

James MacGregor Diary: 1786 - 1806

(HIL-MICL FC LFR .M324J4D5)

Transcription (pre 1791), pages 1 - 14

**Note: Page numbers have been added for researcher's convenience only.*

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In the fall of 1784, the settlers of Pictou sent a petition to Scotland for minister who could preach Gaelic and English, and committed it to the charge of Bailey, John Buist and Mr. John Pagan, two respectable inhabitants of Greenock; directing them to apply to any Presbyterian court whom they could obtain the most suitable answer to their petition. These gentlemen after consulting with one another, their friends and ministers of different denominations, laid the petition before the [?] May 1786; craving that I, (being the only preacher under the inspection of the Synod) I might be appointed to Pictou. After some deliberation and [?] the Synod unanimously granted the petition, appointed me to Pictou, and ordered the Presbytery of Glasgow without delay to take [?] upon trials for ordination and being ordained, that I should take the first opportunity of sailing for Nova Scotia.

I was [?] struck by this decision of Synod, I [?] it though I was not without fears of it. It put me into such a confusion that I did not know what to say or think. I had considered [?] clear? not to myself [?] to only but to the majority of the Synod that I was called to preach to the Highlanders of Scotland and of course that I could [?] called to go abroad. I had never met with [?] till then. That night I [?] upon my bed till it was time to rise? next morning. Through [?] several friends helped much to reconcile me to the Synod [?]. Upon reflection I observed that there? was no? present? opening of [?] for my preaching the gospel to the Highlanders [?], that their souls were equally precious wherever they were [?] I might be as successful abroad as at home I resolved to go, but still overwhelming difficulties were before me. The mission was vastly? important, and I was alone, and weakness itself. I had to go among strangers probably prejudiced against the religious denomination to which I belonged. Though the Synod told me [?] I felt its comfort too, that I was not sent to make seceders but Christians, yet as there was no minister before me nor any likely? to come [after me?], with whom I? could hold communion I felt [?] from [?] church. [There were 2 or 3 min.?] Burghists? Banded/Besides?, Nova Scotia was accounted so barren cold and dreary that there was no living in it with any comfort. To 41.14 was after? spending a few days among my relations and acquaintances [?] of [?] I bade them a finale adieu and repaired? to [?] for [? Rest of the last sentence of the page]

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Ordained? everyday? viz the 31st of May, [because a vessel was?] to sail for Halifax in two or three days, and no other opportunity of a passage was expected that year. The Rev.d Jas Robertson of marmock? preached the ordination sermon from [?] 60.9. It [is?] an excellent [?] sermon, on the future success of the gospel in [?] gentiles from their ignorance, idolatry and universal expression? to the knowledge love and holiness of God in Christ, but its [?] effect upon me was a expression? of my spirits from unbelieving [?] of my weakness, as if God could do nothing by my [?]. Next day came to Greenock along with the Revd John Buist to whose activity alone success of this business was owing. He did all that he could to assist and comfort me, and not then only but his kindness and friendship continued the days of his life, and was one of my principal consolations [?] Providence removed him and raised up others. On the 2d? of June I was on board the Brig Lily, Capt. Smith bound to Halifax. There were with me in the cabin 3

Captains and 2 Lieutenants of the Army and gentlemen emigrants. I had no reason to complain of their [?] along, but I had abundant cause to bewail their impiety. Songs, Cards, Drunkenness, and often horribly profuse swearing were their common afternoon employment. At times reasoning advice would have some effect on them, at other times none. Next morning was the Sabbath and the king's birth day. On board the Lily there was no appearance of a Sabbath, except [?] or three steerage passengers, and one of the hands whom I observed now and then retiring to read his bible. The sailors had very many things to do and arrange in order to prepare for encountering the swelling waves of the sea, which were evidently works of necessity, if it was work of necessity for us to have sailed before Monday; a question which I suppose had not been discussed. No Sabbath at sea was the common reply of the sailors to such of the passengers as accused [?] of profaning the Sabbath.

Nothing worth mentioning happened during the voyage, unless [?] that the Sabbath days were so stormy that on two of [?] only I could stand upon deck to perform public worship. I landed at Halifax July 11 and stayed two or three days there getting my baggage ashore, and [?] out for a vessel to carry them round to Pictou. The immorality [?] Halifax shocked me not a little, and I hastened out of it [?].

