy Valley, Newfoundland, used a leavening mixture of hops and boiled potatoes, as they had no yeast for

> the water, let it melt, and put three or four quarts of water in that, and lots of flour. But that was twice a week.
>
> The bread was left to rise overnight, and in the morning—many's the time I got up through the night to turn it down. Well... the house was warm; we had three stoves in it, that house. Very warm... Covered with a blanket, we could keep everything warm like that. You have to let your yeast get up. Turn it in the morning, and then you can turn it in your pans after. I used to make big pans of them, buns.... My husband took the measure of the oven I had to the tinsmith, and he made pans big enough for my oven. So that would be quite a big pan, just one pan. I had everything very comfortable. [BEK 17:A]

The tinsmith, who lived in Megantic, was French-Canadian, while Gaelic was, of course, the language of the Morrison home. The term "language barrier", so frequently used today, was unknown to them, as the Gaels and French dealt with each other quite naturally. Both groups learned words and phrases as they went along, indicating that even the concept of language barrier was not an issue.[33] In a case such as Maryann's bread pans, the measurements and monetary amounts were written down to avoid confusion:

> What he would do, you know, he'd wait for figures he wanted, and they'd copy them. My husband could understand a little French, but not much.

Quebec's Hebridean kitchens are well known by Scots and French alike for turning out a variety of scones made with white flour, whole wheat flour, rolled oats, oatmeal, or a combination of

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baking (or brewing) until well after the First World War. See M. Bennett, *The Last Stronghold*, p. 87 for the recipe which is very similar to the method quoted by C.P. Traill, *Backwoods*, Appendix A, p. 256 (new edition).

33 The tendency today is to assume that English was the common language in every aspect of commerce; this was not, however, the case, as a large proportion of the Lewis, Harris and Uist immigrants were monoglot Gaelic speakers. Throughout his book, *Crofters and Habitants*, J.I. Little seems unable to deal with the question of language in an objective manner, as he makes frequent references to Gaelic as foreign while French is assumed to be acceptably native. While the latter idea may be quite valid in the late twentieth century, it is unfortunate that a book which is presented to the reading public as a seminal work on this part of Quebec displays such language bias. Having chosen to present his text in English, Little includes quotations in French *without* English translation, yet he uses *only* English translations from Gaelic originals, giving a clear impression to his reader that Gaelic is foreign while English and French are not. Most unfortunate of all is the fact that he projects a personal prejudice against the Gael, which is not only irritating to the reader but reflects very poorly on the writer.

any two. A wholesome accompaniment to any meal, some are made in the oven, though most are made directly onto the top of the stove or occasionally on a griddle. Although individual recipes vary tremendously, they usually consist of flour, salt, a small amount of sugar, baking soda, and sour milk. If fresh milk is used, the baking soda is replaced by baking powder. Most recipes are not written down, though in recent years numerous parish cookery books have included a number of different scone recipes contributed by the women of various church groups.

Once a daily feature of every Highland and Island table—I.F. Grant notes that "all self-respecting housewives became expert in baking scones"[34]—not surprisingly, scones are considered in Quebec to be the most characteristic food of that ethnic group. To one who has been brought up on scones in the Old Country, however, there are notable differences: the local terminology varies from that used in Scotland, and the Eastern Township scones are, almost without exception, much thinner than the ones baked in Scotland. Even a more recent immigrant such as Annie Morrison from Back, Lewis, who was a war bride,[35] has adopted the Quebec style of making scones. She no longer makes the thicker ones she was accustomed to in Lewis, for, as she pointed out, people *expect* them to be fairly thin, (about the thickness of a coarse oatcake in Scotland) and not resembling what Canadians call "tea biscuits" or "baking-powder biscuits".

There is also the question of differences between Canadian and British flours, clearly, if accidentally, demonstrated to me by my mother who lived in Canada from the mid to late 1960s. Brought up on croft on Skye, where scone-making was also part of the day's work, she would scarcely acknowledge that she is a very good "traditional baker", taking for granted her successes in the

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34 Op cit, p. 306.

35 The experiences of Canada's "war brides" is discussed in Peggy O'Hara's book, *From Romance to Reality*. The adjustments that most of the women had to make were enormous and wide-ranging, from the smallest details of domestic practice to major social changes that were suddenly expected of them in the new land.

kitchen, and regarding this as "second nature".[36] I recall her dismay in Canada, however, at her repeated "failures" of batch after batch of scones, each made more carefully than the last, "exactly as Granny made them". They turned out flat no matter what she did, and my assurance that they were just as tasty as ever seemed more irritating than convincing. Eventually she reported home her lack of success at scones, which she attributed to "losing her touch". Her father, a crofter all his life and a keen reader, told her to take heart, as no-one should expect family recipes to have the same result unless a similar sort of flour was used. When she insisted she was still using "ordinary flour" he pointed out that what they were accustomed to was milled from British wheat, whereas she was surely using flour from Canadian wheat, which has a higher gluten content. His advice was to ask the local women or buy a Canadian recipe book, which would give suitable proportions of flour to raising agents and ensure success.[37] What she also needed to learn from the local women was that her recipe would be found under "biscuits" in the index—another strange idea to the immigrant who was accustomed to reserving that term for an item much less common in her youth, the hard, crunchy, usually sweet treat which has now taken over from the daily scones. Those, as we quickly found out, are "cookies" in Canada: yet another example of the immigrant's continuous process of acculturation.

In 1976, during one of my visits to the home of Harvey and Hilda MacRae in Gould, near Scotstown, Hilda was comparing some observations she had made while on a visit to the home of her forebears in Lewis. An active, energetic octogenarian, Hilda was well known in the district, as she had been the French teacher at the English-speaking school in Scotstown. Fluently tri-lingual, her

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36 In a discussion about cooking and baking, Mairi Salton remarked to me that the English girl is a "good, plain cook", whereas the Scots girl is "born with a rolling pin under her oxter [armpit]", that is, a baker by instinct. [Dec. 1993.]

37 The leading flour companies produced their own recipe books, and in some areas sponsored radio programmes, which gave a range of recipes while encouraging home-bakers to use their recommended product. For example, *Cream of the West* and *Robin Hood* flours both produced "tested and tried" recipes that remained popular for decades.

mother tongue was Gaelic, which she could also read and write. On her visit to Lewis, Hilda took every opportunity she could to enjoy daily conversations with third and fourth cousins whom she met. While she related colourful anecdotes about her trip of a lifetime, Hilda was preparing tea and scones for her company. She expressed disappointment, however, that most of the homes she visited in Lewis had come to rely on the local baker, or even supermarket, for their scones, and was surprised that they had not retained the pattern of frequent baking that characterized virtually all the Scotch homes in the Eastern Townships. She spoke of language loss in Quebec (a subject which will be discussed later in this study), identified symptoms in Lewis which raised her anxiety, and remarked upon the fact that modern times very rapidly and insidiously change traditional ways. Hilda was not, by any means, stuck in the past; she very much believed in progress. She was quite clear in her mind, however, that the Isle of Lewis was not immune from the sort of drastic changes in native culture which had hit the Gaels in Quebec: one need only spend some time in a Lewis kitchen, and compare the food preparation of today's generation to that of their parents. As far as Hilda could see, Lewis had undergone a culinary revolution which prompted her to contemplate the possibility that Quebec might follow suit. As far as world affairs are concerned, the subject of home-baking which initiated the discussion may be regarded as relatively insignificant. It was not simply the item of baking, whether scones for the Scots, soda-bread for the Irish, or croissants for the French that was the issue here. It was, rather, the value of the accompanying time and effort required to retain that item as an aspect of tradition. Astutely observant and analytical, Hilda's example of this one issue, and her ability to relate it to the rest of her traditional heritage, reaches the heart of the work of the folklorist. In the words of Thomas and Widdowson:

> The study of folklore is not the study of the past, though it necessarily includes it; rather it is as much the examination of the operations of tradition, from historical development of items, the stability and change they demonstrate, to matters of

> transmission—of items, of course, but especially of their meaning, [and] of the values they purvey...[38]

Considering the baking of scones as an aspect of traditional culture which characterised Scottishness to most of her generation, Hilda found it unthinkable that perhaps the younger generation in her native Quebec would also give up. Had she lived long enough to see the 80s and 90s, Hilda would have been heartened to find that most of the Scotch women, including her daughter, Miriam, adhere to many of the older ways, and there are still no "boughten" scones to be had.

Whether or not they are conscious of it, the preparation of food is one of the few remaining aspects of community life over which descendants of the Hebridean immigrants still have a significant element of control. For as long as they cook and bake according to traditional "Scotch" recipes, they assert a form of ethnic and cultural identity which is easily recognised by all members of the community, both inside and outside the group.

Aside from fulfilling the function of affirming identity, the preparation of food is also extremely important in every social situation: household visits, quilting bees, church socials, communion seasons, harvest or other calendar celebrations, to mention some of the list. Polish scholar Zofia Szromba-Rysowa raises this point in her article, "The Social Aspect of the Popular Diet in Poland ..." and suggests:

> In every society diet fulfills many functions and serves, among other things, to establish and preserve social relationships; it was governed by customs and ... had a significant social aspect as it played an important role in hospitality, [and in] the strengthening of social position...[39]

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38 Gerald Thomas and J.D.A. Widdowson, introduction to *Studies in Newfoundland Folklore: Community and Process,* p.xxii. My square brackets; the complete paragraph is already discussed in my introduction to the thesis.

39 See Zofia Szromba-Rysowa, "The Social Aspect of the Popular Diet in Poland with Special Consideration of Eating Customs and Nutritional Prescriptions and Proscriptions" in *Food in Perspective*, p. 267.

In 1976-77, and during the summers of 1991 to 1993, I experienced the reality of these functions, as I enjoyed the products of several kitchens, mostly in the two homes which were my bases for the more recent fieldwork, that of Muriel Mayhew in Lennoxville,[40] and of Ruth Nicholson in Milan. The baking of scones, for example, needed no special occasion;[41] it was usually prompted by the depletion of the previous batch. As is the case with most home-baking, however, the anticipation of visitors was an added incentive to have "freshly baked" ones for that day. In both houses, I was not the "visitor" as I was staying there, but could observe the household planning arrangements for everyday activities and for visitors.

Baking scones always began with routine kitchen preparations, such as making sure the surfaces were cleared, then getting out utensils and the baking-board, usually referred to as "breadboard". I had considered this item to be more a feature of pre-war households in Scotland, for, within my own post-war lifetime, only my grandmother in Skye, and our school cookery classes in Stornoway, used baking-boards. The modern kitchen, with its emphasis on ample counter space with surfaces like formica, has largely dispensed with the need for them. It was interesting to notice, however, that although Muriel had lived in a modern house in Lennoxville since the late 1940s, the baking-board was still regarded as part of the procedure, and was placed on top of the kitchen counter. [see Plate 34] In Ruth's house, built at the turn of the century and retaining most of its characteristics, the kitchen featuring hand-made pine dressers, stone sink in the corner,[42] a wood-stove, and table in the centre of the room, the

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40 Lennoxville which adjoins the town of Sherbrooke is regarded as the main centre for English-speakers of the Eastern Townships. Even since my first visit in 1976, much has changed; very little is visibly "English" as Quebec's unilingual legislation has resulted in all public signs being changed from English into French. Bishop's University, my main reason to be in Lennoxville, has also become much more French in its curriculum. The village of Milan is approximately fifty miles from Lennoxville.

41 A series of photographs of both women is deposited in the School of Scottish Studies Archive.

42 In the winter of 1992—3, Ruth's son, who lives in Montreal, speaks only French to his children, and uses English only when he goes "home", began to make "improvements" to his mother's kitchen. He started with the sink,

baking-board held its original function, and was placed on top of the kitchen table, the traditional site for all her baking activities.

Using traditional family recipes which are written down only if someone asks for a note of the ingredients, the women display the same "second nature" attitude to baking which was once common in every Hebridean home. Although it would be a straightforward matter to formulate recipes according to the standard technique used in recipe books (a list of ingredients followed by the method), such as both women do for "other recipes" they have gathered over the years,[43] for the purpose of this study I will give only two examples set in the normal context in which recipes were traditionally learned.

Having watched her on many occasions, I tape-recorded Ruth immediately after two baking sessions in July, 1992. Apart from the addition of titles to make the recipes more accessible to the reader, and minimal addition of words and phrases for clarity [in square brackets], the recipes are presented in Ruth's words.

Wholewheat Scones

> The recipe? Well, I used two and a half cups of whole-wheat flour and one and a half cups of white to make four cups—that makes it easier for me to measure the soda and my salt. I put two level teaspoons of soda and maybe oh, a teaspoon of salt, and I put about three tablespoons of shortening and rub it

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which he removed and replaced with a stainless steel one, sunk into a small counter-top, as large an area as the allocated space would allow. When I returned in the summer of 1993 and immediately noticed the "improvements". I attempted to conceal my disappointment by commenting "well, a good thing he didn't touch your beautiful pine dressers." Ruth added "not yet."

[43] Ruth keeps a small file box of 3 x 4 inch cards, and writes down new recipes in the standard way. Although she knows many of them off by heart, she still brings out her box when making cookies, brownies, or puddings, just to make quite sure she has them correct. On the cards she also notes modifications, such as "use less sugar". For a broader discussion on the subject, see Edith Hörandner, "The Recipe Book as a Cultural and Socio-Historical Document" in *Food in Perspective*, pp. 119—144. Ruth's recipe box, by way of contrast, may give very little evidence of her ethnic origins as she mainly records non-traditional recipes. It does, however, confirm the importance of food preparation in her household, as many of them have evidence from the baking-board on them, testifying to their frequent use.

in...No [special kind—any] lard would do, you know, just what makes them tender...And I put about a tablespoon of sugar in—it takes [away] the strong taste of the wholewheat. Then around two cups of sour milk; if you have buttermilk or sour milk—I use the powdered milk for two cups [nowadays] and I pour vinegar in [to turn it sour]... [When we were up at the farm] we had our own cows then, and I'd have my own sour milk then, or sometimes I had buttermilk, 'cos I made butter too then... Oh, the *bainne goirt*, [sour milk] yeah, I haven't thought of that for a long time, the *bainne goirt*. But anyway you put all that in and just mix it up till, you know, not too soft, and not too stiff, and I put the whole thing on the breadboard, and I don't know if I can describe it—[But you floured it first?] Oh, yes, you have to, yes, and roll out. You cut off [a portion from the mass of dough] and you'd roll out. [Kneading it is] not necessary if you haven't got it too soft. And you cut a strip off [the rolled out portion] about three inches, and then I roll it out to flatten it out and cut it into various sizes, square, whatever.

[How thick?] Oh, for wholewheat, a little bit thicker than other things, [about one third of an inch] sometimes—this is through experience. And then ... I put them on the [top surface of the wood-]stove, but not too hot, as flour burns so quickly, and I turn them over and get them browned on the other side, and then I can put them [further] back so I can get more [to fit], so I have the whole batch on the stove, on the top of the stove.

[Making scones was learned at home, but] not from my mother; I don't remember her making them, [because she died when I was 13] but my grandmother—it would be my grandmother... Well, I don't know if she hit them with the knife to see if they were cooked. [Ruth always tapped them with the blunt side of a knife to hear if they made the "right'" sort of noise, indicating that they were cooked—a more hollow noise than one raw inside.]... [And they were always on the top of the stove], oh, of course...and it keeps me warm. [You could bake them] on the electric griddle; it's slower, 'cos you haven't got the space, [and you also have to bake] them a little bit longer. [July 29, 1992]

Even on a hot summer day, Ruth adheres to her traditional method of baking on top of the wood-stove. She opens the outside door that leads from her kitchen onto the verandah, and the back door into the wood-shed, leaving two opened, screened windows, and the airy, screen doors shut to keep out the flies while allowing a cooler air to circulate and cool down the hot kitchen. Nevertheless, the temperature rises considerably, and Ruth is more likely to make jokes about people who "can't stand the heat in the kitchen" than take out her electric frying pan.

Baking day seldom means that only one item will be made. It is not unusual for a second batch of a different variety of scones to be baked, along with "something to fill the cookie-jar." Universally popular are oatmeal scones, made with what we call "rolled oats" or "porridge oats" in Scotland.[44] The baker generally uses a ratio of white or wholewheat flour to oats, and then procedes using a similar method, but rolling them slightly thinner than wholewheat or white scones. Again, they are baked on the top of the stove or griddle. Ideally, fresh butter and home-made jam are served with scones, and, while the former is seldom seen nowadays, many women still make jam.

While wheat, barley flour, and also oatmeal were used in scones, buckwheat flour was generally made into two varieties of pancakes. The Gaelic-speaking Scots had their own name for them, *slapaichean* in Gaelic, and buckwheat slaps (or "slabs"[45]) in English. Only one kind of them was categorized as "baking" while the other, which will be discussed separately, is more in the category of cooking as it is part of a main meal. Christie MacKenzie, as one might expect, had no written recipes, but made them as she had learned in her mother's kitchen. The first method she described produced a thick pancake which would be eaten for breakfast or a small meal:

> We always made the slaps, you know—the buckwheat slaps [directly] on top of the stove. And some make them with sour milk in the frying pan; sort of a cake, like, and cut it in four. Well it would be eh, thicker than a pancake, and it would be the size of the frying pan. Then you turned it out on a plate and you cut it in four quarters.
>
> Well, there's the soda, and the salt, and the sour milk. By golly, I don't know how much buckwheat. It would be

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44 I have asked several people about oatmeal, and to make certain they knew what I was describing, brought a quantity of medium cut and of fine oatmeal from Scotland. Only the very oldest people were familiar with it; Christie and John MacKenzie had seen it, as had Christie MacArthur, all born towards the end of the nineteenth century. They were also familiar with *aran corca* made from the Scotch oatmeal, but had not seen it in Quebec for many years. To everyone else, "oatmeal" meant rolled oats. In the Codroy Valley, however, the winter's supply list included a "hundred-pound sack of coarse Scotch oatmeal." See *The Last Stronghold,* p 85.

45 In a discussion about the word in July 1994, Ruth had difficulty in deciding whether it should be with a "p" or a "b"—"I never thought about it before.". She finally settled on *slaps*, which is closer to the sound of the word.

> according to the amount you were making![46]
>
> [My mother] used to make a stack like that [about nine inches] on the plate. There was eight or nine or ten of us around the table for every meal, you know. We used to have them for supper, mostly. Well, sometimes we used to have maple syrup, and sometimes molasses. [BEK 16:A]

Although she also describes the other type of *slapaichean,* they will be dealt with later, after the activities of "baking day" have been completed.

As far as the cookie-jar and cake-tins are concerned, most ofthe women keep recipes which have become favourites over the years, and are usually acknowledged to be from a general recipe book, a magazine article, newspaper feature, radio programme, or from a friend. A wide variety of such goodies can be encountered at any social gathering, and usually they are regarded the way a dessert might be—to be eaten after the more substantial offerings, in this case, scones. The only recipe among them to be considered "Scotch" is shortbread, which is encountered with a range of individual differences, just as it is in the Old Country. Local experts will discuss the merits of using all butter, as opposed to margarine or half-and-half, and despite the extra expense, will opt for butter if their recipe calls for it. Since no other recipe in this category is regarded as "traditional", none will be included here. It is, however, true to say that the preparation and serving of a range of different baked goods at any social occasion, including unusual items that are new to family and friends, is considered characteristic of the Scotch hospitality.[47]

Buckwheat Slaps and Pork

In any discussion remotely connected with food, it is almost inevitable that the subject of buckwheat slaps will come up, such as during this conversation with Russell MacIver. We had just been talking about hunting, then crop farming, when Russell lit up with enthusiasm:

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46 Ruth's recipe follows, giving amounts.

47 See Z. Szromba-Rysowa, "The Social Aspect of the Popular Diet in Poland..." cited above.

Russell: Buckwheat pancakes, that was a great feed! Did you ever have any?

MB: I did. I had them at Ruth Nicholson's. She'd cover the top of the stove with them.

Russell: Yeah. My, they're good. My father was a crackerjack at making them. He'd make, he'd fry up pork steak and venison steak together, and that gravy, you can't get that taste any more. I don't know why, but you don't get it.

MB: And you'd have that with buckwheat pancakes?

Russell: Yeah. You'd have two plates on the table stacked this high [indicates c. 4 inches high] and stacked that high. Oh, some of the fellows could eat an awful pile! [laughs]
MB: They were making up for starvation days!

Russell: I guess so. 'Course my mother was, I suppose, just as good as him, and my two sisters; Gordon, my brother, is good; I'm fairly good myself at it.
[Sept. 16, 1992]

As part of the main meal of the day, buckwheat slaps were made in a different manner to the pancakes described by Christie, and were always eaten with fried pork, or pork and venison, as Russell said. There would be no potatoes with the meal,[48] as the buckwheat slaps were eaten in place of them. Christie continues:

> You make them with water—the soda, and the salt, and water instead of sour milk. And you cook them like a couple of tablespoons on top of the rim of the stove, you know. You turn them... And with pork chops they are delicious.

To describe the activity or the recipe out of the context of the actual situation does not, however, give any real impression of the production of *slabaichean*, as the older people call them.[49] Had I not watched the procedure, I would have had no idea of the agility required of a cook who has to co-ordinate his or her work while making such a meal for family or friends. This was demonstrated for me by Ruth Nicholson of Milan whom I watched several times. [Plate 36]

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48 Just as in Scotland, so it is in Quebec: dinner is not dinner without potatoes, as far as the descendants of the Gaelic settlers are concerned. This is the *one* exception, however, as potatoes are never served with buckwheat slaps.

49 The issue of *context* in folkloristics has been widely discussed by many scholars. For a fuller discussion see A. Dundes, "Texture, Text, and Context", *Southern Folklore Quarterly*, 28 (1964), pp. 251—265.

Preparations and accurate timing are all important, for once the slaps are ready to be made, there is not a moment to stop for anything else. The pork is cooked first, usually in a frying pan, then the wood-stove is made ready for the fast and ever-watchful cook to pour the thin batter onto its smooth, hot surface, enough to make slaps about the size of a saucer or small tea-plate. Having covered the complete stove, about thirty inches in width, the cooking starts to be reminiscent of a relay race, as it is time to go back to turn the first one immediately after pouring the last one. No sooner is the last one turned than the first one has to be removed. With the family or guests seated at the table, the cook stands at the stove, and occasionally darts towards the table to replenish the serving plates. The work of pouring, turning and removing continues with perfect co-ordination until all is complete, and several piles of buckwheat slaps and a large platter of fried pork grace the table. Only then can the cook sit down and join the company who will have already started on the first ones she prepared.

Recorded on July 29, 1992, after she had cooked and served a meal for four guests, Ruth herself describes the procedure. At this point, a complete transcription of the conversation is given so as to give the clearest impression of what took place. The order in which the stages of the procedure are discussed is not, as the reader will notice, in the exact order that they took place; rather than a step-by-step set of instructions, they represent a re-tracing of the steps with some comments given along the way:

MB: I'm with Ruth Nicholson in Milan, and we've just eaten the most delicious meal of buckwheat slaps and rinds of pork. [We also had fried pork-chops.] What do you call the salted fat-back pork when you cut it up and fry it up?

Ruth: *Cnaoiseagan* is what I call them.

MB: Is that what the old people called it?

Ruth: I think that's what the old people, well there was such a thing, and I always think that's what the *cnaoiseagan* was.

MB: They cut up the pork fat and fried it till it was all rendered?

Ruth: Hm hm.

MB: Delicious.

Ruth: Yes, it's good.

MB: Now, the buckwheat pancakes, or *slabaichean*, how did you make them?

Ruth: Shall I give you the amount I made tonight?

MB: Yes.

Ruth: Well, I used two cups of buckwheat flour and, oh I put a heaping tablespoon of white flour in, I don't know if it's necessary, but I used to put it in the other kind of buckwheat, and salt... maybe salt to taste, you know.

MB: About a quarter, or less than a quarter teaspoon?

Ruth: Oh, it was more than that, for that amount.

MB: More like a teaspoon [from what I noticed].

Ruth: Yes, and I can't tell you how much soda because I added some soda to it because it didn't have the green tinge to it, so—

MB: When you put the baking soda in was it a teaspoon or two?

N: It was about a teaspoon at first.

Ruth: Yea, at first, almost anyway, and then a little bit more, but not too much because then you taste the soda.

MB: When do you begin to see the green tinge?

Ruth: After you put it on the stove, I don't know, I haven't made it in so long I've forgotten.[50]

MB: And then when you mix up the flour and the soda and the flour and the salt—and you did this in a[n aluminium] pan with a handle on it

Ruth: Well, it's easier to handle, unless you had it in a pitcher; I never do, but—

MB: And then you can just pour it directly on to the stove?

Ruth: And I've got the sink right there, so I can lay it.

MB: Into your dry ingredients, then, what did you put?

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50 Within that year, Ruth said she had only made them when her son was "home" on a visit, when her nephew visited from New York, and on my visit. In 1993, however, she made them several times.

Ruth: I just put quite hot, not boiling water, but good and hot, and stirred it up to make a thin mixture. A very hot fire.

MB: That was really hot, I could see.

Ruth: Yes, I don't know if you could do it on a, I suppose, on a griddle, you could.

MB: Is it hotter than for pancakes?

Ruth: I suppose. This would stick, this kind of buckwheat would break up if it isn't cooked quickly enough.

MB; Well, I've seen you prepare the stove, but maybe you'd like to tell how you did that?

Ruth: Oh! [laughs] I fried the pork on a fair fire, but then I added small pieces of wood, kindling, or whatever I have to make a really hot fire. And if the stove is hot enough it doesn't sizzle, but if it gets cool the buckwheat will start sticking to it.

MB: I like the way you cleaned off the stove.

Ruth: Oh! [laughs] I used [newpapers first] then paper napkins or something over there, or a cloth.

MB: Do you put any oil or anything on the stove?

Ruth: No, no. When it's hot enough you don't need to. Still, on an electric frying pan you don't need any either. It's hot enough—you don't need any grease.

MB: So you just put the mixture directly on the stove?

Ruth: And then it forms, it's all little bubbles, and when, what'll I say—when, the holes, they become holes [burst] you turn them.

MB: They're like little volcanoes, aren't they!

Ruth: Yeah, yes.

MB: And when these little bubbles have burst all over, you turn them.

Ruth: Yes, so that it's firm enough so that you can handle it to turn it.

MB: You have a real production line going there.

Ruth: [laughs]

MB: That's why I see that you have to prepare the pork in advance. And the gravy, it's pretty straightforward the way you made that as well?

Ruth: Yeah, well I did pork pieces, scraps of fat, so that I would have enough fat in it to make a, you know, a fair gravy, instead of just plain water.

MB: Yes. The essence of the pork is still in the cast iron pan and you add boiling water?

Ruth: No, I put cold in, because it doesn't spatter all over but it just—

MB: And is that it? Nothing else in it?

Ruth: Well, salt, a little salt.

MB: And a good hot bowl on the table.

Ruth: Yes, and your guests should be eating as soon as there's enough to get going.

MB: So I saw.

Ruth: That's the way to do buckwheat, though.[51]

As can be gathered from the previous chapter and from the foregoing discussion, there is no food which can monopolize a conversation like buckwheat. In his droll way, Russell MacIver joked that when one local character of his youth got married, "she said the only thing she took on her honeymoon was her fiddle and a barrel of buckwheat flour!" A discussion on the importance of buckwheat can find its way into a conversation at any moment, as people never tire of talking about it. Every participant will be firmly convinced by personal taste of the right and wrong way of milling it, and of the best methods of cooking with it. Once commonplace on every farm, in every country-store, and every household, buckwheat has become much more difficult to obtain since the Legendre mill ceased operation. Individuals regret that they now have to search in healthfood stores in Sherbrooke or Montreal, or ask relatives to try to obtain some from country stores in Vermont or New Hampshire.[52] As often as not, however,

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51 There are many anecdotes told about individuals who could eat twenty or thirty buckwheat slaps. The meals I have participated in have always been very jovial, with teasing at the table, and challenges issued as to who could eat the most. There is always a triumphant moment when the cook finally manages to sit down and join the company. Fieldwork notes, Aug. 1992.

52 Healthfood stores in Canada, America and Britain nearly all carry buckwheat. Contrary to some of the earlier notions circulated via British herbalists, it is not only a good source of protein, but is high in iron and

they find a product that does not seem to measure up to the buckwheat that they used to obtain at the Legendre mill at Stornoway.

When anyone finds a new source, there are telephone calls between friends, often long-distance, to pass on information of the new find. Generally the call concludes with a promise to "ring back if it's any good" or "no good" depending upon the context of the conversation. For example, in 1992 I brought some "across the line" from Vermont, and while it was judged to be "fairly good" and "worth buying again", nevertheless, it had too many little black specks in it to meet the former standards of milling.[53] In 1993, on my way to Quebec from North Carolina, I visited a rural water-mill in the Appalachians which still ground locally-grown buckwheat, so I bought a quantity to bring to Ruth. This was enthusiastically examined, and appeared to have fewer specks than a previous batch she had obtained in Megantic. I was asked about the plants, the mill, the mill-stones, the people who ran it, and so on. Once again buckwheat was the subject of several conversations, some in Ruth's kitchen, others on the telephone, or when friends called to visit. Word got around that perhaps this "new source" might be worth following up, so that a week later, and ten miles away, while visiting Mary and Angus Morrison, I was asked for the address of the mill.

The most notable feature of all of these discussions is that over and over again they reaffirm the close ties between the Scotch and the French, in this case the Legendre family. Aside from praising their expertise and skill, the personalities involved are very much part of these discussions. Phases such as "Oh, they

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contains most of the B complex vitamins. See V. Peterson, *The Natural Food Catalogue*, p 30. It is quite possible that it was not highly valued as a food crop in Britain because the famous herbalist, John Gerard, discounted it as lacking in goodness, since "it speedily passeth through the belly, but yieldeth little nourishment." Quoted by Geoffrey Grigson, in *The Englishman's Flora*, p. 252.

53 V. Peterson explains the difficulties involved in removing the hulls which form the little black specks, and points out that it is a difficult operation and tends to add to the expense of producing buckwheat flour. See *The Natural Food Catalogue*, p 31. See also "Pit" Legendre's comment in Chapter 4 which indicates mastery of the skill by the Legendre family.

were real nice people," are repeated,[54] with reminders that "you know, old Monsieur Legendre could speak Gaelic fluently" and "yes, and so could his brothers." Anecdotes are exchanged about visits to the mill with parents or grandparents, when complete transactions took place in Gaelic. Although these days ended shortly after the Second World War, and the present generation of Legendres are bi-lingual in French and English, they are not the only ones to have lost their Gaelic.

It is perfectly clear from interviews with the Legendre family that the respect and admiration is mutual. Before I was aware of the significance of what I thought to be a relatively straightforward, even superficial, subject—buckwheat—I visited Ellen Legendre and her brother Alphonse ("Pit") simply to ask about the history of the mill (see Chapter 4).[55] Ellen's anecdotes and reminiscences of this era reflect a genuine warmth between their family and the descendants of the Gaelic settlers:

> We had very nice Scotch people. My father could talk Gaelic, and so could his brothers... When you've lived in a place for your whole lifetime, then Stornoway *means* something, eh? The Scotch people came here to Stornoway from Scotland... [Father] had a hard task, but the Scotch people liked him... [BEK ll:A]

Although Ellen Legendre died several years ago, the ties between the families remain in the present generation, who are said to empathize with the mutual understanding and respect of the previous generations. Dating back to the 1850s, and partly dependent upon collective memories, those ties are an important part of the local identity of both the Scotch and the French. Small wonder that this symbol is perpetuated today, for there is relatively little else in the course of everyday life that performs the same function.

Preparing and Preserving Meat

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54 Recorded on Isobel Stewart's tape; also other refererences.

55 Recorded in 1976, on BEK ll. See also, *Stornoway 1858—1983*, pp. 154-155, with photos pp. 30-31.

A "feed of buckwheat and pork" was always expected when a pig was slaughtered during autumn or winter. In general, fresh meat was eaten just after an animal was butchered, and, as mentioned in Chapter 4, the rest of the carcass was preserved fresh-frozen (in the depth of winter), salted or cured. Bill Young recalled that in his family

> the pork was salted in barrels or anything other than that. They smoked the hams; and the bacon sometimes was smoked, and sometimes was salted down and eaten as green bacon—it wasn't cured. [BEK 3:A]

At a ceilidh in Ruth's kitchen in 1992, she and her sister, Bernice, discussed the subject with Isabell Beattie (née MacArthur). Bernice recalled how their family made hams after they had butchered a pig:

> *[The meat] was soaked in brine for so many days before the smoking—it was a special kind of a smoke house, seven or eight feet high; the smoke would go out the top. The fire just smouldered with wood chips of a special kind, or sawdust, so that it wouldn't burst into flames. And for about two weeks they'd build fires like that. Not night time, just in the days.

Isabell recalled a similar process at the MacArthur's farm, less than a mile away from the MacDonalds, and added *"we hung them up from the rafters in the barn after they were smoked." [Fieldwork notebook, Aug. 12, 1992.][56]

While their forebears in the Outer Hebrides had relied on fish and mutton as their main sources of protein, in Quebec the settlers relied more upon pork and, to a lesser extent, beef, which was generally salted in barrels in a briny solution, with saltpetre added so that the meat would retain its red colour. Most people were of the opinion that the Scots settlers, apart from a few families, ate little or no mutton. As Bill Young remarked:

> I don't believe the people were much eaters of mutton... we never ate mutton at home. Well, there were sheep—we weren't, they weren't great on sheep—only for wool. [BEK 3:A]

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56 For further discussion on salting, pickling and curing meat for preservation, see Edith Hörandner, "Storing and Preserving Meat in Europe: Historical Survey" in *Food in Change*, pp. 53—58.

Bill's wife, (née Kay MacLeod), who grew up in Stornoway, also shared his opinion, as did many others, with the exception of Isabell's mother, Christie MacArthur, who finally dispelled my suspicion that the sheep were allowed to die of old age. She said that they ate mutton occasionally, always fresh or from the cold-shed, as they never salted it. It appears that no one today has even heard of the dry-salting of mutton that was once so common throughout the Highlands and Islands,[57] although the dry-salting of other meats was practised throughout Quebec.

The local diet was also supplemented by fish, and whatever wild game they could get. As Christie MacKenzie, who was born in Milan in 1897, recalled:

> [We ate] deer meat... Oh yes, we used to have rabbit; oh, yes, rabbit stew was quite a thing... [father and] even the boys used to set snares for them... Partridges, well, as I said before, there wasn't too many that had guns, but those that did used to kill some partridge. [BEK 16:B]

For hunting enthusiasts, such as Russell MacIver's family, the area was a land of plenty. Russell, who recalled that his father would usually return from an outing into the nearby woods with "a whole bunch of partridge tied to his waist..." agreed that there was always "plenty to eat then". Russell's own favourite meat was venison, which, as the following conversation shows, was expertly preserved:

> MB: Would you have it often?
>
> Russell: Hardly any time through the year that we didn't have some. He was as bad at killing deer out of season as anybody! [laughs] Lucky. Through the summer, just for ourselves, just for a treat, cut it up—we had a well down in the swamp and the overflow, that was better than any fridge you ever saw. And anybody coming around he'd go and get one of them jars, quarts, two quarts and that was pretty good meat!
>
> MB: Did they bottle it? The meat?
>
> Russell: Oh, sometimes like that in the summer as we didn't have a fridge at that time—we didn't have no electricity.

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57 Salt mutton was standard fare during my own childhood and adolescence. (See *For What Time I Am in the World,* edited by Bill Usher and Linda Page-Harpa, p. 133.) Bearing in mind that refrigeration did not become commonplace till the 1970s, more than twenty years after the coming of electricity, it is understandable that the older methods prevailed in the Hebrides.

MB: How would they do it?

Russell: Oh just cut it up and put it in the jars.

MB: And boil it?

Russell: No, it went in raw—bring it home to cook it ... It was put up raw, but it was air tight ... They had a rubber [seal] on and it was air tight. If you could see a bubble in it you'd have to fix it up again.

Duncan: And you'd keep it cool in the water.

MB: They were full of inventive ideas.

Duncan: Well they didn't have one of these [points to the fridge] so they had to have next best thing.

MB: Did they use salt?

Russell: Oh they used to use salt to preserve the meat too—put it in a crock and cover it up and put it in the cellar. It'd keep pretty good, because there's some cellars that are pretty good.

MB: Would it have a layer of salt, a layer of meat?

Russell: Yeah, or in brine.

MB: In an earthenware crock?

Russell: Yeah.

And without giving any indication where the conversation was ultimately headed, Russell told his story about the hens dying after they drank the brine (see Chapter 4).

Whenever an animal was butchered for meat, no part of it was ever wasted. Aside from the meat for the table and the hide for leather, the internal organs, head, trotters and offal were all used and indeed relished for a variey of local delicacies, such as head cheese and *maragan*.[58] Different women had their own favourite way of making them, thus individual variations were enjoyed from kitchen to kitchen. For head cheese, the head of a cow or pig was skinned. The ears and sometimes also the brains were removed. The head was then boiled in a very large pot for several hours, till the meat, mostly from the jowls, was tender enough to

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58 *Maragan* is the plural of *marag*.

fall from the bones. The pot was removed from the stove, and all the bones were taken out, with careful attention being given to the smallest ones. The meat was then put through the meat grinder, and returned to the liquid in which it was boiled. The mixture was then poured into dishes and left overnight to cool and set, just like a jelly, provided the cook had correctly assessed the amount of water added for boiling.[59] Knuckle bones were sometimes boiled with the heads. This addition not only imparted a distinctive flavour, but considerably increased the gelatine content of the final product to ensure proper setting.[60]

Butchering an animal also initiated the making of a second specialty—*maragan* (puddings). Among the Gaels of the Eastern Townships, the word always denotes a *white* pudding (*marag gheal*), the only kind made by them, although French-speaking Quebeckers appear to favour what is known as *marag dhubh* (black, or blood pudding) in Gaelic Scotland.[61]

The making of *maragan* involved considerable work, but the effort was deemed worthwhile because of the popularity of the final product. Bessie (MacIver) Smith of Scotstown learned how to make *maragan* in Tolsta, Quebec, as a young girl. She had helped her mother many times, and during her eighty years she had often served this delicacy at her table:

> To fill them casings was a job—an awful job. Well, we'd wash them to death, you know, you'd have a big tub. Kill an animal, and you'd have that [intestines] in a tub, you know, and you'd have to clean all them *caolanan* [intestines] out, you know, from the animal, and wash them. And from this animal that they'd kill there'd be suet, and she'd have this suet, and barley flour, and salt, and pepper, and onions. And all that was worked together. And the filling them *caolanan*, you know, was a job. But they wouldn't break, like the casings you get today. [BEK 8:A]

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59 This is more or less the same as "potted heid" which is common all over Scotland.

60 For a more detailed discussion, with recipes for bottling and preserving, see *The Last Stronghold*, p. 86—89.

61 Bruce Walker discusses the common method used to collect blood for the making of puddings or *maragan*. See "The Flesher's Trade" in *Food in Change*, pp.127—137. See also my brief description in *For What Time I Am in the World,*, p. 131. For a Canadian comparison of practices among the French and Scots, see *The Last Stronghold*, p. 86—87.

There were a few differences between the *maragan* made in Quebec and those made in the Scotland. The latter were always made in sheep's casings, and a mixture of oatmeal and wheat flour provided the cereal in the recipe. Although Bessie had heard of using Scotch oatmeal, she had always used barley flour because her family grew oats only for cattle feed, not for cooking. As far as Bessie knew, casings were now unobtainable in the Eastern Townships. She got hers from Vermont, where, she said, you could get the real oatmeal too. In the area of Graniteville, Vermont, there were so many people of Scottish origin, many coming from the Eastern Townships, that some of the food stores began to cater for the requirements of Scottish recipes. In fact, so popular are *maragan* there that Bessie's relatives send her a box of pork casings in salt which are ready to use, and even the barley flour which is also unobtainable locally. A small funnel-like device has been specially designed for filling the casings, and anyone who makes *maragan* in Quebec today seems to have acquired one of these American-made gadgets. With the pre-cleaned casings and the miraculous filling device, much hard work and frustration are eliminated.

Bessie Smith has collected two other recipes in addition to the one she has been using for some seventy years; while there is a similarity between the one from Vermont and the one from Quebec, both are worth repeating, along with Bessie's added advice.

The first, which Bessie calls "Maggie's Recipe", is from her cousin who was born and brought up across the line in Vermont. She did, however, grow up with the Scottish traditions of her Eastern Township parents, and being an enthusiastic practitioner of traditional recipes, she sent the following to Bessie, along with the pork casings, barley flour, oatmeal, and casing-filler:

Maggie's Recipe

3 cups ground oatmeal (our mothers used graham or whole wheat flour.)
2 cups ground suet—don't skimp.
3 or 4 medium sized onions, ground.
1.5 tablespoons salt (or to taste.)
c. 1 tablespoon pepper.

Mix ingredients in a large bowl with your hands. Cut the dry packed in salt casings to yard lengths. Place casings in water. Open the end and feed on to the funnel. Blow air into it and fill with the dry ingredients. Tie both ends. Use casings enough to take all the mixed filling. Bring the water to boil in a large kettle. Put in prepared *marags*. Prick frequently with a darning needle. Don't cook more than two or three at a time. Boil gently for 20 minutes... Remove to cool, and add more until all are boiled. I have an old fashioned hat-pin I use for pricking the casings to release the air.

To this Bessie added a hint from her long experience of making *maragan*: "No, not *boiling* them for twenty minutes, but *simmering* them, because if you boil them they break." [BEK 8:A]

Bessie's daughter-in-law, Evelyn, who was born in Stornoway and is a sister of Kay (MacLeod) Young, also had a recipe. Although she and her husband, Raymond, had long since left the Scotstown area and live several hundred miles away in Cornwall, Ontario, she continued to use family recipes and to make *maragan*. I visited her in Scotstown in 1993, when they were on a visit to their summer home. Evelyn said she had altered her mother's recipe for *maragan* because she could not find all the original ingredients.

Maragan: Evelyn's Recipe

3 cups Scotch oatmeal.
4 cups barley flour.
8 medium sized onions, ground fine.
Add one tablespoon sugar to onions and stir well.
1 tablespoon salt.
1 tablespoon pepper.
2 teaspoons ginger.
2 lbs. ground suet, very fine.

Mix above ingredients in a large bowl. Work well with hands until mixture is like fine crumbs. Place casings in water. Open end and ease on to the funnel. Blow air into it and fill with the dry ingredients. Bring water to a boil in a large kettle. Put in prepared *marags*. Cook gently until done. Prick with a pin to

let the air out of the casings.

Bessie explained the reason that sugar is added to the ground onions:

> If you're making a dressing, or anything, and you're frying onions, you put a couple of teaspoons of sugar on them and they won't repeat—and the same thing with that. [BEK 8:A]

Bessie Smith considered her traditional recipes to be an important part of her Lewis heritage, and added that she had had a letter from a cousin, who had moved to Vermont several years before, which also confirmed this sentiment. The cousin wrote to tell Bessie that it was Thanksgiving, "a big celebration in the States", and although they had long since adopted American holiday celebrations, they insisted on making one modification to the universal menu of turkey: they served *marag* alongside it. Their local Vermont butcher supplied the casings every year, and as far as they were concerned the preparation and eating of *maragan* allowed them to retain an important link with Quebec and with Lewis.

Preserving Fruit and Vegetables

Ever mindful of the benefits of keeping a daily supply of a source of vitamins through the long winter months, families relied upon preserving the summer's and autumn's harvest of wild berries and fruit. Nature has conveniently arranged their growing cycles so that strawberries, gooseberries, raspberries, blackberries (brambles), blueberries, choke-cherries, cranberries, and finally apples, ripen in succession and do not flood the kitchens with a sudden, overwhelming glut. In July, everyone welcomed the ripening of wild strawberries, the first fruits of summer. Despite the fact that they are minuscule compared to cultivated ones, the effort required to make a quart was well worth it for the picker's immediate reward of their sweet taste, the family's delight in strawberries and fresh cream for dessert, and the assurance that winter would not be devoid of the occasional treat.

As families expanded their kitchen gardens and began to gain access to commercial fruit markets, some set aside an area for cultivated strawberry plants, a row or two of raspberry or blackcurrant canes, and a few crowns of rhubarb. Accompanied by a parent, grandparent, or older sibling, young children helped with the task of picking, while the women saw to the preserving of berries and fruits. Recipes were well known in the community, seldom written down, and followed standard practices of measuring cupfuls of fruit and sugar in a ratio that suited the sweetness for jam-making. In more recent years pectin was added (except for blackcurrants which never need it) and recipes followed according to those "on the label of the bottle". Many a hot day saw the large pot on the stove, preparing for the next batch to be jammed and bottled, then stored in the cool cellar until needed.

Although crab-apple trees grow wild in the region, it was, as already mentioned, preferable to cultivate a small orchard of one or two chosen varieties. Now well over a century old, the names of the varieties are not known locally, but are referred to simply as "good for eating" or "good for pies". After the harvest, fresh apples were carefully packed in boxes and stored in a cool cellar where they would keep for approximately three months. If there were any left after that time (and there usually were), they could be preserved as apple sauce, or air-dried, a technique which the Gaels learned in Quebec. Christie Mackenzie, like most of the women, recalled spending many an evening preparing apples for drying:

> We used to peel the apples, and cut them up, and put them on strings, and dry them... around the stove, oh a couple of weeks anyway. Then we'd put them away, in boxes... Well, they required a lot of cooking, you know, to soften them, and so on. Any they didn't make the pies that fresh apples would make; they didn't taste as good. [BEK 16:A]

Once a familiar sight in most kitchens, strings of drying apples are no longer part of autumn's annual cycle, as freezing has taken over. Nevertheless, today's visitors are still reminded of them, as part of the apparatus used for the process can be seen in some kitchens, such as Ruth Nicholson's, where one of the rods once

used to suspend the strings above the stove is now used as a general drying rail.[62]

Isobel Stewart, a contemporary of Christie's, who grew up in the nearby settlement of Tolsta, looked back over the years which, paradoxically, have somehow been labelled "fairly poor" in today's terms. She considered the community to have been blessed with a plentiful store of food, and a great deal of incentive besides:

> When we were kids we had apples, all kinds of apples, [?pears], plums, and rhubarb. And when I think of it, my grandmother was the first woman in Tolsta that ever grew tomatoes! Now where she got the seed I'll never know.[63] But anyway, I remember one time when some *cailleachs* came to the house one day and they were invited for supper, so she had some tomatoes. They wouldn't touch them for anything! "Don't touch that! You're going to kill yourself eating that!" because they thought it was just something she'd picked up somewhere and she shouldn't either. She just laughed at them, but she was the first woman in Tolsta grew tomatoes. [Did they catch on after that?] Oh, not too much, there was a lot of them that never cared for them anyway. It was just really, everybody'd just mostly *snèapan* and *buntàta,* you know, [turnips and potatoes] just the very [?basics], but grandmother, she'd a beautiful garden. And I remember, oh when *we* got tasting the tomatoes—she slept downstairs; our house is still standing in there—and we use to go down and sleep with granny, one on either side of her, and we'd a big tall sack[64] and we'd take it and hide it under the pillow when the tomatoes were half red and half green. And she'd put us to bed and go out in the kitchen. And we used to slide this window up and we'd slip out in the garden and get a big tomato and get the sack in and eat it. [laughs]
> [BEK 10:A]

Isobel's comment about the conservative attitude towards her grandmother's innovative gardening practices could just as well

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62 Photograph in the School of Scottish Studies Archive.