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Thursday 13th: a farmer from Truro, one of Mr. Cock's [?] offered if I go tomorrow, he would accompany me through the woods to Truro which was 60 miles of the 100 to Pictou. I hired [?]. We set off on Friday afternoon on a good but a miserably rocky soil. About 11 miles from Halifax the road became worse, but the woods became gradually better till their beauty [?] [?] loftiness? They far surpassed any [?] which I had ever seen in the lands?. I imagined myself riding through the [?] of a Scottish Duke, [?] the [?] of no Scottish Duke can compare in grandeur and loftiness? with the forests of Nova Scotia. After wading two or three miles through this beautiful avenue, I began to look for a house, but no house great or small appeared till after we had ridden 8 miles more. Then appeared a small [?] in rocky land, where after supping upon good bread, fish and bohea? tea we lodge for the night. Thenceforth we had no road. A narrow avenue had been cut down indeed?, and some of the trunks cut across, and rolled a little out of the way, but most of them lay as they fell, and none of the stumps or roots were removed. In proportion the land became less rocky, and in every place where it was wet the horses had to wade nearly to the [?] and often far above the mud or water, and every horse [?] to put his feet in the very spots where the one before him put his; [?] dry weather [?] morning we rode 8 miles before we breakfasted which we did on [?] fish. We made out with great exertion and fatigue (to me) to [?] eighteen miles [?] dinner? which again was composed of [?] fish and tea. I was very thankful for our safety, as I counted the greatest part of the ride both difficult and dangerous, on account of the many swamps? full? of roots and logs which we had to pass. I was attentive to direct the horse as dextrously? as possible [?] a good bridle? hand to keep? man and horse from falling and often ascribed? the safety of both to my dextrous management. But at last we came to a place so apparently dangerous that it was quite impossible for man or horse to escape without broken bones. There was no way to get to a side or to go back and the horse was in such a hurry to get on that he did not allow anytime to consult. I threw the bridle upon his neck in perfect despair. How amazed was I to find myself completely delivered from the great danger in a few seconds by the management of a mere beast. My next thought was Surely the horses of Nova Scotia do not know how to fall! This incident was of great use to me afterward, by inspiring me with a confidence in the [?] reared? in the forest there/here; and freed me from many an [?] [?] and fear that I would fall. Towards evening we came to the river Stewiack where there was a pretty clearing on the side of the river, and the soil very fertile. It is called Interval in Nova Scotia, and

haugh or dale in Scotland. The river was small but still and deep and seeing neither boat nor bridge. I thought [?] of swimming across it. My companion however showed me a trough

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Duplicate of page 3.

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edge of the river on the other side; [rest of the first line?] and that it would carry us over [?]. We saw a man mowing hay? [?] distance on the same side of the river with the canoe, and my fellow traveller called aloud to him. He understood that we wanted a passage, at once? [?] aside his sythe and came along to the river side, turned the canoe upon its side to empty it of some water which it had loaded?, launched it, and quickly paddled it over to our side. He [?] us to take the saddles off our horses and [?] us to drive them into the river to swim across. He put my saddle in the bottom of the canoe, and desired me to set down? upon it. I did so, and [?] across quickly and safely, and afterwards my companion in the same morning? These? operations being now? [?] I observed them with no small degree of curiosity. The man was dressed in a home made check woolen shirt and striped? trousers? without hat, handkerchief or stockings. I admired it as the best dress which I seen for labourers in hot weather, which was now the case in a high degree. He accompanied us to his house, put our horses to pasture and lodged us hospitably. [?] again we supped on bread fish and tea. I began to think that there were no other eatables in Nova Scotia. Upon enquiry I was told that country people could not afford fresh meat as it would keep fresh but a very short time in such hot weather that fresh fish could be had at any time as every house I had passed was [?] and [?] the fish was plentiful in proportion to the scarcity of the inhabitants. We had [?] three? houses only during the whole day and each was by a stream. I was also told that they caught fish in winter when the ice was a foot thick, as well as in [?] merely by cutting a hole through the ice and letting down a baited hook; the fish seeing? the light by the hole would come to it immediately and bite readily, that it was common for country people to keep beef and moose meat and caribou?. (I suppose the same as the [?] and Reindeer); fresh in the snow for three months. The house consisted of a kitchen and two or three bed closets with a garret for [?] and a sleeping place for some of the children. We all sat in the kitchen, and I had an opportunity of seeing how the country women prepared their bread. After kneading the dough the landlady formed it into a beautiful large cake of an oval form, nearly an inch thick, swept a hot? part of the hearth clean and there laid it [?]. Then she spread over it a thin layer of fine cold ashes, and [?] that a thick layer of hot ashes mixed with burning coals. By the time that tea kettle boiled, the bread was baked. The landlady with a fire shovel removed ashes, and took it off the hearth; and then after a little agitation to shake of the ashes she wiped it with a cloth much more clean than I could have expected [?] it was laid down. It made very good and agreeable bread. It seems this was the way of baking bread in the days of Abraham. Gen. 18.6. It is a speedy way and though not clean, it is not so foul as a stranger would imagine. But I was told some cover the cake with paper when it is laid up on the hearth, which keeps it pretty? clean; but this is not a common mode. This man I suppose kept up family [?] for the bible was at hand & laid on the table after supper which I had seen done before