63 In a study of vegetable gardens in two Quebec communities between 1935 and 1965, Michèle Paradis records the introduction of tomatoes in the late 1940s and suggest that their long-term influence on eating habits was considerable. "Du jardin à votre assiette...le jardin potager en milieu rural", *Canadian Folklore canadien,* Vol. 12, No. 1, 1990, p. 95. This comment would also hold true among the Scotch population; consider, for example, the addition of tomatoes or tomato paste to the recipe for baked beans (quoted above).

64 The word "sack" is used loosely for any cloth bag, such as a flour sack, and not, as is generally the case in Scotland, a standard sized jute or hessian bag used for coal, potatoes or peat. (In Canada, this is a burlap bag.)

be describing the Highlands of Scotland. Having discussed the importance of potatoes, and to some extent kail, in the diet of the nineteenth century Highlanders,[65] I. F. Grant remarks upon the prevailing attitude she observed in 1961:

> ...the modern Highlanders are not, as a rule, great vegetable eaters. If they have a garden, and the habit is on the increase, little is generally grown beyond cabbage, curly kail and, in sandy districts, carrots.[66] I have seen very tired looking lettuces imported from Glasgow to the Islands to be eaten by visitors.[67]

While fruit preserving occupied most of the time allocated to bottling and canning, there was usually a day or two set aside for vegetables. Turnip greens or spinach could be kept in sealed jars for the winter, by boiling them in a large pot for a few minutes, or just long enough for their springy, bulky leaves to collapse into the familiar form of "cooked greens", then compressing them into sterilized jars which are vacuum-sealed when hot.[68] Carrot thinnings, now called "baby carrots", were also boiled and bottled, as were beets (beetroot), though the latter were generally preserved in a pickle of vinegar, sugar and spices. It need hardly be said that autumn was an exceptionally busy time in the kitchen.

In more recent years, housewives have increasingly experimented more with recipes for pickling and preserving autumn fruits and vegetables. Ingredients such as apples, onions and tomatoes are combined with more recent introductions such as squash, and favourite recipes which include sugar, vinegar, cloves, allspice, and various other spices and herbs are exchanged, as are jars of newly-made jams and preserves. Aside from the

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65 I.F. Grant, *Highland Folk Ways,* pp. 296—299.

66 Similarly, until approximately 1955, when gardeners became more adventurous, most vegetable gardens in rural Quebec had potatoes, carrots, turnips and cabbage. Michèle Paradis, op cit, p. 87.

67 I.F. Grant, op cit, p. 300. Thirty years later, visitors still complain about the lack of variety in the fruit and vegetables they can obtain in Hebridean shops, though the situation has somewhat improved since I.F. Grant's observation. The complaints are as much a reflection of the visitors' inability to acculturate as they are of the Islanders' resistance to change.

68 Preserving turnip greens by this method is common in other parts of Canada. For example, in Newfoundland I recorded descriptions from Scots settlers in the Codroy Valley; see *The Last Stronghold,* pp. 93—93.

original practical and economic reason for preserving foods for the winter, there is now a more social aspect. Housewives are rarely compelled by economic circumstances to take out the jam or pickling pan; the prime motivations are taste and the pleasure of sharing the products in the social setting of family and community. This shift in emphasis is not by any means confined to the Eastern Township Scots; more generally, it is a feature of modern Quebec.[69]

Maple Syrup and Sugar

A favourite emigration anecdote that comes up from time to time concerns the Lewis people who "were told all they had to do was tap a tree and they'd get sugar." It is never attributed to anyone in particular, but is told to illustrate the fact that the new settlers had huge adjustments to make, and many new skills to learn in Quebec. They soon learned how and when to "tap" the maple trees for sap in spring, by drilling a small hole through the bark and inserting a spile or spigot into it, to allow the sap to drip into a bucket suspended below; at the same time they learned how to use the big cast iron kettles (pots, in Scottish terms) to boil up the sap to make the syrup—forty gallons is boiled down to one gallon of syrup. As far as I can ascertain, there are no memories of who learned first, or from whom—"Oh, just learned it, I guess"—but rather vaguely the French and/or Indians are credited.[70] Uncertain also is the source of the recipe for maple sugar, which is the next stage of production after the syrup.[71] It is made by boiling a quantity of syrup till it reaches what is known as the "soft ball stage", that is, when a spoonful of boiled syrup is

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69 For an interesting discussion on this subject in the wider context of Quebec, see Michèle Paradis, "Du jardin à votre assiette...le jardin potager en milieu rural", op cit, pp. 83—98.

70 Compare Chapter 4, the making of snow-shoes, obviously not a skill brought over from Lewis; this was the only response I could elicit. For maple syrup techniques, see Darrel D. Henning, "Maple Sugaring: History of a Folk Technology", *Keystone Folklore Quarterly*, XI:4 (Winter, 1966), pp. 239 - 274.

71 Maple sugar is very popular all over Quebec; see Marius Barbeau, "Maple Sugar", *Canadian Geographical Journal*, 38, Apr. 1949, pp. 176—189.

dropped into a cup of cold water it will form a soft ball, as opposed to dispersing in the liquid if it has not been boiled long enough. (The expression is well-known to toffee-makers.) After that stage is reached, the boiling contents of the pot are either poured into moulds to make maple-sugar loaf, or are whipped to add air, and then poured out to set. Stories of "sugar growing in the woods" could only come true after a great deal of effort.[72]

According to Mary MacLeod of Milan, Gaelic speakers referred to the month of April as *mios an t-siùcair,* [sugar month]. Most "lots" of land that had been granted had enough maple trees to provide syrup for a family. After a few decades, they discovered that second growth woods in some areas grew into extensive groves of maple trees, which could yield enough sap for syrup production on a commercial scale. For most of this century, therefore, farmers were able to supplement domestic income by canning or bottling their syrup and selling it. As time went by, they also kept up with new techniques that were developed, though Russell MacIver was of the opinion that there were mixed blessings with this sweet harvest from the trees:

> Russell: We used to make maple sugar too. We had a sugar bush, I suppose it was tapped for about seventy-five years, and you'd see all the different kinds of holes, and different kinds of makes and spouts, and they'd come out with another invention, you could tell what it was on the bark.
>
> MB: Did you enjoy doing that, at sugaring time?
>
> Russell: Huh! [Laughs!] I didn't like it too much. It was awful hard work and it was awful wet work—out in the wet snow, soaked all the time, and it was hard work too.
>
> MB: Were you selling the maple syrup or was it just for yourselves?
>
> Russell: Oh no, we sold some. And we'd first have the kettles, the big kettles, and boil it in the woods, but then we got an evaporator, and boy, it used to take a lot of wood.
> [Sept. 16, 1992]

After the syrup season was over, the local people held a celebration, not unlike that of harvest-home which is known in

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72 C.P. Traill writes of her experience in 1836 of collecting sap and making maple sugar; see *Backwoods* pp.155-8.

many farming communities. Families would gather at the Oddfellows Hall in Milan on an appointed evening, and bring a sample of the season's syrup. They would then hold a "sugaring off" party, at which they would boil up the new syrups, and, when it was judged to be ready, the party-goers would take it out into an area of fresh, clean snow chosen for the purpose, (usually near a fence where nobody had trodden), and then they poured the boiling liquid into the snow where it immediately turned into a kind of toffee. Still outdoors, and enjoying the merriment and celebration, everyone would then eat the hard-earned treats with forks. When this part was over, as many "as were allowed" would return to the hall afterwards for a much-enjoyed dance.[73]

The dance, however, like every other dance in the community, was regarded with strong disapproval by a stalwart core of Presbyterian church-goers. Almost every member of the community[74] talked about how strict some of the older generation were, and how they frowned upon such frivolity. As already mentioned in Chapter 5, for example, Maryann Morrison's father would not allow dancing, for in his generation they were under the impression that Christ Himself preached against it.[75] Commenting on this topic, Muriel Mayhew, who experienced both the old and new attitudes over years of listening to church services in Milan, remarked:

> *I can remember a minister who said if you went to a dance and you thought the Lord was with you ***He'd leave you at the door!*** So much for "I will be with you always, even unto the ends of the earth"! [Fieldwork notebook, August 1, 1993]

Many years have passed since a sugaring-off party and dance was held, as the Oddfellows Hall was demolished in 1959. Nowadays, some of Quebec's biggest producers are in the Milan

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73 This is a composite account based on various conversations and on Johnnie "Bard" MacLeod's *Memoirs of Dell*, p. 127.

74 There are references on most tapes, with the exception of Russell's recording, for, on that day, or on subsequent visits, we did not talk about the church or about dances.

75 A wide range of topics which people *imagine* to be "in the Bible" but which, on further investigation, are not, are discussed by Lee F. Uttley in "The Bible of the Folk", *California Folklore. Quarterly,* Vol. 4, Jan. 1945.

area, where sugar-houses can be instantly recognized by their large metal stove-pipe chimneys, and by the enormous wood-piles that stretch several times the length of the house. The maple groves nearby are no longer tapped with spigots and buckets, but have an intricate system of plastic tubing running from tree to tree, with the taps running directly into it, and the entire yield running straight into the condensers. Gone is the sound of the drip-drip-drip in the spring, and no longer is there a need to stand in wet feet for hours on end. Usually the producers run family businesses, many of them on farms that were once cleared by Hebridean settlers, which now bear French names, or simply a notice saying *Syrop d'érable.* Even farms which have retained arable land, cattle and crops of vegetables and grain, find that their main income comes from shipping canned syrup to Montreal and New York where it can earn an instant profit.[76] There is nothing instant, however, in the months of cutting wood, the long hours in the sugar-house fueling the stove and attending the condenser, or in the sterilizing of cans or bottles, or in the filling, sealing and labelling. It is still hard work, regarded today as a major part of the Quebec economy.

Taste and Tradition

Over twenty years ago, when the majority of folklorists were primarily concerned with the study of stories, songs, and objects of material culture, American folklife specialist, Don Yoder, drew attention to the strong connections between *food* and its central role in maintaining culture.[77] Among the Eastern Township Scots, the preparation and presentation of food retains a vital role in

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76 For example, Paul and Julia Doerfler who own and work an "old Scotch" farm on the Tenth Range keep cattle, goats, and poultry, and produce a wide variety of grain crops, fruit and vegetables. Nevertheless, their main source of income is maple syrup, when, two or three times a year, Paul loads a truck with home-canned syrup and drives to New York to sell it.

77 Don Yoder,"Folk Cookery" in *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction*, edited by Richard Dorson, p. 325. Despite the fact that Richard Dorson's book, *The Handbook of American Folklore*, was published much later (1986), he scarcely heeds Yoder's advice, as he only includes *food and festivals*, as opposed to a study of food as part of daily life. [See Dorson's index].

reflecting Scottishness. In any social situation, even if the participants were to remain silent—a most unlikely occurrence—the food served would speak clearly of cultural retention on behalf of those present. In the closing years of the twentieth century, when the mother tongue of the first settlers is fading towards extinction, there remain, nevertheless, strong indicators of culture that are reflected most of all in the foodways of the Eastern Township Hebrideans.

Gone are the days when the *taigh-céilidh* had all the aspects of oral tradition that could be found to the older setting—Gaelic songs, stories, proverbs, riddles, tongue-twisters, and so on. Today, the *taigh-céilidh* still survives in the form of the impromptu house-visit, especially during the summer when people are "home on holiday". There are still plenty of stories told, mostly amusing anecdotes and memorates, though now they are all in English. As far as songs are concerned, they are seldom heard except at organized events, where an "outsider", with no knowledge of local songs, is likely to be invited to sing. Some of the Quebec texts that remain are in the form of yellowed pages, hand-written in old-fashioned ink, without translation. Nowadays only the oldtimers recall the singing of local songs such as "Big Dan's" song, *Oran a' Bhaidseileir* [the Bachelor's Song[78]] which pokes fun at the single man who has no wife to cook for him and keep him company. Although nobody sing the songs any more, the context of their singing and the reaction of those who enjoyed them is well remembered, as Russell MacIver remarks:

> But there was lots of them kinds of songs. Yeah—And there's another song made up about a white cow that got killed under the train in Milan; all I can think of is *"Bó bhàn* [sic], *carson na dh 'fhàg thu mi?"* "[White cow], why did you leave me?"[79] And I used to hear that! [Laughs] ... And though there was a lot of them that couldn't read or write, they had a great memory.

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78 I am grateful to Duncan McLeod for a copy of the song. I have retained the original orghography here, and although there are irregularities, (e.g. *dhalbh* for *dh'fhalbh*) it is, nevertheless, quite intelligible.

79 Although Russell professes to have no Gaelic, his pronunciation of this title sounds fluent; it is also interesting that he translates it for the company, as Duncan McLeod does not have Gaelic.

An "old bachelor" himself, Russell did not know the "Bachelor's Song", though his friend, Duncan McLeod had typed out a copy of a hand-written page for his collection, remembering to record that "Big Dan" was Donald Murray from Dell:

Oran a' Bhachelor

1.
Dhalbh mi gu tigh air an' oidhche,
S'cha robh laimp a deanamh soillse,
Chuala mi gearrainn agus saoidh,
Se so na roinn mar leannas iad.

2.
Rinn mi duff air bog wheat fluir,
Pailteas soda agus buirn,
S'nuair a chaidh i chon a bhuird,
Cha deanadh cu a cagnadh.

3.
Rinn sinn cake is bha i searbh,
Is leis an soda bha i dearg,
Ach fhuair an cat rud dhi gu dearbh
S' gun d'fhuareach marbh sa mhaduinn e.

4.
Ach, oh gur mise tha gu sgith,
Ri ludradh bog wheat ann a miose,
Is cha dean cainnt mo dhorainn innse,
S' gu de ni mi s'gun bhean agam.

5.
Ach oh, gur mise th'air chul an aite,
Is falt mo cheann air tionndadh ban,
S' a nuair a theid mi null mheasg chaich,
Se ni iad gaire fanaid rium.

6.
Gur e mise tha gu truagh
Ri dol an coinneamh geamradh fuar,
Is mur a gabh gin rium-sa truas,
Gun aognaidh fuar mo leabaidh sa.

7.
Ach mu's tig greannaireachd is fuachd,
Gaillion agus gaoth a tuath,
'S fhaodair sgriob a thoirt mun cuairt,
A measg an t-sluaigh gu faigh mi te.

8.
Is mur a faigh mi te an tus
Cha dean stad le sin a chuis,
Cha toir mise suas mo dhuil,
Cho fad s'bhios triuir am Bragair.

9.
Tha duil 'am dh'aichear dhol air cuairt,
Air Shiadar, Barvas, Borve, is Brue,
Is mur a faigh mi te mo ruin
Gun tog mi curs' gu Shiabost.

10.
Bheir mi sgriob air Dail Bho Thuath,
Eoropie am baile truagh,
Is do na H'earadh bheir mi cuairt
Mas toir mi suas nach faigh mi te.

11.
Theid mi Ghallaibh is gheibh mi te,
A bhios sgiobalt agus gleusd,
Bithidh i math air cutadh eisg,
S' bheir mi fein dhi suckanan.

12.
Tha clann-nighean sa Bheinn Ruaidh
Cho maiseach air na dheirich grian,
Tha feagal orm mun tig a' crioch
Nach toir gin cioch do leanamh aca.[80]

The Bachelor's Song

1.
I went to a house at night-time
And the lamp was not giving light [except feebly]
I heard complaining and bemoaning,
These are the verses that follow.

2.
I made a "duff" from buckwheat flour
Plenty soda and water,
And when it was put on the table
A dog could not chew it.

3.
We made a cake and it was bitter.
And with the soda it was red.
But the cat certainly got some of it,
And was found dead in the morning.

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80 Verse 13 has been omitted because I could not make sense of any of it.

4.
But oh, I am so tired,
With mixing buckwheat in a basin,
And of my agony no words can tell,
And what can I do without a wife.

5.
But oh, I live at the back of beyond,
With my hair now turned to white,
And when I go over amongst the rest,
They laugh mockingly at me.

6.
It's me who is so miserable
Facing a cold winter,
And if no-one takes pity on me
My bed will be so dreadful and cold.

7.
But before the rough, cold weather comes
Storms and the wind from he north
I must take a trip around
Amongst the people to find a wife.

8.
And if at first I don't find one
I don't need to stop there.
I will not give up hope
As long as there are three in Bragar..

9.
I intend shortly to pay a visit
To Shader, Barvas, Borve and Brue,
And if I don't find the one of my choice
I will set my course for Shawbost.

10.
I'll go around to the North Dale
Eorapie, the wretched township,
And to the Harris I will go
Before I give up the search for her.

11.
I'll go to Caithness and find one
Who will be deft and prudent
She will be good at gutting fish
And I will give her [?pet lambs].

12.
There are girls in the Red Mountain
As beautiful as any on which the sun shone
I'm afraid that in the end
None will have a child at her breast.

The theme of the song is one which has been re-echoed on both sides of the Atlantic,[81] and amusing as it is, it invariably dwells on the fact that a man without a wife is a man who, above all else, lacks the comfort of home-cooking. In today's progressive society it may be considered unfashionable, or even socially "incorrect".[82] In days gone by, however, it reflected the expected role of women, and rather than being one into which they were forced by circumstances or social expectations, most of the women with whom I have discussed the subject of food did not question this role. On the contrary, they felt fulfilled by the continued reassurance of its importance in the family and community.

In the 1940s, aided by a grant from the American Committee on Food Habits, Professor Kurt Lewin examined several questions surrounding *why* people ate what they ate. Apart from concluding that food habits are not based on a biological need for nourishment, his report highlighted the cultural and psychological aspects involved in the complex patterns that exist.[83] He referred to those who prepare the food as "gatekeepers" who control these patterns, and who, at any moment, could prevent certain foods from reaching their destination. From all accounts, it is the women of the Eastern Townships who have been the "gatekeepers" of food traditions, and as such, have also been careful custodians of many important aspects of their Hebridean culture and identity.

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81 Several such songs have been made in Scotland (my mother and uncles know one from Skye, "Oran a' Bhaidseileir"). During fieldwork in Newfoundland I heard one in English sung by a Codroy Valley man, Paul E Hall. It was recorded by American anthropologist, John F. Szwed, and published in *Folksongs and Their Makers*, (edited by Henry Glassie, E.D. Ives and J, F. Szwed).

82 Russell MacIver, who may be considered typical of his generation, would not be offended by the song, but amused. As far as he is concerned, it does not insult his ability in the kitchen—he copes well, and can make buckwheat slaps as well as anybody. He is clear, however, that the finer points of baking, such as scones, were characteristic of his mother and sisters.

83 Kurt Lewin, *Field Theory in Social Science*, pp. 170—187.

CONCLUSIONS

"When you're young, you're not so curious—
and when you grow old, it's too late to enquire."
[Ellen Legendre, Stornoway, 1976]

It would not be unreasonable to ask if there is any real value in studying the cultural identity of a minority group which represents less than two per cent of the population of the province in which they live. Bare statistics can be deceptive, however, as they do not, in this instance, deal with the fact that the group in question was, at the time of their immigration, highly concentrated in a comparatively small area of the Province of Quebec [Maps 2 and 3] Furthermore, the Official Canadian Linguistic Census ignored their language for over a century, counting them as "English speakers", since neither the census forms nor the enumerators were equipped to deal with languages outside the guidelines of the Census.[1] While it is now impossible to give a complete set of accurate figures for the entire area, it is highly significant to record several examples that could scarcely be disputed. Based on the knowledge of when the first non-Gaelic settlers arrived,[2] the following information for towns and villages would considerably alter the *Census Reports* issued by the government in Ottawa for the years 1851—52, 1860—61 and 1871—91:

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1 Folklorist John L. Campbell conducted an unofficial census of Gaelic in Eastern Canada in 1932. As one would expect, he concentrated his efforts in Nova Scotia, though he also noted Gaelic in Quebec. He published his findings in *The Scotsman*, Jan. 30, 1933. In 1937 he re-investigated the same issue, and concluded that there were, at that time, between 40,000 and 50,000 Gaelic-speakers in Eastern Canada. *Songs Remembered in Exile,* pp. 32-41. Comparing the attitude of Census officals in Canada and Britain, it is also noteworthy that in Britain's 1991 Official Government Census, forms were delivered to every householder in Britain. Citizens had a so-called "freedom of choice" concerning language, which offered the option of filling out an alternative form in any one of a dozen *recognized languages* including Chinese, Hindi, and Urdu—***but not Gaelic.***

2 For example, Christie MacKenzie who grew up in Milan knew from family tradition when the first French family arrived in their village; it was in 1879 when work on the railway began [Recorded Nov. 13, 1990] Her husband, John, who was born in 1893 could remember that in 1915 there were exactly four French-speaking families in Milan, and the rest of the population was Gaelic. [BEK 15]

Year(s)	Town/village	Gaelic	French	English[3]
1851—91	Marsboro	c. 75%	c. 20%	c.5%
1851—91	Milan	c. 95%	c.5%	c.0%
1851—91	Scotstown	c. 50%	c.25%	c.25%
1851—91	Springhill	c. 50%	c.25%	c.25%
1851—91	Stornoway	c. 95%	c.3%	c.2%
1851—91	Red Mountain	c. 75%	c.20%	c.5%

In the light of the above example, the over-all statistics for Quebec begin to appear meaningless, if not deceptive. As the twentieth century draws to a close, however, the language that was once spoken by such a significant proportion of the population is on the verge of extinction. Today, English is spoken by most of the descendants of the first settlers and French by an increasing proportion. Clearly then, it cannot be language or ethnic background that decides or dictates *cultural identity.*

The Finnish folklorist Lauri Honko suggests that one of the most valuable results of researching cultural identities is to promote awareness of emerging identities, especially in newer countries (his plea is for the Third World) so that we can "watch it as it happens" and be able to recognize changes and trends.[4] I would propose, however, that the most important value in this study, in terms of *identity*, is to stimulate an awareness in Quebec that *cultural identity* is not simply a matter of recording "ethnic identity", but has a much more significant meaning. The acknowledgement of ethnic identity may emerge on modern Census returns, but a statistical detail such as this will do little more than record the fact that there are over 60 "ethnic minorities" in Quebec. It would be just as useful, or not, to know that 37% of them take size 6 in shoes. If the province of Quebec is to benefit from any information about the minority groups who have all contributed to the past and to the present, then surely what is called for is something rather more significant.

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[3] Again, it becomes obvious that the term is unsatisfactory and deceptive as many of these English speakers were Irish and Lowland Scots.

[4] Lauri Honko, "Studies on Tradition and Cultural Identity: An Introduction" in *Tradition and Cultural Identity*, p. 10.

In putting forward a case for the study of history and tradition *at a local level*, American folklorist Lynwood Montell points out that

> Local history serves as a microcosm of a nation's history. Trends in attitudes, thoughts, and economic concerns at the national level may be discerned and documented at the local level.[5]

Furthermore, British anthropologist Anthony P. Cohen strongly recommends that "we should seek to learn about the whole by acquiring knowledge of its parts, rather than by ignoring them... *Local experience mediates national identity.*"[6]

Had I been writing a thesis on *identity* fifty years ago, there is no doubt that it would have had an entirely different emphasis, and, as a result, a different approach, and other conclusions. One could be fairly certain that, in singling out the major factors affecting the *identity* of Quebec's Hebridean population half a century ago, the emphasis would have been on the Gaelic language, and the accompanying wealth of oral tradition in the form of Gaelic songs, stories, sayings, and so on.[7] Fifty years ago, however, I did not exist, but those who did experienced an entirely different Eastern Townships to the one I have just described. In a bi-lingual article written almost 25 years ago, entitled "The Scottish Highlands of Quebec: Gaidhealatachd Chuibeic", the reporter states:

> At the time of the first Great War there were approximately two thousand five hundred Gaels in Marsboro alone.[8] We were talking with a man who was born in Milan, who told us that he

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5 Lynwood Montell, *From Memory to History*, p. 21, my emphasis above.

6 A.P. Cohen, *Belonging*, p. 13, his emphasis.

7 The impressive collection of Prof. Charles Dunn of Harvard University contains a number of Gaelic songs from Quebec, sung in the 1940s and 50s by singers with strong voices, surrounded by animated companions prompting them to give a rendition of this or that local favourite. Over a dozen of these songs formed the core of a Ph.D. thesis by Dunn's student, Nancy Rose Dunkley, *Studies in the Scottish Gaelic Folk-song Tradition in Canada*, unpublished, Harvard University, Cambridge, 1984. All the texts and melodies included in the thesis are fully transcribed and discussed.

8 This figure is excessive for one settlement. More accurately, it would cover several townships.

> did not know that there was any other language in the world but Gaelic until he was seven years old.[9]

This is a far cry from the situation today—one Gaelic-speaker in Marsboro (Angus Morrison), and one partial-speaker in Milan, (Ruth Nicolson), with a few others scattered throughout the other settlements. But it is the old story: we are not aware of how distinctive our culture is from that of any other group until we encounter something entirely different—language, dress, customs, religion, and so on. In Cohen's terms:

> We become aware of culture—more specifically, of *a* culture—when we are brought up against its boundaries: that is, when we become aware of *another* culture, of behaviour which deviates from the norms of our own. Put briefly...we are not aware of the distinctiveness of, and the circumscription, of our own behaviour until we meet its normative boundaries in the shape of alternative forms.[10]

Moreover, we are less likely to value the distinctiveness of our own culture until it comes under some kind of threat. In the Eastern Townships, the "other culture" co-existing beside that of the Gaelic-speaking, Presbyterian Eastern Townshippers is, of course, that of the French-speaking, Roman Catholic Québecois. From the earliest beginnings, clearly there were major differences, but there was also a mutual recognition and appreciation of those differences which contributed to the level of harmony and co-operation that characterized the "early days" of this part of Québec. The co-existence of two (or more) distinct cultures is not an impossible dream; it has been shown to work in many parts of Canada, a country that prides itself on its multicultural approach to national issues. Actual examples of Gaelic and French co-existing in harmony can be seen in parts of Nova Scotia, and the Codroy Valley in Newfoundland, where both languages survived for a number of generations. Admittedly, the majority of people in both groups shared the same religion, Roman Catholicism. It was not the differences between them which eventually led to a

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9 The clipping from the newspaper, which was among Duncan McLeod's papers, was published in *The Clansman News*, 1970. I am grateful to Duncan for lending it to me.

10 Anthony P. Cohen, *Belonging*, p. 4, his emphasis.

shift in language use to English, or to a blend of various elements of these cultures, but other factors entirely.[11]

When one who has studied the history of the emigration from the Outer Hebrides and has learned of the hard work and effort to establish thriving communities in the Eastern Townships, observes the enormous shift in language use and overall pattern of cultural identity, the question immediately arises "Whatever happened?" The ageing Scotch population, who have discussed this very question among themselves on countless occasions, must weary of trying to answer it, though they scarcely ever do so without emphasising at the same time how strong the Gaelic influence once was. Presented in the most simple terms, as far as I can ascertain, there appear to have been two main directions from which forces have been exerted:

- first and foremost, albeit very subtly, from *within* the community, hereafter sub-headed Internal Influences.
- and secondly, though eventually far more powerfully, from *outwith* the community, hereafter sub-headed External Influences.

Internal Influences

To begin with, there were intermittent indications that, within the group, Hebridean culture was not as highly valued during the first half of the twentieth century as it is now. To cite one small example from Muriel Mayhew, which, in itself, may seem like an insignificant comment, but, on a deeper level, displays the symptoms of this "undervaluing" of culture:

> [My mother] brought these wooden egg cups [when she came over] from the Old Country, from Keose, and they smelled of peat. And she used to scrub them to get the smell of peat off them. It was awful [that she used to do that]! I'd like them to have the smell of peat on them today! ... She just didn't like the smell or perhaps everybody else didn't like the smell! [Nov. 14, 1990]

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[11] In *Songs Remembered in Exile*, John L. Campbell discusses language-use and shift in Nova Scotia, pp. 32-35. Factors affecting changes in the Codroy Valley are discussed briefly in *The Last Stronghold*, pp. 51-54 and 192-3.

To get rid of every trace of the blackhouse was her aim, as if her new neighbours would think less of her because of her humble beginnings. Similar examples could be cited in Gaelic Scotland: in my teens and twenties I knew people of my own age ashamed to be viewed as Highland/Gaelic/crofting, who, now, two decades later, assert all of these images as and when it suits, simply because it is suddenly desirable to be from a Highland/ Gaelic/crofting background—there is prestige attached to being any or all of these.

And if the outward appearance of house, home, or dress, was important to identity, so also was language-use in terms of how the individual would be regarded by the rest of the world, or how (s)he would "get on in it". Let us consider, for example, two contrasting situations involving language-use. The first is from the pen of Johnnie "Bard" MacLeod, who, in a letter to Duncan McLeod, explained his reasons for writing his *Memoirs:*

> If Dell is ever again inhabited, the future generations might know the type of people that had once lived there... it is too important to become obscure and forever lost.[12]

He recalls a neighbour of his, John J. MacDonald who was born in Tolsta, Quebec and later moved to Dell. Johnnie "Bard" remembers that he "spoke Gaelic better than English... [and] years later he journeyed to Lewis and brought back Annie" who became his wife. *"...She fitted into the life of Dell like a pocket in a shirt,"* and together they raised an entirely Gaelic-speaking family.[13] To Annie and John MacDonald, speaking their mother tongue was the natural thing to do; there was no question of having to learn English to operate the family farm in Dell, for when the children went to school they would (and did) "pick it up with the rest of them". Of their generation, it appears that Annie and John MacDonald (born before the turn of the century), along with a few

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12 The thirteen letters have already been referred to as *Memoirs of Dell.* The author did not publish the manuscript, but had three copies made, one of which he gave to Duncan McLeod, along with a letter from which the above quotation comes.

13 Johnnie "Bard" MacLeod, op cit, p. 55, my italics.

families such as the Morrisons at Cruvag and the MacKenzies in Scotstown, were becoming the exception rather than the rule.[14]

The second example that considers language-use, demonstrates the attitude that began to emerge as the more common by far. As in the Highlands of Scotland, considerable doubt began to creep into many families where Gaelic had been the mother tongue. One typical example was that of Donald Morrison who was born to Gaelic-speaking parents in the fairly isolated community of Red Mountain. Like many of their generation, his parents were of the increasingly common opinion that their children would "get on better in life" if English was their first language, and so they spoke English to the children and Gaelic to each other. It became almost the norm for that generation, and Donald, like many of his contemporaries in the Eastern Townships, and the next generation on the Hebridean side of the Atlantic, firmly believed that the decision was one which not only deprived them of a birthright but actually *disadvantaged* them in life. As Russell MacIver put it, "Well, that was a mistake; a bad one too! We'd learn English, [when we went to school] I'm sure!"

It was not until it was far too late, and the situation had changed almost irreversibly, that an entire generation of partial- and non-Gaelic speakers could see that their own parents had actually scored a series of "own goals" in the language game. Not that their French neighbours insisted that they should speak English; far from it. The Gaels made the initial move themselves, ensuring that the "other team", the French in this case, would eventually win, hands down. Little did anyone realize at the time that the Gaelic language would slide into such decline that there would be no going back. Furthermore, those who denied their mother tongue in favour of English, scarcely imagined that it would not be *that* language which would ultimately take over among the population of the region. That fact was not to dawn upon them till much later.

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14 Though there were several others not named here, these families were still very much in the minority.

Apart from language, the other feature of the Hebridean settlers that was most "different" to their French-Canadian neighbours was their religion. As already discussed in Chapter 3, the brand of Presbyterianism that characterized the group was very much the same as that found in the Isles of Lewis and Harris. To the outsider, or more specifically to their French Catholic neighbours, the strict guidelines that everyone was expected to follow were most noticeable in the observance of the Sabbath,[15] and in their attitude to music and dancing. Over the years, however, attitudes began to soften and changes began to take place, as Isobel Stewart of Dell explained:

> Well, in my day, I'd say, after the old folks died, like my grandparents, things then began to change; younger people would read and hum [songs]—and they'd come back [from the States or our west] with all the new ideas, you know... and the [Second World] War made a lot of changes with everybody in every way. Oh yes, I'm sure the war had a lot to do with it; and you know, a lot of boys coming over with new brides from different countries, and you know, changed a lot of things. But it's the younger generation, of course, is what changed a lot of the stuff, and the old people thought some of the stuff was quite all right; they were getting sick of some of the old ways, but the real dyed-in-the-wool ones never changed. [BEK 9]

Despite significant changes that have taken place, there are still enormous differences between the two religions. If *les Ecossais'* observance of the Sabbath proves to be somewhat of a mystery to the French, then the Gaels find themselves not only mystified but even scandalized by a number of features of Catholicism, including the apparent absence of Sunday observance. Although Presbyterian preachers have, until relatively recently, been known to preach from the pulpit against Roman Catholic doctrines,[16] and theological discussions in the home occasionally include references to the lack of scriptural evidence for specific features of Catholicism, including the status of the Pope, the one feature that affected the older generation most of all has been the ubiquitous appearance of holy statues and shrines. For those who were reared on the Bible and the Catechism it was a fearful

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15 Guy Lalumière remarks upon this in *Stornoway*, p. 36.

16 Preaching against certain doctrines is not, however, the same as "preaching against Roman Catholics" as some would imply.

breach of the second Commandment: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above..."[17] Not only are these "graven images" outside churches, but at roadsides and cross-roads, beside public buildings and frequently so close to some of the homes of their neighbours that there is no escaping the technicolour range that now prevails: there are larger-than-life Jesus figures with outstretched arms; there are home-made shrines ingeniously made from discarded bath-tubs with the taps-end buried approximately one-third into the ground, and Mary, in prayerful pose, standing under the arch. Affectionately referred to as "bathtub Madonnas", they are usually positioned near the house with an array of colourful flowers surounding them, real or plastic, and in recent years an increasing number of plastic ducks, flamingoes and other creatures have been added to the holy display. The Presbyterians keep a polite silence outside their own homes, and while the older generation are said to have despaired, or even averted their eyes, the present generation are cautious never to offend their neighbours by mentioning them. What would they say? Sometimes they appear to be unsure which offends more, the "graven images" or the poor taste. Better to remain silent, is the rule.[18]

As far as is known, this perfect tolerance in public has an unbroken record since the Hebrideans settled in the Eastern Townships. Considering the Protestant-Catholic spread in Scotland, the attitude in Quebec parallels that which exists between the Outer Hebridean islands, where no aggression is anticipated between the two groups. I would speculate, however, that had the Eastern Townships been settled by, say, Glasgow-Irish immigrants, their French neighbours would have known an entirely different set of reactions, including the as-yet unknown

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17 Deuteronomy, Ch. 5, 8-10; see also Exodus, Ch. 20, 4-6. The Second Commandment is Question Number 49 in the Shorter Catechism. Also of importance are Numbers 50, 51 and 52 which elaborate upon the "requirements"of, the "reasons annexed" to, and the things forbidden by the second commandment.

18 A familiar phrase in many homes (including my mother's) runs along the same lines: "If you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything at all."

phenomenon of vandalism. But public attitude and private perception are two very different ideals[19]. Within their own group, the feelings of the Hebridean Presbyterians run deeply. There is an indignation and a hurt that is expressed in terms of private comment, and occasionally in the form of less private jokes. The jokes do not give the impression of being told with animosity, but merely a way of releasing some of the feelings that emerge from daily confrontations, for example, Jesus surrounded by his ducks, or watching his flamingoes in the snow. As folklorist Robert Cochran puts it, one can sense instead that "there is a defeat at the heart of every joke, a sorrow in the heart of every joker... the joke is a protest...but its efficacy is psychological, not political"[20] or chauvinistic.

At its height, in the late 1940s, the form of protest which expressed most vehemently the Scotch Presbyterian feelings of distaste towards the French Catholic ambience, was a Gaelic satire, *Oran nam Frangach*, composed by local bard Murdo "Buidhe" MacDonald.[21] To the outsider who understands nothing of the culture or the situation, the content and tone of the song would be instantly offensive. As already explained in Chapter 3, however, the real sting or "bite" in the satire does not come from a wishy-washy portrayal of the subject, but from a dramatic and pointed emphasis of the key issues. Somewhat akin to the caricature, where certain features are singled out by the artist and exaggerated, often outrageously, with the aim of shocking observers into paying attention, so the satire can also shock, as this one does, and will. It can also make listeners laugh, even when "outsiders" see nothing to laugh about. On one level, it is

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19 Anthropologist John Szwed has discussed this issue in his book about the Codroy Valley (referred to as the community of "Ross" in an attempt to preserve anonymity). See *Private Cultures and Public Imagery: Interpersonal Relations in a Newfoundland Peasant Society*. The observer's views surrounding such a subject can be highly controversial (as Szwed's were) and completely dependent upon the researcher's understanding and interpretation of what (s)he observes.

20 Robert Cochran, "'WHAT COURAGE!' Romanian 'Our Leader' Jokes", *JAF*, Vol. 102, p. 272.

21 In the Isle of Lewis, Donald MacDonald refers to a branch of the same family, the "Buidheadh" MacDonalds, who, for generations, have been known to compose songs and poems. *The Tolsta Townships*, p. 28.

laughter at the expense of others, thus it may seem cruel or nasty, but on a deeper level, it is laughter that is weighed down with sadness, anger, indignation, helplessness, and despair. If, through lack of understanding of all (or even any) of the factors involved, the listener takes offence, or if (s)he happens to identify with the features that are satirized, then the song becomes problematic to the "outsider". Yet very few "outsiders" have heard the song, as the Gael will choose to sing a satirical song only in what (s)he considers to be a suitable context. It would not, for example, have been sung to offend listeners such as the Legendre family, who, although French and Catholic, do not in any way exemplify the issues satirized. Taken out of context, however, such a satire could be dangerously misunderstood. Nevertheless, the only access that "outsiders" might gain to such a song would be through a folklore collection or archive. Unfortunately, already a certain amount of damage may have been done to the cause of understanding between the Gaels and the French, as part of *Oran nam Frangach* has been lifted out of context and published in at least two collections. The excerpt is prefaced only by judgemental remarks which tell more of the self-righteous indignation and total lack of understanding of those responsible for publishing than of the song-maker and his society.[22]

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22 Prefaced by L. Doucette's comment "several of the less offensive stanzas are quoted here", six verses (of fifteen) with translation of "Oran na Frangach" (from my 1976 collection), appear in *Cultural Retention*, pp. 141-143. Exactly the same excerpt is quoted by J.I. Little in *Nationalism, Capitalism, and Colonization*, pp. 144-145. He erroneously refers to it as a "Gaelic lament", and credits me, p. 261, note 67, for "providing" him with the words and translation. This is completely incorrect, as I have never had any communication from him, and was never approached for texts, translations or any other information. Apart from misinforming, indeed deceiving, his readers, Little not only contravenes the code of good practice in academic scholarship, but takes the song completely out of context and misuses it in a very detrimental manner, damaging to Gaels and French alike.

Oran na Frangach[23]

le Murdo "Buidhe" MacDonald[24]

1.
Nach bochd mar chuir na Pàpanaich
An t-àit' so air mhi-dhòigh
Tha dachaidhean luchd Gàidhlig
Aig Pàpanaich an Ròimh.
'Se sin an nì a shàraich mi
'Se dh'fhàg mo nàdur leòint
Nach fhaic mi duine ach Frangach
Anns a' ghleann san robh mi òg.

2.
Dh'fhalbh a nis na h-àitean sin
Bu tràth do'n thug mi spéis.
Far an òg an deacha m'àrach,
Gach oidhche is là gun éis.
Tha na cnuic 's na glinn a b' fheàrr leam,
Na àite fon a' ghréin,
An diugh aig clann nam Pàpanach,
Na plàighean grannda, breun.

3.
'Se Frangaich odhar lìgich,
A chì mi anns gach àit.
Na mnathan òg, is aosd' aca,
Le n'aodainn lachduinn grannd'.
Le croisean agus griogagan,
Le delbhean taois 's buntàta,
Le Sagairtean, 's le iobairtean,
'S uile innleachdan, a' Phàp.

4.
Tha cainnt an t-sluaigh cho neònach leam
Is m'eòlas orr' cho gann
Ged bhruidhneas iad 'nan cànan
Cha'n e 'Ghàidhlig chaomh a th'ann.
Cha'n fhaic mi gruaidhean ròsach ann
Aig òighean na aig clann
Bho dh'fhalbh na Gàidheil bhòidheach as
Le'n gruaidh mar ròs nan gleann.

5.
Tha Winslo nis 'na fhasach
Far 'na dh'fhàs da daoine treun,
Tha Whitton air na plàighean ud,
Is pairt do Mharston féin;...

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23 The text reproduced here (in the original orthography) is one which was sent to me in 1976 in response to my letter to the *Sherbooke Record*. I did not meet anyone who could sing the song till my return visit in 1990.

24 The composer was a brother-in-law of Mrs R.E. Morrison, i.e. Angus Morrison's uncle.

Tha Beinn-Niss, 's Beinn-Bharbhais aca,
Tha Baile Thalasta féin aca
'S tha sagart ann a Lingwick,
'S air Hampton rinn iad greim.

6.
Cha chluinn mi 'n diugh a' Ghàidhlig
Mar a b'àbhaist bhith 'ga seinn,
Is gillean agus òighean
Nuair bhiodh iad móran cruinn
'S an sluagh tha nis ri tàmh ann
Chan e 'Ghàidhlig th'ac' mar chainnt,
Ach godail shalach, ghrannda,
Thug na plàighean as a Fhraing.

7.
Cha chluinn mi n'diugh a' Ghàidhlig,
Far na dh'àraicheadh na seòid.
'S aodainn odhair ghrannd',
Chì mi n' àite Clann MhicLeòid.
Chan fhad bhios Dia na Sàbaid,
Anns an àite so nas mò.
Le iseanan nam Pàpanach,
Tha'n t-àite's air dalladh beò.

8.
Tha Eaglais aca a Steòrnabhagh
A chosd dhaibh móran prìs.
Tha Sagart agus òighean ann,
Aig Pàp a Ròimh fo chìs.
Cha chluinn mi 'Ghàidhlig bhòidheach ann,
Cànan còir nan Laoch,
Ach godail ghrannda Fhrangach,
Tha mar chainnt nan cearcan fraoch.

9.
O's uamhasach na biasdan iad,
Cho lìonmhor 's tha iad ann
Tha 'n t-àite so air a lìonadh aca,
Gach sliabh, is cnoc, is gleann.
Beinn-Ghabhsinn 's Beinn an Tàlleir aca,
'S cha'n eil an dàil ach gann.
Gus'm bi Beinn-Dal, 's Bein-Dòrainn aca,
Is Bosda, 's na bheil ann.

10.
'S biodh mo mhollachd-s' air na sàilean
Aig gach Pàpanach bheir ceum,
Air na cnuic a b' fheàrr leam,
'S air 'n àirde rinn mi leum.
Mas d'fhuair me idir eolas
A riamh air bron no péin.
Far 'na chaith mi laithean sòlais
Le òigridh mar mi fhéin.

11.
Tha na Frangach odhar lìonmhor,
'S iad ri sìolachadh cho luath,
Chan ann le neart an làmh
Fhuair iad tàmh 'sa bheinn a tuath,
Ach Gàidheil bhith 'ga fàgail,
'Sam Pàpa ri tabhairt buaidh.
'Se sin a chuir do'n choire iad,
'S thug còir dhaibh sa Bheinn-Ruaidh.

12.
Tha dachaidhean air fhàsachadh,
Bh'air àiteachadh aon uair
Le Gaidheil mhaiseach, bhàidheil,
Tha 'n t-àit' aca an diugh fuar.
Ach sgap iad as gach ceàrnaidh,
'S tha pàirt aca anns an uaigh.
'S tha m'Pàp', ri dèanamh gairdeachas,
'S 'm Pàp ri faighinn buaidh.

13.
Na h-eòin bu bhinn a b'àbhaist
Bhith seinn air bhàrr nan craobh,
Theich iad roimh na Pàpanaich,
Cha b'fheàrr leo bhith ri 'n taobh.
Cha tuigeadh iad na Frangaich,
Is cha robh 'n cainnt leo caomh,
'S cha d'fhuirich de na h-eòin sin
Ach na ròcaisean mhì-naomh.

14.
Bho'n fhuair na Frangaich shalach ud
Air gach fearann greim.
Theich na féidh 's na gearran as,
'S gach beathach glan na ghné,
Ach dhuirich *skunk* an fhasaich ann,
Tha gné innt' mar iad fhéin;
'S cha d'charaich a' mhial-mhàgag as,
'Se Pàpanach th'innt' fhéin.

15.
Tha dachaidhean nan Gàidheal aca,
Far robh iad féin 'san clann
Gu sona 'laighe 's ag éiridh,
Le 'n air feadh nan gleann,
Tha Baile Uig 's Bail' Ailein aca,
'S a h-uile baile th'ann.
'S cha 'n fhada gus 'm bidh 'm bailes' aca,
Le sagairt air an ceann.

A Song About the French

1.
Is it not awful how the Papists
Have upset this place.
The homes of the Gaelic speakers
Belong to Roman Catholics.

That is what has distressed me,
And has offended my nature [goaded me into a tempter].
That I see only Frenchmen
In the glen where I was young.

2.
Those places are no more
That I loved in my young days.
And where I was brought up
Each day and night without want.
The hills and glens that I loved more
Than any place under the sun
Today belong to the Catholics
The ugly loathsome plagues.

3.
It's the sallow, sly Frenchmen
I see everywhere.
Their young and old women
With their ugly swarthy faces,
With crosses and beads,
With images of dough and potatoes
With priests and sacrifices
And every device [invention] of the Pope.

4.
The language of the people sounds strange to me
And my knowledge of them is scant.
Though they talk in their tongue
It is not the pleasant Gaelic.
I never see any rosy cheeks
On maidens or on children
Since the bonnie Gaels have left
With their cheeks like the roses of the glens.

5.
Winslow is now a deserted wilderness
Where the brave men grew up.
Those plagues have taken Whitton,
And part of Marston itself.
They have Ness Hill and Ben Barvas
And also the town of Tolsta
There is a priest in Lingwick
And they've also claimed Hampton.

6.
Today I do not hear Gaelic
Where it used to be sung.
By the boys and girls
When they often met together;

The people who now reside there
Do not have Gaelic as their language,
But dirty, horrid gibberish,
The plagues brought from France.

7.
Today I do not hear Gaelic
Where the heroes were raised,
Sallow ugly faces
I see instead of Clan MacLeod.
Not much longer will the God of the Sabbath
Remain in this place.
With the brood of the Catholics
The place is teeming alive.

8.
They have a church in Stornoway
That cost them lots of money.
There's a priest and nuns
Employed by the Pope in Rome.
I do not hear the beautiful Gaelic there
The fine language of the heroes
But horrible chattering in French
Like the cackle of moor-hens.

9.
Oh, they are such awful creatures
So prolific they are.
This place is just filled with them;
Every meadow, hill, and glen,
Galson Hill, Taylor's Hill, they have,
And it won't be long before
They have Ben Dal, Ben Doran,
Bosta and the whole lot.

10.
My curse be on the heels
Of every Papist who takes a step
On the hills I liked best,
And on whose tops I skipped
Before I ever experienced
Feelings of sorrow or pain
Where I spent happy days
With youngsters like myself.

11.
The sallow French are plentiful
With them reproducing at such speed,
It was not by the strength of their arm
That they settled in the north hills;
But because the Gaels were leaving them
And the Pope claiming the victory.
That's what brought them to the corries
And gave them a right to the Red Mountain.

12.
Homes are now derelict
That were once farmed
By handsome, kindly Gaels
Whose places are now cold.
But they have scattered from every area
And some of them are in the grave
And the Pope is the one who is rejoicing
And the Pope is the one who is winning.

13.
The birds that used to sing
So sweetly in the tree-tops
Have flown from the Papists
They didn't want to be with them.
They couldn't understand the French
And they didn't like their speech,
And none of these birds is left
But the unholy crows.

14.
Since those dirty Frenchmen
Grabbed all the land,
The deer and hares have deserted it
And every animal of clean habit,
But the skunk of the wastelands stayed there;
She is the same sort as them
And the toad did not move away,
She is a Catholic herself.

15.
They possess the homes of the Gaels
Where they lived with their children
Happily sleeping and waking,
With their cattle roaming the glens.
They have the townships of Uig and Balallan,
And every other village,
And soon they will have this village
With a priest at their head.

Nobody would deny that these are bitter words. Nevertheless, to use them in the manner in which social historian J.I. Little does in *Nationalism, Capitalism, and Colonization,* is as foolhardy as to sue the artist for libel because his caricature grossly exaggerates the facial features of a politician. Closer to the truth would be a complex web of attitudes woven by both parties, with both the Presbyterian Gaels and the Roman Catholic French expressing a range of opinions and feelings that characterized their people. As one might expect, there were reservations on both sides, just as

there were people of intolerant attitude on both sides. Elements of mystery surrounding the "other group" tend to promote fear of the unknown, which can only be dispelled by getting to know more about them and building up trust to replace the fear. Only the oldest inhabitants could remember aspects of this gradual process, such as Maryann Morrison who could recall the 1890s when there were very few French-speakers in her home community of Marsboro. Nevertheless, they accepted each other as good neighbours do:

> We didn't notice no difference. They were very nice. When they would meet a Scotchman on the road they'd tip their hat for them...which was very nice. [BEK 17:A]

She was of the opinion that people should be accepted for their own individual qualities, regardless of language or religion. While this ideal may sometimes be difficult to put into practice, Maryann was certainly put to the test when the next generation, her own children, became adults. She and her husband "R.E." were in the first generation to be confronted by the issue of intermarriage between the two groups, as two of their sons married French Roman Catholic girls. Maryann remembered when she first had to consider this possibility:

> When Sam came home from Montreal to Megantic—you know, they always take home their girlfriends...and Sam came home with this girlfriend, and in the morning we were talking like this, and he said: "How do you like my girlfriend?"
>
> "Is she French?"
>
> "'Se gu dearbh," he said, "'se gu dearbh." *[That's for sure.]*
>
> But we didn't find no difference. She's just like yourself and myself, and she likes to go to meetings and attend all the meetings. But she goes to her own, she keeps her own [religion] in her mind. I don't blame her. She was brought up to it. But she don't interfere with us at all, at all. [BEK 17:A]

Many years later, in 1992, when the same subject was being discussed by Jean and Alex MacIver, Maryann Morrison was remembered as "a very wise lady", ahead of her time in her philosophy and attitude. The MacIvers acknowledged that there were elements of prejudice on both sides which took many years and much effort to dispel. Alex, who sang *Oran nam Frangach*, appeared to reflect more amusement than empathy with the sentiments of the song, as he smiled even while singing the most

scathing lines. He then offset the bitterness expressed in the song by recalling one of his uncles who made a much louder statement to his family than *Oran nam Frangach* ever did:

> *He married a Catholic in New York (but she was Scotch) and when they came home to visit, [my great-grandfather], the Bugler's father wouldn't give him the horse to go to church. They had to go to Mass at 5 o'clock in the morning, when they were home visiting. They were in Marsboro and the church was in Megantic; he never came back, not even to his father's funeral nor nothing. [Fieldwork notebook, August 5, 1992]

By the late 1930s, the start of the Second World War, however, the rapidly increasing number of French incomers was not attributable to intermarriage, but to a take-over of land by French settlers from north of the area. At first it appeared to be "just the occasional farm" that went up for sale, because the "old folks could no longer manage it and the young ones had moved away." Though the pattern rapidly escalated in the 1940s, even before the turn of the century there had been a steady movement of young people, mostly men, who "went out west". To begin with it was often for a sense of adventure, or to make a "quick dollar", that they went, but some decided to stay, as there were usually other brothers and sisters to carry on the family farm. Furthermore, many of the farms were not big enough or fertile enough to be sub-divided among several sons, so with this in mind, there was less reason to return to the Eastern Townships. Sometimes a sister would join her brother out west, or go "to the Boston States" to work in domestic service. During the 1920s the motor car industry attracted labour from the area, as former school-teacher and local historian Annie I. Sherman notes:

> When Henry Ford started to make his Ford motor car, he attracted many young men from Lingwick to work in his plant in Detroit. His $5.00-a-day wage was good news and big news at that time. Many left home to seek employment with him. Large numbers of Scottish families settled in Detroit and the Lewis Society was formed where they met together regularly. Many of these families did well for themselves.[25]

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25 Annie Isabel Sherman, *History: The Families of Sherman-MacIver with Stories of People and Places on the Eastern Townships*, p. 57.

Wherever they went to earn a wage, the hard-workers and adventurers could always return home for a holiday, and could usually help to support the family by sending money or the occasional parcel of clothing or other goods. This pattern was also very common among the French, who, like the Gaels, enjoyed the occasional boost to household expenses:

> Ma Joe sen' me twenty dollar,
> Jus' las' week from Lowhell, Mass.[26]

Angus Morrison's wife, Mary, whose family, *les Martins*, moved into the area before she was born, also watched this ebb and flow of population, which she saw as a pattern that had emerged around the beginning of the century:

> In Stornoway where I was born we were across from some Morrisons—when we [my family] went to Stornoway it was all Scotch development...And the people in Stornoway they start[ed] to move away. When the kids would get older they would move to the States to work, or go out west where there was work and an easier life. [Aug. 7,1992]

As long as it was only "the odd one", most families were big enough to sustain a comfortable balance between those at home and those away, and could maintain the continuity necessary to the upkeep of home and farm.

During the 1914-18 War, however, all this was to change. So many young men enlisted that it was not only individual families but entire communities that suffered drastically from the consequences.[27] To begin with, nobody could possibly have seen the far-reaching effects; the call-up of men to fight for the Old Country was strongly influenced by the fact that most of the immigrants felt loyal to the homeland. Optimistically they signed up, thinking it would be short-term, and that life would be back to

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26 Oscar Dhu, "Christmas in Quebec". The "parcel from America" is also well-known to many Scottish families who, especially between the wars, and even into the 1950s, looked forward to this boost to family goods.

27 To this day, Canada's involvement in the two world wars is a very emotive subject, giving rise to heated discussion, varying opinions, and criticism of both the Canadian and the British Governments. It is also the subject of several books and articles. *From Romance to Reality*, edited by Peggy O'Hara, deals with the subject of war brides.

normal as soon as it was over. Even the bitter experience of the First World War did not dampen the spirits of those who enlisted for the Second, as war veteran Bill Young explains:

> Another big thing was the two World Wars. Now, in the First War, there was a high, high establishment around this area—of English-speaking people—I mean the *Scottish* were predominant. And Scotstown suffered heavily in the First War. At the Ypres ... and places like that, they lost a tremendous amount of men. And then in the last war, you had the same thing—you had a heavy enlistment all through there, "English-speaking" again, you see. And then one entire regiment was wiped out at Hong Kong, eh? Well, that was fellows I went to school with. Well, the whole class I went to school with were in that thing—my brother-in-law [__?], I don't know how many. Then of course, I, being raised in a Scottish district, thought I would go to Montreal and join the Black Watch; but fortunately, or unfortunately, I got side-tracked and joined an artillery unit. My brother joined the Black Watch and he was taken prisoner at Dieppe, (he's living up in St. Catherine's, now). So, there you had it again! Our whole high school classes that I went to school with disappeared out of the picture—they were killed or taken prisoner. Disappeared. There were no younger people left to take over. [BEK 3]

As was the case in crofting and farming communities in Britain, not everyone over the age of conscription was called up. Nevertheless, large families were suddenly reduced to having one son at home, who would find himself with ageing parents and the full responsibility of running the farm. For example, in the case of Maryann and "R.E." Morrison, by then in their late sixties, their busy household, which also included a very elderly, bed-ridden grandparent, had to be run with the help of only one son, Angus, and a daughter, Eva. When Angus got married, he brought his new bride, Mary, to his parents' homestead. Although the young couple took over more and more heavy work, when Angus and Mary began to have their own family, Mary's role had to adjust according to their needs. With no brothers left to help with the heaviest work, and no sisters to lend a hand as they once did, when R.E.'s health began to decline it was decided it would be too much for the younger couple to manage all the farming chores and the care of their ageing parents besides. In 1943 they made their decision to sell the farm, little knowing that the buyer had no intention of farming, but would, instead, run a lumber business, which, even fifty years later, and under new ownership, is still

profitable. Ironically, much of the new timber is cut from the area which once was fields and meadows, cleared by labour and toil by the first settlers, which, after years of being abandoned and neglected, is now "all growed over":[28]

> It breaks my heart to see this—the way Marsboro has gone... When we lived in Marsboro, before we sold the farm, there was around fifty-six all Scotch Gaelic families... In 1943 we sold the farm... We sold it to a woman for lumber...She cut all the lumber off. She had hired men, and they cut the lumber, and when she took all the lumber off the farm she sold it to somebody else... Imagine! My father going to Cruveg and no road or nothing...Just imagine the people that came out here—no road, no [farm-] animals or nothing. But [now, look at] the beautiful road here [made by the Government so that they could drive lumber trucks and huge gravel trucks on it], and nobody living here; oh the government made this road, they took a lot of gravel out of it. [Tape recorded in Angus's car; we drive on; noise of gravel road; stop tape and restart]...And there's nobody living on this road. Look how nice it is. [Aug. 7,1992]

Some families describe a similar scenario, beginning with the departure of the younger generation to get a university or college education. Until the First World War it had only been the occasional minister who received the privilege of a university education. In the years that followed, however, opportunities were afforded to many more young people, "even the girls", as former school-teachers Muriel Mayhew, Ruth Nicolson and Bernice Laurila will attest. Not only were there teachers, but also nurses, doctors and lawyers whose professions took them outwith the area. When it came time for the old folk to hand over the working of the land to the young, they found that they had no willing candidates for the job. Some of "the girls" *did* come back to teach or nurse, but generally they married into families whose sons were needed in similar circumstances. One by one, till it became almost inevitable, the "Scotch farms" went up for sale, and were quickly taken up by incoming French settlers.

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28 It is always a source of wonder to visitors from Scotland, especially those from the Outer Hebrides where trees are not only difficult, but impossible to cultivate, that windfall seedlings grow like weeds, and in the space of one generation land that was once farmed becomes "all growed over" [with trees], as the local people say.

Meanwhile, the older, already established, French families, such as the Legendres in Stornoway and the Poulins in Milan[29] were also educated in English-speaking schools. In discussing this subject, Ellen Legendre and her brother Alphonse ["Pit"], did not question the fact that their parents believed the schooling offered by the Scots to be superior to that available in the French schools:

> [There was] a big difference in education...there certainly was. And our Bishop there in Sherbrooke—he came here when my sister died—he himself said that he thought that the good part of us, or the good spirit, came from the Scotch people. [BEK 11]

Having had elementary education in Stornoway, when they were old enough to attend secondary school, Ellen and her sisters boarded at the convent school in Coaticook.[30] Her brother added that their Gaelic neighbours "were much better set up than the French," and could afford to send their children to "places like MacDonald College in Montreal..."

> And when they finished there was frequently nothing for them to do in Stornoway... a lawyer and a doctor was unlikely to want to take over his parents' farm... when the Scots parents reached old age there was no-one to take over[31]...And

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29 The Poulins ran the Bureau de Poste and a general store in Milan until the 1980s. They were the only French family in the village who were as fluent in English as in French, and were regarded as "very well educated". This is discussed by John and Christie MacKenzie, BEK 16.

30 J.I. Little notes that when Ferdinand Legendre sent his children to the Protestant School he was told by the curé *[incorrectly]* that this was against the law. Op cit, p. 233 and endnote 61; my square brackets. Ellen Legendre made no mention of this, but simply stated that they attended the convent school afterwards.

31 J. I. Little strongly disagrees with this widely expressed opinion. Having attempted to compare the education systems of the French and the Scots in the Eastern Townships, he suggests that the idea that the Scots "became overqualified for farm life is actually a myth". *Crofters and Habitants,* p. 242. He attempts to support his opposition to the prevalent opinion held by the older generation of French and Scots by singling out *one* French school which "managed to offer a more ambitious curriculum of secular subjects than did the Scots schools", giving as his evidence the fact that the St. Romain school records state that they included history, while none of the Scots school records make mention of it. P. 239. (By way of contrast, there is frequent mention in oral tradition.) Little concedes that, in general, the Scots opened schools earlier in the year and hired better quality teachers, (p. 242), but he trivialises the motivation of the Scots and their emphasis on good schooling and education by saying: "...for *if* the Scots placed more emphasis on educating their children than did the French Canadians, that impulse appears to have originated with their

> while there was a big demand from the French, they sold out. [BEK 11]

Almost all the buyers were from outside the area, from Beauce County to the north, where there was a land squeeze with more families looking for farms than could be found in that area. As soon as they realized the potential in the Eastern Townships there was a major influx of population. Ellen Legendre gave her perspective on the situation she observed as a young woman:

> The French people from Beauce started to come and buy their farms. The first thing we knew we had lost our good Scotch people for French people that couldn't be compared, because they were of a lower class. [BEK 11]

Resentment of incomers taking over the "Scotch farms" was not confined to the Gaels, as Ellen Legendre clearly suggests. Steadily and relentlessly, changes began to affect the society and the landscape, a process that continued over several decades, until in the 1970s, when I interviewed the Legendres, it was pronounced *complete* in Stornoway, where there was only one Gaelic-speaker left.[32] When questioned about resentment between the French and the Gaels, Ellen Legendre made very little of it, saying there was absolutely none in the early days and in her own youth, and none today because there were no Gaels left to feel resentful.

In an independent discussion in Lennoxville, many of the same points raised by the Legendres were also made by Bill Young whose comments are worth considering in the context of his entire conversation:

> Bill Young: And then, if you stop and figure, or you could look at the records of the younger folks born up through there, of Scottish descent, from both periods, like after the First War and after the Second War. Before the Second War, there was a tremendous amount of talent went out of this area. There were schoolteachers, doctors—all kinds of them graduating in that particular period. Nurses—and they just spread and no matter where you go in Canada today, and parts of the United States, you run across people and their origin is Megantic. It's tremendous, you know.

Bible-centred evangelicalism." p. 256. (My italics; but from my own experience of both French and Scots schools in the area, there can be no *if*.)

32 The same was true of Marsboro and Springhill (Nantes).

MB: A big brain-drain, as well as manpower?

BY: Yeah, manpower...**[33] Well, after the First World War, everyone went to the States—practically all of them. I had an uncle that was in the army and he came back—he was taken prisoner at Ypres [laughs] and after the war he came back and he stayed here a year, right, in Canada, and then he went right to the States... He went to Detroit. Detroit was the big industrial centre then. It was springing up, eh? And then, he's drifted from there to California. Now you'll find a lot of people in California from around these parts. And he died there, eh, five or six years ago. So wherever you go—my brother's in Ontario; my wife's sister is in Ontario; uh, people from all through here are all through Ontario.

MB: Do the Scots who are left resent the French take-over of their area in any way?

BY: Well, no, because the older Scottish people, they get along very well with the French, in the beginning. You see, there was no such thing [as resentment]. The Scottish have always seemed to be able to get along, no matter where they went, which is perhaps one of their strong points, eh? They could settle anywhere, and—No, they didn't [resent the French]! When I was a child there were French and there were Scotch. Oh, let us put it in a bigoted way—we thought we were the better race and we kept it that way! [laughs] But there was no, there was no down to, you know, any of this hatred, or anything [that we are beginning to detect in today's society]. We associated with French kids; we played with them; we chatted. And there were French families that leaned to speak the Gaelic!

MB: ...is it possible for you to look back objectively and consider whether or not you were economically better off than the French?

BY: No, no [he implies there was no question but that they were.] We were economically better off in the sense that we received an education and they didn't. Now there's the root of the whole evil.... The fact that their school system was separate from ours and they were under the domination of the church—completely!

MB: But did the Scots not have to memorize the Bible and the Catechism—?

BY: Yeah, we had to have that thoroughly ingrained in us... but the *teacher* was boss [as opposed to the priest or the church]. She held the sway, and if we came home with stories about being picked on, we were picked on when we got home. they'd say, "Go back to school; it's a place for you to *learn*...

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33 ** is to indicate the placement of a comment which I have moved to the next section as it specifically applies to the impact of Quebec's newer policies for French language and culture.

> while you're there you *will learn*, or else!" Well there again, we've fallen far down the ladder... You've got to have discipline. I don't care who you are. This permissive society is for the birds! You've got to have discipline. You've *got* to have it. [BEK 3]

One by one, the small schools closed down, and even the old churches began to change hands. For example, the Presbyterian Church in Marsboro was sold to the Catholic community who added a tall spire and several holy statues to the grounds; the one in Megantic was also sold, and though it had changed its function to that of restaurant-cum-gallery in the 1970s, it was up for sale again in 1993—empty, with *"Maison à vendre"* on the door.[34] How could the present-day visitor possibly know that this little brick building was once the place of worship of Gaelic-speaking inhabitants of the town? As they watched the sudden removal of established institutions such as the churches and schools, those who were attached to the area knew that their fragile culture had been overbalanced. In terms of what was happening to it, initially the Gaels may have been oblivious to their own part in its demise, but none could fail to recognise the second, far more powerful force that began *outwith* their community, that of the French incomers and the wider community of the Province of Quebec.

External Influences

As understood by Ellen Legendre, the incomers to the area had good reason to move, as the "Scotch farms" offered them an instant opportunity of making a living and raising a family in an area that had more to offer than the one they left. Catholic churches and French schools, generally attached to the churches, had already been established throughout the counties by the turn of the century,[35] so that the newcomers had none of the worries which concerned the first settlers, of where to worship and how to

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34 The case of the Megantic church was one of the reasons that the residents of Milan decided to have their church, St Mark's, demolished in the 1980s rather than watch it change hands and be used for secular purposes. [From a conversation with Duncan McLeod and Ruth Nicolson, 1991]

35 In a discussion on education, J.I. Little gives an overview of education at a local level. *Crofters and Habitants*, pp. 220-243.

educate their children. Despite today's frequently heard generalization that there was a need to assert the right of the French settlers to be educated in their mother tongue, from the earliest beginnings there has never been any questioning of this.

The steady shift in population from Gaels to French very soon gained such momentum that nobody of either group seems to remember a stage when there was half-and-half.[36] Suddenly the Gaels were by far in the minority, and the French had taken over so successfully that most did not seem to have any idea that the community they regarded as home had originally been carved out in the mid-19th century by a group of Presbyterians from Scotland. By the 1970s, many families were second and third generation descendants of the incomers from Comté Beauce, who had never even heard of Scotland, far less considered its significance in the context of the subject under discussion. This fact was clearly established the very week after I arrived in Quebec in 1976, when I attempted to respond to a question from my middle-aged French neighbour in Milan who, understandably, wanted to know where I was from. I explained that I had come from Scotland—"Je suis Ecossaise," *[I'm Scottish].* She hesitated, then asked "Nouvelle Ecosse?" *[Nova Scotia?]* Again I explained, this time being much more specific, mentioning the Old Country on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. Not a glimmer of understanding crossed her face, so she took a different approach; smiling with renewed enthusiasm, she asked me if I had *driven* all the way to Quebec. "Only part of the way," I added, before changing the subject.

In dramatic contrast to the educational and cultural awareness of the generation of Québecois characterized by the Legendres in Stornoway or the Poulins in Milan, I was to find out repeatedly that the complete lack of understanding conveyed by my neighbour was the rule rather than the exception. To extend the contrast outwith the Province of Quebec, in Newfoundland where

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36 Although I have repeatedly asked questions on this subject, I have never encountered any response which suggests that anyone ever noticed such a stage.

the Gaels and French co-existed for a similar length of time, I encountered none of this complete oblivion about Scotland—not even from an elderly French-speaker who, according to her own testimony, did not get past grade two at school. Like many of her contemporaries, she could associate Scotland with creativity and progress in North America—in exploration and mapping, in trade and commerce, in education, in science, and so on.

In his introduction to *Scotland: A Concise Cultural History*, Paul H. Scott writes "it is undeniable that Scotland, in a phrase often quoted by the Saltire Society, has been for many centuries a great creative force in European civilization."[37] North Americans are quick to point out Scotland's importance to the New World, with reminders that the MacKenzie River was named after a Scottish explorer (though many might not know he was a Lewisman), that Alexander Graham Bell's experimental work in Cape Breton eventually gave us the telephone, that John Logie Baird may be credited with the invention of the television, or even that Quebec's Bank of Montreal was established by a Scot. That is, unless they have never heard of such facts. It occurred to me in 1976, as it does now, that something has gone drastically wrong with Quebec's education system when it leaves so many of its people oblivious of basic general knowledge.

Nevertheless, the emergence of this new generation of Québecois, whose ideas of history and culture are so far removed from the "old style" exemplified by the Legendres, offered almost ideal conditions in which to cultivate new and powerful issues, those of language and separatism. The absence of one specific body of knowledge or understanding does not imply a gaping hole in the minds of the new generation, but rather raises the question "what fills that gap?" In a recent conference paper entitled "Whose Periodisation? Francophone Historians and the Canadian Past",[38] Peter D. Marshall brought up the question of school text-

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37 Op cit, p. 10.

38 The theme of the conference sponsored by the Centre of Canadian Studies at the University of Edinburgh in May 1994 was "Canada's Centuries: Periodisation As a Strategy for Understanding the Canadian Past". Peter Marshall presented his paper in the session on French Canada.

books dealing with Canadian history, and, in making a plea for a comprehensive book covering all aspects of the nation's history, he emphatically repeated that there is "no such book" available for schools. Having surveyed the material available, he drew attention to the omissions in Quebec's portrayal of Canada's history, implying that historians of the province have been content to highlight whatever aspects suit the cause they wish to promote.[39] Marshall's appeal to historians and academics to redress this balance confirmed my fear and suspicion that too many important facts of Canada's history are being denied to Quebec children. Meanwhile, during the past three decades, not a man, woman, or child, Francophone or Anglophone, could fail to have been impressed by the ceaseless repetition of information centred on Quebec policies on language and separatism.

In the early 1960s, when the idea of Quebec's separating from Canada first received widespread public attention, the Gaels in the Eastern Townships viewed the question with incredulity, attributing what seemed to be a far-fetched, unrealistic notion to "a few fanatics". Even the increasing pressure to use the French language did not, at first, seem to be anything more than a reflection of the fact that it was the majority language. As far as they were concerned, there had never been any question of the French having to use English as their language of commerce or education; the French had always had the freedom to speak French, therefore they were not aware of any need for pressure. By the mid-1970s, however, feelings were changing, and the children who grew up during the sixties were beginning to transmit cultural messages that reflected the pressure they felt by the changes in the political climate. In 1976, Bill Young, whose children were among that group, observed:

> Now that they've started this, eh, separatism, which of course, you know about—anybody knows what that is... Our young people are leaving, like my son, and daughter, Laurie, there.

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[39] The concept that texts can be moulded to fit the intended propaganda is, of course, not specific to Quebec, nor is it a recent phenomenon. It is as old as written history: George Buchanan's *History of Scotland* gave selective accounts, school text-books of American history do not mention all the dead Indians, in this century texts have been re-written to omit contributions made by Jews, and so on.

> Uh, chances are they may not be able to find what they want, a living, compared to the United States system, around here...they'll leave—they'll leave this area.[40] [BEK:3]

And leave they did, along with countless of their generation who, by the time new uni-language policy [sic] came in to effect in the following decade, had simply had enough.

Yet even in 1976 there was no possibility of the Scots—or the nation, for that matter—predicting the course of events that was to follow. Canada had been formulating her multi-cultural policies, attempting to create national guidelines that would ensure the safeguarding of minorities' rights, and the nation appeared to be enjoying a fairer approach to issues that concerned language and culture. In Quebec, the French could hardly be called a "minority", though as far as government statistics were concerned, the Canadian Census might well give that impression. This particular case was given special place at the Second Canadian Conference on Multiculturalism which was held in Ottawa, February 13—15, 1976.[41] On behalf of Canada's French-speaking population, Fr. Léger Comeau addressed the conference in a speech entitled "Multiculturalism—the Francophone Viewpoint"

> Although French-Canadians respect the rights of every Canadian, and although they appreciate the cultural contribution of the various Canadian ethnic groups, they do not want multiculturalism to be promoted at their expense, *and have no desire to... become the losers in a worthy cause.*[42]

Comeau's powerful address seemed to imply that Canada's multi-cultural policy-makers were considering some kind of competition for attention, that some would win, and by extension, others would lose, thus missing entirely the original aims of the debate. Had one been able to prophesy the collapse of the multi-cultural policy, perhaps Fr. Comeau could have been cautioned that there

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40 This statement was made in the context of the previous conversation, indicated **, footnote 31, above.

41 I attended the conference at the invitation of the Secretary of State, representing at that time Newfoundland's minority Scottish immigrant population.

42 Fr. Léger Comeau, address to the conference, "Multiculturalism—the Francophone Viewpoint", *Multiculturalism as State Policy*, Conference Report, p. 28, my italics.

would be no winners in this cause if Quebec continued to steam-roll single-mindedly along the route of separatism.

At the same conference, Clive Linklater spoke on behalf of the National Indian Brotherhood in a one-person session which, with hindsight, now seems like a token concession. In a speech published in the conference proceedings under the title of "Special Presentation", the dignified Mr Linklater, having listened patiently to all the policy-makers and delegates, replied:

> You now seek to establish a nation with a multiplicity of races, cultures and languages.
>
> You would leave us, *the indigenous owners of this land*, out of such an arrangement.[43]
>
> We consider such an action to be immoral, illegal, unethical, unChristian [sic], undemocratic and *contrary to all the values and mores you profess to believe.*[44]

But why, at this stage, bring in the remarks from another minority, albeit the one that represents Canada's native peoples? I believe that in tracing the virtual disappearance of one language group, in this case the Gaels of the Eastern Townships, one should also take heed to the pattern that could so easily be the fate of yet another group. Referring again to Lauri Honko's statements (cited above) on the values in researching cultural identities, he rightly claims that such studies may promote awareness of *emerging* identities.[45] Equally, however, I would claim that such a study may press for an urgent awareness of *disappearing identities.*

In a television documentary about Quebec, "Blood and Belonging",[46] viewers were left in no doubt that feelings run high in that province over issues of nationalism and identity. Suddenly the vitality and fervour of Quebec national pride in language and

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43 In his collection of papers, Duncan McLeod has a note stating that the area of the Eastern Townships settled by the Gaels had originally been settled by Abenaki Indians, who still inhabited the land in the 18th century. He gives no other source of reference.

44 Clive Linklater, *Multiculturalism as State Policy*, Conference Report, p. 177, my italics. His entire speech is pp. 173-177.

45 Lauri Honko, "Studies on Tradition and Cultural Identity: An Introduction" in *Tradition and Cultural Identity*, p. 10.

46 BBC 2, telecast Dec. 9, 1993.

culture evaporates when the camera is turned upon the chief of the Cree people. She tells of how Hydro Quebec, with full backing of the government, has succeeded in altering the landscape that sustained her people for over 5,000 years—hunters, fishermen and trappers whose skills were a way of life. In the eyes of the white man, the rivers are seen as potential power on an enormous scale, not just for Quebec, but to be sold for profit to their wealthy neighbour, America, and such vast tracts of barren wilderness have no obvious value, so can be flooded in the creation of dams. Today, the rivers are no longer navigable and the landscape has been drowned, and as payment, or perhaps by way of compensation, the Cree have been given government-built schools in which to educate their children. Provided they remember that there is only one *official* language in Quebec, French, they may learn to speak, read and write Cree, and sing Cree songs. A few moments of the documentary showed an example of one little class of children happily singing in their native language. It was without comment, however, that the song happened to be a translation of one of the white man's songs, using the white man's melody and therefore denying completely the music of the Cree. Did nobody else notice? Surely this is a stern warning that the same surreptitious factors are at work on the Cree language as have been steadily working on the Gaelic language on both sides of the Atlantic. In this case, it may be quite subtle, but the fact is that the five-year-old who innocently sings these songs will grow up *believing* that (s)he is singing traditional Cree songs, thus even in using the native language there is persistent cultural distortion.

It is a source of complete dismay to Quebeckers whose mother tongue was not French[47] that the language policy is such an all-consuming issue. As one English-Quebecker pointed out, the English-speakers did not *make* the French speak English, there were always French schools in which to educate their children,[48]

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47 According to the BBC documentary, there are 62 ethnic minorities represented in Montreal alone. Most speak French, but if they have retained a home-language, it is all the more valued.

48 J.I. Little credits the Catholic church with the diligence that ensured educational opportunities for all French children in the area. Op cit, pp. 233-239.

and they always had the freedom of choice where language was concerned.[49] Today, however, with the current legal state of language policy, based on the fact that language is the expression of a culture, the French are *making* everyone speak French, thus denying that other ethnic groups have a culture that is worth expressing, recognising or preserving.

Returning to the case of the native peoples, and to a more optimistic era of folklore collection in Canada, the past century has seen collections of lore, language and literature of the Indian and Inuit peoples which, in sheer volume, far surpass any in French or English.[50] When Quebec's best-known folklorist, Marius Barbeau, died in 1969, the Canadian Press reminded Canadians of the enormous contribution he had made to collecting and preserving the folklore of the nation:

> During fifty years of research, much of it on long and arduous field trips, he produced a wealth of knowledge...he delved deeply into French-Canadian folklore and into the story of the Indian peoples, their legends and culture. He gave the National Museum a collection of 195 Eskimo songs, more than 3,000 Indian, close to 7,000 French-Canadian, and 1,500 old English songs. Many of them are still on the old tube-like records that came off his Edison recorder... "I would need two lives to process all my research," he once said.[51]

If he *wished* for two lives to process his research, he would not be alone, for others, too, would welcome a Barbeau of the 1990s, a "true-born son of Quebec", not simply to process his research, but more especially to add his voice to others which appeal for the Québecois to value *all* the various cultures which have helped

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49 My own experience testifies to this, as I was free to send my own son to the neighbourhood school in Nantes, which was entirely French-speaking. The closest English-speaking school to Milan was in Bury, nearly 30 miles away. Regrettably, the decision to enrol at Nantes was entirely unsatisfactory from the point of view of the child, but our link with the school gave me (as a trained teacher, rather than as a parent) an insight into educational practices that I would not have seen (or believed) had we not participated.

50 For a summary, see Edith Fowke, *Canadian Folklore*, pp. 4-15; for a more complete study on the subject see Penny Petrone, *Canadian Indian Literature*.

51 Quoted by Edith Fowke, op cit, p. 15. If these figures seem at odds with the previous statement, it should be noted that there were also other collectors working among Canada's native peoples.

shape their province today. The Cree nation are still eleven thousand strong, but their cultural values are being eroded daily. (Remember, however, that there were over two thousand Gaels "in Marsboro alone" before the Second World War.) Facing the television cameras of "Blood and Belonging", their Chief commented upon the "total arrogance of one nation", the Quebec-French, "against another", forcibly imposing its cultural value at the expense of the other. She concluded that "if somebody did that to England, there would be a war."

It is interesting, though perhaps not surprising, that she chose England for her comparison. It is more than ironic, however, that her example was the ancient enemy of the French, and one cannot block out the ring of hypocrisy that sounds in this analogy. French Canada has a three-hundred-year-old score to settle, and blinded by a need to triumph at the end of the long battle, they have lost sight of the cause. Meanwhile, Quebec has struck out at its minorities, and, by denying their place in the present, they have automatically discounted their contribution to the past. If this continues to be the stance taken, minorities will have little or no significance in the future.

When it comes to the Hebridean Scots who carved out the landscape that today's French Canadians inhabit, there is no doubt whatsoever that an enormous sense of loss dwells in the heart of every descendant of those first settlers. That they have lost their Gaelic language there can be no doubt, for only a few elderly people now speak it. As for the French, whose primary quest has been, and still is, the right to speak their own language, they do not seem to have noticed that there has never been any need to search for something that was not lost in the first place. There is, however, a great need to seek out the quality of harmony that once characterised two peoples who lived side by side and whose history of nations together goes back much further than Champlain, to the Auld Alliance of the French and the Scots.

The only rewards that are to be reaped after the seeds of cultural arrogance, aggression, antagonism and denial are sown

are those of cultural impoverishment. Unless the Eastern Township Québecois are willing to acknowledge their old neighbours as the same people who so willingly "raised big barn" for Russell MacIver's French neighbour, or who conversed in Gaelic with the Stornoway Legendres, or who built and worshipped in what is now known as the Catholic Church in Marsboro, then they stand to lose much more than they gain. This study of the Hebridean traditions of the Eastern Townships has been undertaken in the hope that Quebec is still capable of identifying cultural values and their contribution to the wider context of the province as a whole.

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Abbreviations

CCFS Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies

JAF Journal of American Folklore

MS Mercury Series

MUN Memorial University of Newfoundland

TGSI Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness

NIF Nordic Institute of Folklore

Aarne, Antti, and Stith Thompson. *The Types of the Folktale*, Helsinki, 1961.

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APPENDIX A

Bibliographic Notes to Chapter 1[1]

The subject of Highland history during this period is the focus of many major studies and books. The scope of this study, however, can not extend to discussing the historical, political, and social conditions of the eighteenth century. For an overview of these subjects, see W. Ferguson, *Scotland 1689 to the Present* , T. C. Smout, *A History of the Scottish People 1560—1830*, , M. W. Flinn, T. C. Smout, et al. *Scottish Population History from the Seventeenth Century to the 1930s,* Bruce Lenman, *An Economic History of Modern Scotland 1660—1976,* Malcolm Gray, *The Highland Economy*, R. H. Campbell, *Scotland Since 1707,* and Michael Lynch, *Scotland: A New History*, pp. 362—377. For a more detailed discussion on the causes and effects of emigration see Eric Richards, *The Highland Clearances*, and Margaret I. Adam's three articles in *Scottish Historical Review*, which have supported the work of many recent writers, "The Highland Emigration of 1770", in Vol. xvi, (July, 1919), pp. 281—293; "The Causes of the Highland Emigrations of 1783 and 1803", in Vol. xvii, No. 66, (Jan. 1920), pp. 73—89; and "Eighteenth Century Landlords and the Poverty Problem", Vol. XIX, No. 73, (Oct. 1921), pp. 1—20 and No. 75, (Apr. 1922), pp. 161—179. Although it deals with America rather than Canada, Duane Meyer's book,*The Highland Scots of North Carolina, 1732—66*, is also essential background reading as it helps dispell the popularly-held, but entirely false, notion that the Highland Clearances were purely and simply a direct effect of the defeat at Culloden and its dreadful aftermath. (Unfortunately this is the impression that is given emphasis by Donald MacKay in *Scotland Farewell.*)

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[1] My decision to place these notes in a separate appendix is based only on the fact that the layout of the first page with such a lengthy footnote was problematic.

APPENDIX B

List of tapes and informants of 1976 project
(All deposited in the archives of the Centre for Folk Culture Studies, Ottawa, and accessioned BEK + number)

BEK 1 Muriel Mayhew (Née MacDonald), Milan & Lennoxville

BEK 2 Allan Morrison, Dell

BEK 3 Bill and Kay Young, Lennoxville

BEK 4:A Bill and Kay Young, Lennoxville
4:B Duncan & Kay McLeod and Muriel Mayhew, Milan

BEK 5 Donald MacLennan

BEK 6 At a quilting bee, Scotstown.

BEK 7:A Part of an informal ceilidh in my house, Milan, with Donald & Annie Morrison (Scotstown), Harvey & Hilda MacRae (Gould), and Duncan & Kay McLeod (Milan).
7:B Donald Morrison, Scotstown, singing Oscar Dhu's songs. One item from the Scotstown Presbyterian Church choir.

BEK 8:A Bessie Smith, Scotstown.
8:B Kenny & Harria MacLeod, Scotstown.

BEK 9 Isobel Stewart, Dell.

BEK 10:A Isobel Stewart, Dell.
10:B (blank)

BEK 11 Ellen & Alphonse ("Pit") Legendre, Stornoway.

BEK 12 St. Mark's Presbyterian Church, Milan: Annual Gaelic

Service. Minister: Rev. Donald Gillies, originally from St. Kilda, formerly minister in Quebec, retired in Cape Breton.

BEK 13:A Gaelic service, continued.
13:B Rev. Donald Gillies, with Duncan McLeod.

BEK 14:A Christie MacArthur, Milan, recorded in Megantic hospital.
14:B Kelly MacKenzie, Scotstown (mostly songs).

BEK 15 Christie MacKenzie, Scotstown.

BEK 16 Christie & Johnnie MacKenzie, Scotstown.

BEK 17 Maryann Morrison, age 101, formerly of Marsboro, now living in Montreal with her daughter, Eva.

BEK 18 Maryann Morrison, age 101, Montreal.

BEK 19 Maryann Morrison, age 101, Montreal.

Sample of a tape index from 1976 project
depositied in the Centre for Folk Culture Studies, Ottawa

BEK 15 Christie MacKenzie, age 72, recorded in the family home in Scotstown by Margaret Bennett-(K). 1976
[complete hand-written transcription is in the CCFCS archives]

TRACK 1

1. ceilidhs, esp. men; some sat on floor.
2. Songs: Gaelic & English; names a few popular songs
3. Bible: Gaelic. Psalms in church; precenting
4. Stories: mostly the men
6. women in church, silent; heads covered. Attitude eventually changed.
7. man who saw ghosts when drunk
8. supernatural warnings—knocks on door; whistling noises; premonitions, especially the "Stump"
9. doctors
10. home remedies: cuts, toothache, earache, poultices, cold-cures
11. 'magical' cure—spit under stone for wart
12. childbirth; midwives
13. father's role in childbirth—minimal
14. women's work
15. childcare; bedtime
16. lamps
17. dances; none on Sat. night
18. death: no work till after funeral
19. bees: working together
20. French: since 1950s a big influx into Scots area.

TRACK 2

1. French: they all worked together.
2. French included in bees; everyone joined in
3. box socials organized to help the needy—anecdotes
4. showers—baby, bridal; started c.1925
5. death: coffins; grave clothes
6. mourning clothes
7. re-marriage after death: acceptable time lapse
8. marriage
9. baptism
10. communions: June & October
11. women: appearance in make-up; hairstyles.

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childcare; bedtime....A15
cold-cures....A10
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re-marriage after death: acceptable time lapse....B7
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Songs: Gaelic & English; names a few popular songs....A2
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APPENDIX C
Fieldwork notebook, 1992

July 26, 1992.

Drove to Quebec. Went to Scotstown to the annual ceremony, the "Kirkin' o the Tartan" held this year as the final celebration of a 4—day event, a reunion & ceilidh of Scots from the area. Held on a farm, 3km from Scotstown. c. 200 people from all over (Canada & USA) had gathered to celebrate their ancestors. Led by a piper, the tartans paraded in, first the Saltire and the Maple Leaf flags, followed by a parade of over forty tartan banners, each carried by a member or representative of the clans, many dressed in tartan. After they were all seated, the service began. Guest minister (former minister of Scotstown church from c. 1962 - ?) preached. A Scotsman, (Ayrshire?); v. good speaker, esp. in his address to the children [the story of Bruce & the spider]. In his sermon he began by stating the strong Scots heritage, almost seemed like he has going to use the platform in the cause of nationalism, then stated the characteristics of the early setters—their values, God-fearing people, Sabbath observances,

"they reared their families on the Word of God, the Shorter Catechism, and the 3Rs"

He spoke of their high moral standards, (like you don't find today), etc, etc— the old-fashioned hell-fire and damnation approach, for well over half an hour, under bright sunshine and with amplification via car battery P.A. system that was not the best. As he spoke there were small children and other young people bathing in the river behind him; quite a contrast (I thought) to the early day photos of the outdoor services (those very days he spoke of). But where was the powerful voice that relied upon good projection? He could have done it (I'm sure) but the organizers had set it all up, and that was the way it was to be. The Gaelic songs were solos from a guest (fr. N. Brunswick); the pipes accompanied Amazing Grace; voices were raised and the singing was fairly good—but probably nothing like the old people remember. Afterwards everybody visited and ate picnics, in a warm, friendly atmosphere. there was also a pipe-band display, from the ancient regimental band, the 78th Highlanders, [Montreal branch?] dressed in the uniforms of the 18th century [took photos], harmony band-playing; Highland dancing [4 men, sword dance].

People began to drift away c. 4 p.m. those who discussed the day invariably said the minister was far too long-winded (even his son, the local preacher, was reported to have told him so).

We went home with Ruth Nicolson to Milan, with her son Wesley, her sister Bernice and her son Norman & friend Charles

(home on holiday from Ontario & New York), and cousin Shirley MacAulay (from Saskatchewan, of Milan parents and with very strong kinship ties to the place) and Duncan McLeod. It was a very happy reunion. Wes., Norman, & Charles left after their special trip "home" for the four-day event; the rest of us stayed on to visit, and Ruth invited us to stay with her. A very gracious offer, she wouldn't take no for an answer; it's a delight to be with her and get a chance to visit.

July 27, 1992
Milan. Went to Megantic via Val Racine, Piopolis and Marsboro. Photographed old barn.

c. 2 km south of Marsboro visited a ruin of one of the old two-storey houses. Log construction, hand-squared and notched, meticulous carpentry. It had been vertically planked, some as wide as 16 inches, circular sawn, then on top of that was 5-inch clapboards — possibly 3 stages of "appearance". Took photos of all the joints visible; long timbers—such craftsmanship! Nails were squared (possibly rectangular) iron, hand-forged, some c. 6" long. Roof metal finish (tin?); cedar shingles on upper surfaces of walls also. The foundations were of quarried granite, large blocks c. 4 ft long, (possibly from Scotstown quarries?) and part was built like a stone wall with cement. In one corner of the house was a rowan tree, in full leaf and green berry, now towering above the remains, a stark reminder of the lives that planted it, and a strong reminder of the ruined croft houses at home with their living rowans. The cleared fields above and beyond the house were still used as pasture for cattle. The land was lush and the farm was bounded by stone walls (from field clearing, some of them huge) on one side and on the far side by a stone dyke with cedar rail fence on top—an interesting combination of Old and New World styles. On the hill above the house was a grove of apple trees like an abandoned orchard; more fields stretched to the crest of the hill and beyond. One location between two fields was the site of abandoned farm implements, such as the remains of harrows, and harvest machinery, rims of cart wheels and an old tractor seat. Also the remains of a cart, just the wheels and an axle sat at the edge. The view from the top of the hill over Mount Megantic and other layers of hills was spectacular. Must find out who owned the land, who cleared it, etc.
[note: Aug. 11: Mary & Angus Morrison in Marsboro said it belonged to MacDonalds; it only fell down this spring. The farm next to it is owned by Foleys, a French family with an Irish name.] The reflection of the hard work to carve out such a splendid farm was strong; the expanse and "generosity" of the land allocation

was such a contrast to the pitifully meagre land the emigrants left in Lewis and Harris; yet the silence over the land, no human habitation on it, but only cattle in the adjoining [French] farm is almost eerie.

July 29, 1992
Milan: Ruth Nicolson baking wheatmeal and oatmeal scones on the stove. Photos and recording her recipes.

July 30

Scotstown, with Ruth, Bernice and Duncan to the Sherman residence's annual summer "cookout". Two rows of long refectory tables [4 in all] were set out in the garden and the residents and visitors sat in and were served by some of the local men [including Duncan] with plates of hot-dogs and hamburgers as they came off the grill. Our group sat with Ivy MacDonald, formerly of Milan, widow of Ruth & Bernice's uncle, though she's more of Ruth's generation— just 8 years older. I was glad to meet her as I'd heard her name often. She's very lively and witty, teasing "the girls" and anyone else in the group. Also at our table was Lola MacLeod, a very quiet lady, who had just turned 90. After the meal we went inside and visited with Ivy; she's very funny and witty! Sang a few songs and Duncan asked for "Fear a Bhata" which he joined in.

Afterwards we drove to Lennoxville to visit Muriel Mayhew. Arr. c. 8 p.m. Lois Matheson came in c. 10 but didn't stay long as we were going to bed.

July 31

A day to sort out banking, buying films, etc.

Aug. 1, 1992
Visited Christie MacKenzie at the London Residence. She is remarkable. She showed me pictures of Johnny's 100th birthday. Talked briefly about his last days; "Oh how I miss him" and indeed she must, after 72 years of marriage. She said "get Jean to show you my [wedding] dress..."

Recorded Muriel Mayhew at Lennoxville. Talked of her mother's second sight experiences etc.

Aug. 2
Went to church, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Sherbrooke with Muriel Mayhew and Lois Matheson. On way home went 'for coffee' then a short drive.

Note re. death: Muriel said her mother used to keep special pair of linen sheets for laying out the dead. After a number of years, when the undertakers did all that, she figured the sheets were no longer needed for this purpose so she put them in with the rest of the household linen, but Muriel didn't like that; "I didn't ever want them on my bed."

Aug. 3
Went to visit the Wales Home in Richmond with Muriel and Shirley MacAulay. Called in to see Gladys [orig. of Springhill, nee MacDonald] and "Kelly" [Carroll] Taylor [of Scotstown], see photo at Muriel's collection.
Then visited Maggie "Hughie" [nee? MacDonald] Parkins, age 94; amazingly bright woman, witty [even sarcastic! "if that pest across the corridor bothers me any more I'm going back to Montreal!" she said of one of the other residents, a man from the area. Talked of her young days; made ref. to some of the men in terms of "oh, he was a real good dancer..." Recited the 23rd psalm in Gaelic, then sang it with me. She seemed to prefer the anecdotes of characters to the pursuit of genealogy (which Shirley gets into at any given moment—by her own admission "it has become a passion!")
5.p.m. Returned to Sherbrooke and went to Jean and Alex MacIvers as Jean had invited us to supper. Looked at old photos. [will return to copy some].
gave Jean a tape of Martyn & me — music & Gaelic songs

Recorded Shirley MacAulay talking about her own attitude to her Scottish b/g.

Aug. 4
Transcribed Shirley's tape.
Went to the Special Collections Room at Bishop's University Library.

Aug. 5, 1992
a.m. took photos at Muriel's; see list.
then went to:
Jean and Alex MacIver, Durham Rd, Sherbrooke, Que.
I sat with Alex for a while [Jean was on the phone] and although he's difficult to understand because of the stroke he had some years back, yet he's full of information. To prepare for the photo list I took out my computer notebook while sitting beside him. Interested in the fact that it could record information immediately, he spontaneously began to relate several anecdotes and was fascinated that I could write them down as he spoke.

When a word or two wasn't clear, I asked him if I had it right, and he was happy to check and correct. The following sections in italics are the parts I wrote as he spoke:

Calum Sgaire[2] *married the Bugler's aunt, Mary MacIver. He* had second sight he said that when he lived in Scotland though he didn't live anywhere near a church in Lewis but he could see people going by his door as if they were going to church. And sure enough, when he settled in Echovale he settled in a place where they built the church in Marsboro—Knox Presbyterian Church.*

He added that this man was a MacKay, not a MacAulay as all the other "Sgaires" are.

*NOTE: In E.W. Woodley's Compton county Sketches, [Duncan had copied it out, typed, and gave me a file of copied stuff to read] "In 1857 Malcolm MacKay ... took up land near the head of Victoria Bay" despite the fact that remote neighbours discouraged him. He said he had chosen it because of a vision he had had years previous, "...and later he "could see from his door-step, the church, manse, school-house and post-office in Marsboro."
Also, see D. MacDonald, *Lewis,* . p. 167, he refs. to emigrants who were among the settlers in the new township 1858, "including a Malcolm MacKay who had second sight"— for this info., he references M.C. MacLeod. *Pamphlet on the Settlement of the Lake Megantic District, Quebec.*

One of the Buglers's brothers, Iain a' West, married the Outlaw's sister, Catherine Morrison, and one of his brothers, Donald, married the sister of Malcolm MacAulay that the Outlaw sent the money to. And another brother married a Catholic in New York (but she was Scotch) and when they came home to visit the Bugler's father wouldn't give him the horse to go to church. They had to go to Mass at 5 o'clock in the morning, when they were home visiting—they were in Marsboro and the church was in Megantic; he never came back to his father's funeral nor nothing; he felt outcast.

The anti-catholic attitude gradually changed, though you still find it. Maryann Morrison, e.g. was "a very wise lady". Even in her generation she didn't make anything of the fact that her son

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[2] Dr Donald MacDonald in Tales and Trad. of the Lews, says the name Zacharay is peculiar to the MacAulays of Uig; see p. 58.

married a Catholic ["but her husband wasn't so broad minded" said Jean]

The Bugler and his brother had to go after tobacco for the old man. His father, Iain a Dhomhnall Bhan, used to smoke and he said "chaidh e mach as a cheann" without a smoke, and they boys went 17 miles for it, walking through the snow; they used to carry it half a mile and then stop. It was the leaf tobacco; people would cut it with a tobacco cutter at home. And none of them ever never smoked since—not Alex's grandfather, or father, or himself, they never smoked since. The store in Winslow, Cailean Noble's, kept it.

Alex chewed tobacco when he worked in the Railway "I had to, on account of germs" when they were ripping up floors.

I was cooking in the Army for 300 men and there was one [came in the canteen]I never seen before; and you could only give them one serving and he came and asked me "am faidh mi fear eile?"

— and it it was only then Alex recognized him by his Gaelic AND gave him another serving! "

Alex:
*When I was nineteen I used to hire on for the log drives. And some of the drivers were younger than that. You'd pack your lunch and work for ten cents an hour for ten hours a day.

[NOTE: Johnny 'Bard' MacLeod writes of his memories of this; prestige attached to the drive, but not to the cutting, etc. See notes.]

Jean, in the meantime was looking for her mother's wedding dress because I told her that her mother mentions it every time I see her ["and I'm going to be buried in that dress...ask Jean to show you it..."] When Jean said "Gosh, I hope I can find it," I felt almost guilty at asking her, yet she herself insisted on looking, saying that her mother had asked her dozens of times, but she just put off and put off. Offered to photograph it; she thought that would be a good idea, as Christie would be convinced then that Jean hadn't lost it. Success ! [in a mere ten minutes] :

Christie's wedding dress is ivory silk and quite beautiful. Her sister, Kate (2 years older), made it; she was a seamstress "she did it for a living". The fabric is very fine, so the stitching

(especially the hand-sewing) is *incredibly* delicatle. On the bodice is a design in tiny beads, like marcasite, and pearls, some knotted with marcasite on crown of them. Along the neck and sleeve (armhole) seams are little pearls which, almost invisibly, act like buttons along one shoulder. The marcasite are so tiny that when Jean tried to sew one on after the dress was at the cleaners, she could hardly find a needle fine enough—no wonder! The style is mid-calf, has a neat sash with silk fringing. In all, a wonderful example of exquisite needlework.
Took photos; see list.

reminder: send copies of the wedding pictures to Jean. [DONE]

5.30 p.m. Went to see Christie in the home. She was absolutely delighted when we told her we'd seen her wedding dress. Indeed it is exquisite; her sister made it out of fine cream silk she bought in Megantic (c, 1919).

Aug. 6.
a.m. to Bishop's University library; took photos of maps and photocopied cuttings.

p.m. Left Lennoxville for Milan. Drove out *Traverse du Dell* a very rough road that cuts off after McLeod's Crossing [used mainly for lumber hauling]. Stopped at the Dell cemetery; it's off the main road & so peaceful; neatly kept. Even from the road we were struck by the prevalence of Scottish names: MacDonalds, Murrays, Nicolsons, and Morrisons especially. Several had Gaelic inscriptions, usually Biblical texts. Many of the stones indicate early death—childhood and infancy, sometimes 4 children in one family over a number of years, telling that sadness and death visited some unfortunate parents many times in, say 10 or 20 years. One little stone [flat on the ground, c. 10 inches x 6, simply said BABY. We visited Johnnie MacKenzie's grave [polished stone inscribed, thistle at the top. all the family names on it, even Jean's & Dalton's] The visitors' book shows frequent visit of local people.

On the way to Milan we passed the cross-road sign posted *Ch. Dell* and *Ch. Tolsta;* passed the MacDonald "Dodge" house now sadly & rapidly falling into disrepair. One post-box said John Morrison—Ruth tells me he died 2 years ago, one of three brothers, and the last one, Alex, lives alone in it today. [? should visit there.? but didn't.]

Back at Ruth's, and such a warm welcome; she cooked a roast pork dinner and we had a most relaxed evening.

Aug. 7

a.m. At Ruth's. A visit from Isobell Beattie [nee MacArthur] with her niece, Linda MacArthur [40-ish, daughter of Murdo MacA.] from Toronto, accompanied by her friend Marjory [nee MacDonald] b. Ontario, and her cousin Catherine MacDonald from Lewis [Emigrated in the 1960s]. The atmosphere was very friendly and lively, as for Linda it was a re-visit to the area she knew from childhood as "grandma's ..." A very happy visit.

p.m. went to Angus and Mary Morrison's at Marsboro. [Drive to Lac Megantic, turn right, past RC church, c. 1 mile, on L]. Gaelic was once the only language in the Morrison home [certainly in his grandparents' day, and also in his parents— till they sold their farm in 1943 and moved to Megantic and then Montreal. Recorded in Gaelic to begin with; though she's French, Mary "doesn't mind... I'm used to it..."; seemed to follow most of the conversation though she interrupted Angus's response to "correct" him [re. lumber industry; woods operation; the point at which Mary comes in she has actually misunderstood, and gives a response which is misleading: n.b. on tape transc.] From that point the tape reverts to English. Angus is nearly 82 and certainly doesn't seem so; he's very active, lively, full of energy. He took us out to his old homestead where he was born: Cruvag [which he pronounced *"craobhag"*]. We turned off the main road [R] and drove on a gravel and dirt road c. 3 miles in, All the way along he showed us landmarks, scarcely visible, and remarked on who used to live there, farm there, etc. And pointing out areas of thick brush and timber he's say, "so-and-so used to cut hay there..." *[some recording in the car, no doubt noisy, but a notebook would be impossible on the bumpy road.]* When we reached as far as the road would take us we got out and walked. There was a cable gate, locked, across the bottom of the farm road; the people who bought it did so for the lumber, and having cut once had re-planted pinetrees [which Angus called "?craobh a phaine"] On the way up [L] he showed us the brook of fresh cold [icy!] water in which they used to store their butter, cream, and fresh meat in the summer. Nearby, on the other side of the road [R], was the place where Angus's brother built the little log cabin for the home-made shower. At the end of the road/track was the site of the house. Nothing is left apart from a few stones from the foundations. No outline is visible—it was till last year, but they filled in the foundation. there's a small hut with a metal stove-pipe coming out the upper gable end, "just a hut the lumbermen have for their tea, but they don't stay in it overnight." There's a profusion of wild grasses and flowers—goldenrod, fireweed, yarrow, plantain, chamomile. Mary picked some yarrow "for

medicine; you make an infusion of it if you have a cold in the winter and you breath in the vapour... an old neighbour of ours said she wouldn't last the winter without it."[3] Wild raspberries grew along the edge of the site. There also used to be lots of caraway growing wild but we didn't see any. The site of the house and the surrounding area was level, the first level area since the bottom of the hill [3 miles!]. Angus was filled with enthusiasm as he showed us where the barn was, where the closest hayfield was — "my mother was in the load and my father pitching hay up on the cart the day before my brother Peter was born—now that's work!"— where the track to his Uncle Donald's was — "That's the one that couldn't read or write"— and though the track is clearly visible as a green pathway it quickly vanishes into the trees, when we turned about to leave Angus said "It makes me sick to see this today." All the hard work of his family and forebears has vanished completely "and I tell you, they worked hard." On the way down to the main road we stopped to look at the little school he and his brothers and sisters had attended. Not a trace left, even foundations or path; all grown over. They went mostly in the summer months.

[NOTE: Though this may seem at odds with today's practices, it was not in the least unusual. Donald MacDonald, in *Tolsta Townships*, notes that the "school year was divided into two sessions...1st November to 1st April and ...15th June to 15th September...and so education interfered with neither sowing nor harvesting." [p. 39]

We returned to the house and Mary prepared dinner: trout from her brother's pond across the road (Angus has 25 trout in it this year, bought from a breeder in Megantic, growing in the pond) and fresh vegetables from her own garden—peas, potatoes, & a salad of lettuce, cucumber & tomatoes; she's a very good gardener and has a wide variety of vegetables and flowers. Desert was raspberry shortcake, based on her homemade "biscuits' (more like our oven scones) and wild raspberries that she and Angus picked the previous day. While Mary was in the kitchen Angus showed us a charcoal sketch of his grandparents with his mother [Maryann] and her sister; young. It was in a very nice, carved wooden frame. Photographed Angus holding it. He then took out photographs— a pile of albums, at least 10 of them, from all stages in the family's history.

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[3] Note the use of yarrow by French-Canadian midwife, Henriette, on p. 122 of Paradis, Roger. "Henriette, la Capuche: The Portrait of a Frontier Midwife", *Canadian Folklore Canadien*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1981, pp. 110—126.

After dinner we went to the Echovale Cemetery; Angus tends to some of the caretaking in co-operation with the official caretaker who lives next door, It's very neatly kept. Some of his family [parents and brothers, but not grandparents] are buried here. Next to the fence, c. 6" from it, he showed us the flat stone, c. 8 x 6, with no inscription which is said to mark the burial site of the "one that Donald Morrison shot in Megantic...well, he was from the States" Mary added "and if Morrison hadn't shot him then he would have been shot himself, killed."] She indicated that as many French people as Scots supported his cause.] He showed us his parents grave, with siblings buried next to it — and then indicated where the surviving ones would be buried—Eva, himself, his sister in the States— all as a matter of fact.
When we returned to the house we took photos. *[some more recording and notes]* Angus said they sold the farm because during the war the economy was poorer, you couldn't get any help because the young men had gone off to war; his father was getting too old to manage it, and the entire workload was too much for Angus. They sold it in 1943. Angus did "try for the army but failed... and a good thing too." [eyesight?? he didn't say] He and Mary moved to Montreal where he became a millwright in a paper mill, maintaining and repairing machinery. Retired to Marsboro in 1976 "and are we ever glad!" Both he and Mary are now close to where they grew up; her family are all around, brother across the street, their daughter, Louise, is less than a mile away, et al.
After declining a persuasive invitation to stay the night, left for Ruth's c. 10.15 with a promise to return.

Reminder: send Angus a copy of his mother's tape; also copy of the tape I made with him, and the old family photo "himself in his dress!" as his children may like to have it. [DONE]

Aug. 8
Ruth: Notes— the house next door used to be the Milan school. David's sister was the teacher when he was a child so he went there when he was five years old, in 1908 [he was born in 1903]. In Ruth's day the school was "up town" a brick building on the MacDonald Road, the 6th house, but it has been taken down since. Later they built another one, taken over by the French, later called a convent, and now [today] the town hall.

Aug. 9
Went to Scotstown to St Paul's Presbyterian church with Ruth and Bernice; the minister was on holiday, so they had lay preacher

from Bury Baptist church. Only 13 in the church, 3 of which were in the choir.
After church went to Megantic to try to get more b & wh film; no luck. Went on to explore northwards— took the road to St. Cécile, and went to the Musée de Dodier , quite a contrast to the emphasis among the Scots with the focus entirely around the RC church: holy pictures, bleeding hearts, rosaries, candles, robes, etc. by the dozen. The kitchen was v. interesting; small cast iron stove [4 rings on it], & other utensils. Spinning wheel, rag hooked rugs,, etc. Also a hand-wound knitting machine clamped to the table, c. 8" high & same across, for circular knitting. [Ask Ivy??] In the costumes room there was a display of dolls, most recently made, *including* a nun with her robes, cross, rosary beads by her side, beautifully made [the priest doll didn't look so convincing, as he was too like a Cossack with his boots!] The priest's bedroom had a weird fascination, not so much for the neat wooden bed [c. 4' wide] with its beautiful white on white linen pillowslips, patchwork quilt and white cover on top, but more for the display cabinet of his things *especially* the three "?c------?check terms?", c. 2"+ wide in a sort of chain mail (each link bigger than a cent with a barb sticking out of it, to face in towards the part of the body around which it is worn) one for the arm, thigh, and middle, for self-flagellation, penance or whatever. Pretty grim!
Afterwards we drove on north; saw the granite quarry nr St. Sebastian—v. impressive size of rocks; later saw the "works" where they cut and polish. No short supply for gravestones here, and of a very good-looking quality. There were huge cubes, c. 5' x 5' x 5' sitting waiting.... massive!

Came home via Lambton and St. Romain. Ruth was out so we made dessert for her return. She & Bernice came back c. 7.30 p.m. with Duncan and Ivy all full of mirth after an enjoyable day out, and before long there was a good-going ceilidh going with anecdotes and laughter all round. Story after story, with gales of laughter, as we have come to recognize as characteristic of gatherings at Ruth's. Her house must be the closest to a *taigh ceilidh* in the area. A most enjoyable evening. [Tape-recording this session didn't seem like the thing to do. Must ask Bernice to tell her brother's story on tape— the tailor with the chalk—it's a scream!]

Aug. 10.

Had to go into Sherbrooke to buy more B & Wh film—it's hard to get!
On the way, photographed the amazing French house outside Cookshire—talk about lawn ornaments! Flamingos round the swimming pool, the Madonna, life-size, with outstretched hands

nearby, little negro boy in pensive mood, frogs, ducks, and two life-size maidens with skirts held ready for stepping into the water...there is everything! So that's what they mean by the "French sensibility". It is the epitome of today's decor!

In Lennoxville went to Kay Young's [b. 1919]; photographed a few of her pictures. She has a v. old picture on the wall of her grandfather [nicknamed the Buffalo**], carrying a gun. Kay was born Katherine MacLeod, in Milan; parents lived in the house "two down from Aunt Annie's...French people have it now." She recalled Sunday's and the busy preparations and the fact that "whistling was a mortal sin!" the girls didn't whistle anyhow, but on Sunday if one of the boys was heard it was a dire offence.

**[Ruth recalls the parents and her grandfather "the Buffalo" don't know why he was called that. They lived beside the creamery (gone now) which was operated by Ruth's father. Note: Johnnie Bard's book has a ref. to the Buffalo; says he got his name because he thought he saw a buffalo in the field near where he stood; he pointed it out to man who was with him, but he couldn't see it. B. persisted; then other man saw a bug on the old man's eyelashes which he surmised was what the old man was seeing; ever after he got called the Buffalo. See also note from Kay's sister, Evelyn Smith; a much more likely story: he was the first one in Milan ever to own a buffalo robe; rec. Aug. '93]

Aug. 11

Went to see [and record] Ivy MacDonald, in the Sherman Residence, Scotstown. She was in great form and her liveliness belies her 88 years. Recorded half hour and visited the rest. Took some photos on the way home to Milan.

Asked at Ruth's about the creamery in Milan. Her father owned it, "everybody around brought cream to the creamery and he made the butter, Mondays and Fridays, and it was open to the public where they could go and buy butter." Bernice: *"and on Tuesdays he had to be there himself for the testing of the cream. He had to take a sample of every cream that came in. Having taken a special course for this in Montreal (while our mother was still alive), he did this himself with a special machine; a round machine machine held c. 48 of the bottles, and it spun round really fast; he read the scale on the neck of bottle. He had about 50 customers from the area. People used to come from all over, from the States they'd come up and buy butter because they said it was the best tasting butter you could buy. It was packed in 56 pound boxes and sold."*

Angus 'Willis' MacDonald [Muriel's cousin] came by; talked of the old house, built c. 1900; the big stones in his basement walls were from the quarry in Scotstown [not, as I thought Muriel said, from Vermont—something that always puzzled me.]

Duncan brought two files of clippings from his collections; mostly typed from articles—a lot of work! Also a manuscript book by Johnny "Bard" MacLeod, *Memoirs of Dell*— clearly a labour of love, and I must read it as it has so much about the local people, etc. [*DONE; see notes]*

8 p.m. went up to Peter Jort's with Ruth; that is her old family home, though scarcely recognizable with all the changes. It grieves her to see the old barn flat on the ground. A pleasant evening all the same.

Aug. 12.

To Miriam MacRae [Holland]'s log house in Gould. She had many photos which we looked through and copied (selections). She had several mementoes incl. an old wooden trunk which came over on the ship, label still intact. Afterwards went over to her parents' house and then to her grandparents' house and log house.

Went in the Galson road, a "cul-de-sac" now; not a Scottish house now, and the road through to the Dell road is now blocked (Ruth says by the Fish & Game folk); picked raspberries and turned around, and went in the Tolsta road instead to Dell; had a look at the Dodge house, woefully decayed, with lower beams rotting and in danger of falling in.

Returned home to Ruth's for supper with R. & Bernice & Duncan. D. brought in the Mcleod's account books, from his father's store. Very neatly kept. We looked at the pages together, and they reflected on what it was like. Many people bought things on credit and paid when they could, e.g. when they cut a load of pulp, or sold butter, eggs.

Prices were noted: e.g.

1927	
15 lb salt	30 cents.
cake of cooking chocolate (8 oz)	30 cents.
1928	
1 pr mitts	$1.00
4 .75 lbs haddock	48 cents
1936	
1 lb butter	28 cents
5 lbs sugar	30 cents.
1 pr shoes	$1.85
1 pr rubbers [overshoes]	60cents.

half pound tea	33 cents.
3 glasses	48 cents.
1 cigar	10 cents.
1 bag oats (one bushel)	$1.35

While we were looking over these big account books on the kitchen table, Isobel (nee MacArthur) and Ross Beattie arrived for a short visit. I was busy writing the above notes and Isobel showed interest. Leaving that aside, I told her I had recorded her mother, Christie MacArthur, in 1976. The conversation naturally diverted to the old times and with no time to divert to tape-recorder, I wrote as Isobel spoke:

Re. the Megantic Outlaw:

MB: I heard that your mother recalled the Megantic Outlaw and that they held a wake for him in their family home?

Isobel: **"he was the first dead person she'd ever seen; he died in 1894. the wake was right in our house. Her father and her uncle came down to the station to meet the remains and my mother would have been about 5 or 6. He came in the casket; the Caledonian Society looked after him in Montreal—they had him removed from the penitentiary and moved to the Royal Victoria Hospital. They liked to say that he died a free man.*

...the wounds from his shooting were never really cared for. She came down the stairs in the morning and she remembers seeing her grandmother [mother of the Outlaw] sitting in the corner crying, and this is the first recollection of the sadness of death. And throughout her life the story of Donald Morrison was never discussed because it was too painful. They had pleaded with him to give himself up, but he wouldn't . I think he would have been treated fairly if he had— but each time he gave the same ultimatum: "Give me back my $800..." It was the principle[involved].

Oh, he was always a crack shot and always armed.

When they were put off their farm where the Megantic Hospital now stands, my grandfather, Alexander B. MacDonald, let them stay in the little cabin on their land, just at the corner going into Gisla, and it was quite a come-down from the lovely home they had had in Echo Vale. And that was where he was shot by the half-breed who didn't know that a truce had been reached. And he was taken from the cabin on a buck-board [a wagon with 4 wheels and no springs] and put on the train with his injuries. Can you imagine that? They put planks on it and threw him on it.

When visiting relatives in North Dakota this summer [1992] they told me to tell about the Donald Morrison the Megantic Outlaw. One elderly cousin aged over 90 said that her mother wouldn't tell them anything about him because they were ashamed. But people here are <u>proud</u> of him.

The reason my mother's three older brothers went west was because Malcolm Morrison , a brother of Donald, had already homesteaded there, and he had beautiful land, so they worked for him and then got their own land.

My father grew up in Winslow and he was about 15 years older than my mother, so he would have been at a very impressionable age when Donald was a fugitive. He recalls seeing the army on the roads, and one time he came into their home when the army was close by and they were eating beans, and they warned Donald that there were soldiers nearby but they wanted him to eat anyway. So my grandmother MacArthur put beans on a plate and sent him down to the cellar, and while he was down in the potato bin the soldiers came into the house and asked if they'd seen him. They told them they hadn't seen him for a long time, and they were very polite to them and when they left they called Donald up. And my father said "and you know, he had eaten every bean on the plate!" He couldn't believe that he'd be so calm, sitting down there eating beans while the soldiers were in the house asking for him.

This is from Isobel Beattie (née MacArthur) who spoke as I wrote. We were all sitting round the kitchen table, she was beside me looking over my shoulder; occasionally I stopped to ask if I had this right, or to ask her to repeat something. Most of the conversation flowed without interruption and I simply typed in her words as she spoke. Her husband, Ross, was sitting in one rocking chair and Duncan in the other, both having left the table after our tea.

<u>Isobel:</u> *I think the spring time was the hardest time to prepare meals. In the fall my father always butchered four pigs and as soon as the weather was cold enough he'd store it in an out-building. And in the winter we'd eat *four pigs*. There were a lot of hired men around to feed too. And we always had potatoes and turnips to see us through, though the carrots would be long gone by Christmas. And then when spring would come and the weather would be warm and we had meat left over we would try burying it in the snow banks to try to keep it fresh. And although

it was cold it wouldn't have the frost in it. And then after that, [when the weather got milder], it was put in the brine to keep it.

Bernice: *[the meat] was soaked in brine for so many days before the smoking—it was a special kind of a smoke house, seven or eight feet high; the smoke would go out the top. The fire just smouldered with wood chips of a special kind, or sawdust, so that it wouldn't burst into flames. And for about two weeks they'd build fires like that, not night time, just in the days.

Isobel: *"we hung them up from the rafters in the barn after they were smoked." [Aug. 12, 1992]

Aug. 13, 1992

Went on a guided tour with Duncan pointing out all the points along the roads while we recorded and plotted on a map. Must enlarge and incorporate the two—94 points indicated. visited 4 cemeteries [Marsboro Mills, Stornoway (Winslow), Sandyhills and Gisla) all neatly kept. Photographed Duncan's receipt books and Ruth's photos.

p.m. went to Paul & Troad [Julia] Doerfloer's and took pictures of the World War I drawings from Gallipoli—remarkable, both from the point of view of the work and the portrayal of the dreadful campaign. Must give a set to the Military Museum at Edinburgh Castle.

6 p.m. ret. to Ruth's. Buckwheat pancakes and fried pork & gravy, with maple syrup. What a treat—again, and lots of fun. Mac ate 20 and Duncan didn't tell how many he had, not too darned few by my estimation. I had 4.

Aug. 14, 1992

Ruth: re. Hallowe'en: didn't do much up at the farm but in Milan they used to; like they'd carry off your steps [if they were loose] and put them somewhere else; or maybe the chairs on the front porch would disappear ; they'd turn up again, where-ever they landed they would know who they belonged to. Or one time they put buggy on top of the roof of a shed—that was the big boys, "it'd have to be the big boys to handle that;" Today the kids come dressed put, for Trick or treat, "they're in and out the house before you know it" and they have fun, you have your treats for them, and the mothers are waiting outside near the house for the little ones. And sometimes they carry a pillowcase to carry the "loot" they even come from Springhill. I used to go with my children when they were small. some would have black on their

face, some had these awful mask, others with just a bit of rouge on."

Bernice, Aug. "*Big Grandma used to say things like "Get me the pan dog" [get me the dog pan, to feed the dog']

Bernice *Well, she always said it the same and we never corrected her, she wouldn't have taken kindly to that. That was Big Gramma [Ishbel]--she was kind of stern; didn't show much sympathy. But she had a hard life. husband killed by a flying log, at the age of 39, leaving her with six children to look after, including. Ruth's mother who was four years old when her dad was killed. She had lost others in infancy—died very suddelnly, with chicken pox or measles. She was married to her first cousin. Her oldest son was old enough to take over the farm but he was killed—On the way to church the horse kicked over the traces and he was found with a crushed pencil in his top pocket as if the horse had kicked him in the chest. Big Grandma lived with Ruth & Bernice because they actually lived on the old folks farm. When their mother died, Ruth was eleven and a half, & Bernice was two and Alma was three. Moma was pregnant when she died, the baby had died in-utero, and though she went to the Dr. but—she hadn't been too well. The baby didn't abort, and moma died. The older children stayed with Grandma, she did most of the work but taught Ruth to do house work. Ruth used to milk too.

Bernice and Alma went to stay with Little Grandma (Mary) in Dell. She was in her 60s, and so sweet and gentle, never angry. She talked Gaelic with Grandpa all the time and would throw a little bit of English in when we were kids. We used to say things like
"Oh look at the big cuileag mòr!" [Alma]
And I always asked her "Can I *sguap* the floor" We swept it twice a day after meals and I liked to do it, so I'd ask.

*I got pneumonia when I was 3 years old after taking trip to the farm, catching a chill; nurse came over to see me and all I remember is sleeping in Grandma and Grandpa's bed .

Went out to see Angus and Mary Morrison at Marsboro, just to say "Goodbye." Duncan came too. Back at Ruth's I recorded Bernice talking about her childhood. NB the rhyme from her grandfather.

Mid-day meal with Ruth, B. & Duncan, and then departed. (Left my thick, black towel I had used for a photographic backdrop

with Ruth—she really liked it—also the light bulbs, a rather odd house present!)
Drove off after photos and "Goodbyes'. This has been a most wonderful visit and Ruth couldn't have been more welcoming.

Drove to Vermont, to Norman Kennedy's house, and the Marshfield School of Weaving. He had invited Helen Schneiyer over to dinner and we had a very relaxing and entertaining evening. Slept in a room with a high poster bed, all Norman's handwoven blankets, rugs, curtains, and a patchwork quilt that was made for him by Almeda Riddle. A second one of concentric hexagonals, also Almeda's, hung over the stand.

Aug. 15

Norman's weaving school is in full operation; several old looms being used. Ideal place to look at all aspects of wool working He still holds a *luadh* from time to time. [I attended one last year]. His dye-pot has indigo in it, and stale urine that "wid blow yer heid aff." Spinning wheels of many kinds, including very old "Scotch wheels that turn up here every now and again." Went over to Helen's for brunch. Her place is at the back of beyond, originally a log cabin, now much extended, and full of interesting things—weaving (both Norman's and Navaho), works of art, etc. Returned to Norman's and departed mid-afternoon.[thus ending my summer's fieldwork].
[For the sake of brevity, notes for 1993 are not included.]

APPENDIX D

List of tapes and informants 1990—93

The following recordings were originally made on Sony TC110B, cassettes. Some have been transferred to reels @ 7 1/2 at the School of Scottish Studies. Accession numbers are according to the SA system.

Nov. 13, 1990
Christie and Johnnie MacKenzie, ages 93 and 98, formerly of Scotstown. Now in a nursing home, The London Residence in Sherbrooke.

Nov. 14, 1990
Duncan McLeod from Milan (now living in Scotstown) talking about his collection of printed songs, newspaper clippings, etc. Recorded in the home of Muriel Mayhew, Lennoxville; Muriel also joins the session.

Sept. 16, 1991
Russell B. MacIver, Scotstown. 2 cassettes, recorded with Duncan McLeod and a neighbour. A bachelor in his 80s, Russell recalls the old days: farming, hunting, trapping; funeral customs.
[SA1991/112, 113 and 114]

Sept. 24, 1991
Jean and Alex MacIver, Sherbrooke. Jean is the daughter of Christie & Johnnie MacKenzie. Both are fluent Gaelic-speakers and Jean is also fluent in French, making her one of the very few tri-lingual people left. Alex had a stroke a few years ago, and his speech has been affected. Nevertheless, he has a remarkable memory. The tape is difficult to transcribe in place, but I have supplemented this with entries in my Fieldwork Notebook, where Alex spoke as I typed.

Sept. 25, 1991
Myrtle Murray, age 94, former school-teacher at Milan; recorded in the nursing home, The London Residence, Sherbrooke. Reminiscences of going to Milan, her perception of the "Gaelickers".
[SA1991/116 and 117

July 29, 1992
Ruth Nicolson, Milan: Baking— wheatmeal and oatmeal scone recipes; buckwheat.

Aug. 1, 1992
Muriel Mayhew, Lennoxville. Talked of her mother's second sight experiences; the story of Calum Sgaire.
[SA1992/68/A]

Aug. 3, 1992
Shirley MacAulay, visiting from Saskatoon, on her annual holiday to her parents' home town of Milan; talking about her own attitude to her Scottish background.
[SA1992/68/A]

Aug. 7,1992
Angus and Mary Morrison, Marsboro. Angus starts in Gaelic, recalling early days of his family, from Geocrab in Harris.Mary is French, and speaks English. Most of the tape is in English. Some of the recording was made in the car as we drove to Cruveg, first home of Angus's grandparents when they arrived in Quebec; he and Mary stayed there when they were first married.
[SA1992/69]

Aug. 11, 1992
Recorded Ivy MacDonald, age 88, former nurse, originally from Milan, now in The Sherman Residence, Scotstown. Cures, spinning and other wool work, local characters, church.
[SA1992/68/B]

Aug. 13,1992
Duncan McLeod, Milan. Went on a guided tour with Duncan pointing out all the places along the roads while we tape-recorded and plotted on a map.
[SA1992/70]

Aug. 14,1992
Bernice Laurila [née MacDonald, Ruth's sister] talking about her childhood; quotes Gaelic rhyme from her grandfather.
[[SA1992/68/A]

July 31, 1993
Bilingual auction on the Cookshire- Sawyerville road, at Art Bennett & sons, bilingual auctioneers. Mostly old dishes, "Depression glass", tools, etc. Only c. 5 minutes recorded.
In Sherbrooke, Alex MacIver sang part of locally composed song *Oran Holeb*. [cassette only]

APPENDIX E

Stories recorded in 1975—76, published in1980

The following stories from my collection have already been published in "Folkways and Religion of the Hebridean Scots in the Eastern Townships" in *Cultural Retention and Demographic change: Studies of the Hebridean Scots in the Eastern Townships of Quebec*, edited by Laurel Doucette, pp. 91—127. The section is headed TRADITIONAL ORAL NARRATIVE:

Stories from the Isle of Lewis
- "Bodach na siabunn" (Lord Leverhulme) and the Poacher.
- "Mac an t-Sronaich" (3 anecdotes)

Donald Morrison, the Megantic Outlaw
- Short summary followed by previously unpublished memorates and anecdotes.

Stories from Literature to Oral Tradition
- Killing the Pig: a story with a moral
- "Alasdair an Taillear"

Stories Which Involve the Supernatural
- Ghosts and Devils
- Second Sight, Tokens, and Warnings
- Buried Treasure: "The Pot of Gold" (local legend)
- Dreams
- The Evil Eye and the Buisneachd

Local Characters and Events
- Anna Sheumais and Bob
- The Baw-baw
- John Mogais
- The Scotstown Bank Robbery
- Colin Brock and His Wife
- The Dodges
- A.D. Morrison

Church and Clergy
- Prayer Meeting story
- "Preaching for a Call"
- Dedication of the Catholic Cemetery
- Stories about the Rev. Donald Gillies, St. Kilda

Stories published in1980

The following stories from my collection have been published in *Nothing But Stars: Leaves from the Immigrant Saga,* compiled by Magnus Einarsson, National Museum of Man Mercury Series, No. 51.[4] Numbers and story titles, under chapter headings, are according to those chosen by the compiler of the book. In order to indicate the range of motifs represented in this sample, the motif numbers follow the titles, and are cited according to Stith Thompson's *Motif Index of Folk Literature:*[5]

"First Impressions of a New World"
No. 8 "Second Thoughts"
J215 Present evil preferred to a change for the worse

"Learning the Language"
No. 23 "The Power of the Gaelic"
J2496.2 Misunderstanding because of lack of knowledge of a different language to one's own

"Novel Situations"
No. 30 "Irish Gree"
J1932 Absurd practices connected with crops

"Life Among Strangers"
No. 36 "French-Canadian Helpfulness"
K185 Deceptive land purchase
No. 39 "Burying the Differences"
J1442.11.1 The cynic's wish

"An Alien Landscape"
No. 53 "Mosquito Control"
H960 Tasks performed through cleverness or intelligence

"Pluck and Enterprise"
No. 63 "Beating the Draft"
J1180 Clever means of avoiding legal punishment

"Tales of Lying"
No. 73 "Faster than Rabbit"
X1796.2.3 Lie: man outruns rabbit

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4 This collection of stories represents twenty-two of Canada's ethic minorities.

5 For the complete range of motifs covered in the collection, see *Nothing But Stars,* pp. 169—172

APPENDIX F

Songs

1) Oran Holeb

From the singing of Alex MacIver: composed in the lumber town of Holeb, this song of nostalgia was very popular at céilidhs, both in the lumbercamps and in the villages:

1)
Chan 'eil air an t-saoghal ni ri fhaighinn
Na rinneadh e feum bhi leum le aighear
Ach guthan bho neamh gu seimh a chanadh
A maitheadh dhomh peacanan m'oige.

2)
An uair bha mi òg bu luath a ruithinn,
Is b'aotram a dhannsainn cluinntin fidheal,
Tha abair leis leam bhi seinn na luinneig
Nuair bhi te a gabhail nan òran.

3)
Cha dhean mi'n diugh danns' 's cha chluinn mi fidheal;
Is oranan binn cha sheinn mi tuilleadh.
Bho 'n tha mi gun sund, 's mo chairt-iùl air a briseadh,
'S cha chàil-ar dhomh tuilleadh ri m'bheo e.

4)
Mo Shearrach air chall, mo Shamradh seachad,
A Foghar air teanntainn rium am fagus,
A falt air mo cheann a sealltainn abaich,
'S e 'g innse nach fada bhios beò mi.

5)
Nuair bhios mi leam fhein bidh mo dheoir a sileadh
Mo smuaintean air tìm nach till rinn tuilleadh.
Gach ni dhomh ag inns' gu bheil an t-am ann fagus
San cuirear mi laighe nam aonar.

6)
Nuair a chluinneas mi eun an crann na coille
Na creutairean binn a seinn an ceileir,
Theid m'intinn na leum gu tìr mo bhreith
Far am bithinn ri cleasachd nam' òige.

7)
Nuair a ruigeas i thall a nall air ais i
Le naigheachd am ionnsaidh leam nach taitneach
Gu bheil cuid ann dhe'n oige bh'ann an [?]lagain
An diugh tha na laighe 's na fòdan.

8)
Tha cuid achd' 'sa chuan na ghrunnd nan cadal,
Is cuid mar mi fhéin s' an aois a laigh orr'.
Gach ni dhomh ag inns' gu bheil an t-àm ann fagus
'S an cuirear mi laighe fon fòdan.

9)
Nuair thig an aois le h-aodan frasach
Is crith anns gach ball is gann a sheasas sibh,
Sùilean ghur cìnn ri diùltadh faicinn,
'S ur fiaclan air caitheamh 's iad breòite.

10)
Sibhse tha òg thuigaibh mòran aire,
Is cuiribh gu feum ur ceudne maduinn,
Gheibh thu gliocas on àird a dh'aireamh bhur la
Ur grian mur laighe, sibh gòrach.

The Song of Holeb (Maine)

1)
There is nothing to be gained in this world
That would not make you jump for joy
But voices from heaven, singing serenely
That the sins of youth were forgiven.

2)
When I was young I could run so swiftly,
And lightly dance to the sound of the fiddle,
And I'd join in singing the choruses
When the songs were being sung.

3)
Today I can't dance, I don't hear the fiddle;
No more can I sing the sweet songs.
I feel pretty low, my compass [purpose] is broken,
I do not have any interest any longer.

4)
My Spring is lost, my Summer is gone,
The Autumn is now drawing near,
The hair on my head is looking ripe,
A sign that I shall not live long.

5)
When I'm on my own, my tears will fall
With my thoughts on a time that will not return.
Everything tells me the time is near
When I'm laid to rest o my own.

6)
When I hear a bird in the branches of the trees
The sweet creatures singing their song,
My mind swiftly leaps to the land of my birth
Where I used to play in my youth.

7)
When I get over there, it comes back to me
With news not very pleasant to hear
That some of the young who were in Laggan [?Dell]
Are today lying under the turf.

8)
Some of them are sleeping at the bottom of the sea,
Some like myself are showing thier age.

Everybody tells us the time is near
When I'm laid to rest in the ground.

9)
When age comes with its showery face
Every limb shaking, you can hardly stand,
The eyes in your head refusing to see,
Your teeth are worn out and brittle.

10)
You who are young, take much heed,
And put to good use the prime days of your life;
You will get wisdom from on high, according to your numbered days
Before your sun sets while you're still foolish.

2) Donald Morrison, the Canadian Outlaw

Donald Morrison (i.e. the singer, *not* the subject of the song), was recorded during an informal visit to my house in Milan, October 1976. The event was, in his terms, "as close to the old-time céilidhs as you get..."

D' you ever heard the tune of the Donald Morrison song?[6] [No] Well, I'll sing the bit about the shooting.[7] Now this is part of a song about it that was written by Angus MacKay, Oscar Dhu, "Donald Morrison, the Canadian Outlaw". This story's pretty well known. [sings]

The fatal twenty-third of June
Arrived and all was fair;
The summer sun shone brightly on
The village of Chaudière.
Ah, little thought the villagers
Another day would close
The village green would be the scene
Of Warren's dying throes. [10]

"Pray, show me now the outlaw who
Has terrorized your land,"
Said Warren to some villagers
Who round about did stand.
"To capture Donald Morrison

---

[6] The complete text is Angus MacKay's (Oscar Dhu's) book, *Donald Morrison, the Canadian Outlaw: A Tale of the Scottish Pioneers.* According to his grand-nephew, Thomas A. Mckay, who reprinted an "enhanced version" of the book in 1992, there were a number of hand-written copies of the entire poem. Donald Morrison had a copy of the book which he had had since his youth.

[7] The singer takes up the song in chapter 8 of MacKay's book. The point at which he decided to begin is the tenth verse, p. 67. The text that follows is not identical to the printed version, but is very close. In order to indicate how closely his sequence of verses follows the book, I have numbered the verses in square brackets after each one.

I came across the line,
And if I fail, pray tell the tale
To other ears than mine." [11]

Young Donald has not terrorized
The country, as you say,
But bloodhounds of misfortune
Have mocked him on his way.
He would not yield to them the field
Without one struggle more,
Thus goaded on he quickly won
The name we all deplore. [12]

Unconscious of all danger
Donald saunters into town,
While Warren's furtive glances
Travel up the street and down.
Oh, grant, ye Fates, that Morrison
He will not now espy,
For if they meet upon the street
One of the twain must die. [18]

Alas, too late, the die is cast,
None can prevent the fray,
For Warren, seeing Morrison,
Intercepts him on the way.
Though cautious are his actions,
There is mischief in his eyes,
"Alive or dead, your mine," he said,
"Or Lucien Warren dies!" [19]

With courage in his bright blue eye
The son of Mòrag stood
Before this vain, misguided man
Who sought to shed his blood;
With eagle glance made perfect
By experience on the Plains,
Ass doubtful turns he soon discerns,
But still his ground maintains. [21]

Surrender now, young Morrison,
You are my prisoner!
I swore that I would capture you—
I'll shoot you if you stir!
He grasped his deadly weapon,
As these rapid words he spake,
And on he came, with eyes aflame,
But death was in his wake. [20]

In fearless tones, subdued but clear,
His answer quickly came:
"I pray you keep your distance,
You have erred in what you claim.
That brightly gleaming weapon

To you pocket pray restore,
Pup up that gun, for Morrison
Has met your kind before!" [22]

All speech was vain, for Warren
Quicly drifted to his fate.
He strove to raise his weapon,
But alas, he was too late,
For Donald drew upon him, and
Quick flashed the fatal flame,
The bullet sped, and Warren dead
Proclaimed the cowboy's aim. [23]

Thus Warren met young Morrison,
And thus he met his fate.
None could prevent the tragedy,
Assistance came too late;
For ere the fearful villagers
Could realize the scene,
The angel Death, with chilling breath,
Swept coldly in between. [24]

Detectives came from old Quebec,
From Sherbrooke, Montreal;
Fresh forces to the scene each day
Arrived at duty's call.
They come from far, they come from near
To greet the one they loved,
And some there was from God know where
Whom vilest motives moved.

They come, they come, the black, the white,
The coward, and the brave.
Three thousand dollars leads them on
To glory or the grave;
Young Donald of Megantic
Is the victim of the chase;
Oh, hasten then, o'er hill and glen
You'll need a lively pace!

They hunt the woods both night and day,
They search both high and low.
A constant stream of armèd men
Were hunting to and fro,
From Lake Megantic's lovely slopes[8]
To Dudswell in the west,
Determined wills o'er vale and hills
Pursued the futile quest.

[laughs]

---

8 Oscar Dhu wrote shores.

Harvey: Very, very good.

MB: Did many people learn long sections of Oscar Dhu's poem?

Donald: Not too many, but at one time I knew the book.

MB: The whole lot?

Donald: The whole book, oh yes.[9]

---

9 In August 1992 I discussed this topic with Alex MacIver and asked him if he ever knew anyone who could sing the whole song. Alex said there were "a few in the lumbercamps" and added that Donald Morrison in Scotstown was one of them. The following summer I also asked Donald's widow, Annie and she smiled as she recalled his enthusiasm, adding emphatically "Oh, Donald knew the whole book.." [Fieldwork notebook, July 30, 1993]

3) Guard the Gaelic: An Exortation to the Gaels

Donald Morrison: Oscar Dhu also wrote a song to the Gaelic language—"Oscar Dhu's Exortation to the Gaels[10]

Is it not our bounden right
To uphold with all our might,
And with tongue and pen to fight
For our native Gaelic?

Guard the language known to Eve,
Ere the Serpent did deceive—
And the last one we believe,
Mellow, matchless Gaelic!

Pity the disloyal clown
Who will dwell a while in Town,
And returning wear a frown
If he hears the Gaelic.

'Tis amusing to behold
Little misses ten years old,
When they leave the county fold
How they lose the Gaelic.

Some gay natives of the soil,
Cross "the line" a little while[11]
And returning, deem it "style"
To deny the Gaelic.

Lads and lassies in their teens
Wearing airs of kings and queens—
Just a taste of Boston beans
Makes them lose their Gaelic!

They return with finer clothes,
Speaking "Yankee" through their nose
That's the way the Gaelic goes—
Pop! goes the Gaelic.

---

10 The song, entitled "Guard the Gaelic: An Exhortation to the Gael", is published in Angus B. MacKay's book, *By Trench and Trail* 116 - 119.

11 That is, they went to the United States.

Though the so-called "Tony set"[12]
Teach them quickly to forget,
They will all be loyal yet
To their mother Gaelic.

Then abjure such silly pride
Cast the ragged thing aside—
Let your mongrel "English" slide [sic]
Rather than the Gaelic.

What a dire calamity
And how lonesome we would be
If our honored Seannachie
Failed to charm in Gaelic!

Better far the "mother tongue"—
Language in which mother sung
Long ago, when we were young—
Ever tender Gaelic!

And Buchanan[13], how could he
Sell his soda or his tea
On the side of "Talamh a righ"[14]
If he lost his Gaelic?

Also Merchant Edward Mac[15]
Would not sell so much tomac
If his stock was found to lack
Lusty Lewis Gaelic!

And Pennoyer[16], what would you
At the Gould post office do
When you'd hear from not a few
"Ciamar a tha thu fhéin an diugh?"[17]
If you lost your Gaelic?

---

12 "Tony" means "fashionable", suggesting people who had been to the city.

13 Buchanan had the store in Gould

14 i.e. Crown Land, or land that was not owned by anyone.

15 Duncan doesn't know

16 Family (either Irish or English) in Gould; he was the post-master. Since a lot of people there couldn't speak anything but Gaelic in the early days, he would have had the basic phrased for everyday communication.

17 This is what Donald sings; Oscar Dhu has *"Ca mar u ha u fean a diubh"* [sic] in his printed text. In this, and the next verse, the rhythm of the third line is repeated for the fourth line, then the final line returns to the rhythm of the other stanzas.

Little Donald with the plaid[18]
O'er his burly[19] shoulder laid,
Would go dancing in the shade,
And his glory soon would fade
If he lost his Gaelic.

From O'Groat's to Land's End too
What would brother Scotsman do—
But a single language know,
If they lost their Gaelic?

What would then become of those
Poems grand in rhyme or prose,
Which in stately measure flows
From "Beinn Doran's"[20] spotless snows!
"Caber Feidh"—the best that grows—
"Fhir a bhàta"—how he rows!
What, I ask, would happen those
If we lost the Gaelic?

Then uphold the magic tongue
Which through mystic Eden rung
When Creation still was young—
Language in which Adam sung
To his Eve, Earth's first love song;
When the morning stars were flung
Into space, where since they've clung—
Ancient, Glorious Gaelic!

---

18 Nowadays local people now say "plaid" pronounced PLAD as they do in the U.S.A. Apparently in Oscar Dhu's day it was as in Scotland.

19 Oscar Dhu's version has "buirdly".

20 Oscar Dhu has Beinn Oran, and in the next line "Chaibar Faidth".