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My companion roused me pretty early [?] morning, which was Sabbath, intending to be at Truro in time to attend public worship. I did not relish travelling on [?] sabbath, but I could not persuade him to stay, and I had found him so useful that I thought it a work of necessity to accompany him. When we went to

the pasture to saddle our horses, his was not to be found. We sought for him a long time all round the pasture but in vain. I then proposed again to stay where we were till tomorrow [?] we could not now be at Truro in time for Sermon. Truro was but 14 miles off and we might still be in time had the road been tolerable, but it no better than [?] we had travelled already. He replied that we could be at Truro in time for the afternoon service, that doubtless his horse was moving slowly homewards [?] as he went? and that probably we would overtake him after travelling [?] mile or two. So saying he took his saddle and bridle on his own back, and invited? me to come along with him. I obeyed, as I could not think either of travelling alone or waiting till chance would bring forward another traveller which might not be for a number of days. We overtook the horse as he expected, and we reached Truro by the time the afternoon's service was to begin; but was so fatigued that I was fit for nothing but [?]

On Monday I went to pay my respects to the Revd Daniel Cock, the minister of Truro, man of warm piety, kind manner and primitive simplicity. He received me with great kindness, but when we came to speak of uniting as members of the same Pby he was disappointed and a little chagrined? at my refusal. He was the more disappointed as he was the writer of the petition which Pictou people sent home and never had doubted [?] that the person it would bring out would sit in Pby? with him; and [?] he had given most supply of sermon and other ordinances to Pictou people previous to my arrival. He accompanied me next day to Londonderry, 15 miles down the bay of Fundy, to visit the Rev. David Smith, the minister of that place. He was a man of more learning and penetration, but less able than Mr. Cock. His untoward disposition had alienated a great part of the congregation from him. He proposed several judicious considerations to induce me join the Pby but at that time they had no influence upon me. I believe that every honest Scottish emigrant that goes abroad carries with him a conscientious? [?] attachment to the peculiarities of his profession which nothing but time and a particular acquaintance with the country he goes to will enable him to lay aside. It may be so with more than Scotchmen. It was so with me. They both informed me that their Pby was to meet? that day two weeks and proposed to me to come to the Pby to preach to it, and to converse with the members about the point in question. To all these things I agreed. Mr. Cock and I lodged with Mr. Smith that night; and next day we returned to Truro. I understood that [?] men of Truro intended to go to Pictou on Friday, therefore I waited willingly for

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their company. Till this time there had not road from Truro to [?] but a blaze, that is a chip taken off every tree?, in the direction which the road should have, to help the traveller to keep straight [?] but a member of Pictou Highlanders were now cutting down the trees where the road was intended to be Gov.? [?] [?] money to open it. My companions had taken with them a small flask of rum and a [?] of lamb to refresh us by the way, as it was too far to [?] fasting, and there was no public house. Just as we thought it time to take? our snack? we came to a place where there was a patch of good grass and a boiling pot hung on a stick laid on two forked sticks stuck [?] the ground. Here we agreed to take our snack. The [?] rather more than sufficed us, and we agreed to put the bones and the remaining meal in the pot that the road men might get the good of them. We then took each a mouthful out of the flask and mounted our horses. [?] [?] by we met? two men on foot going towards Truro and came to the road men. [?] them in gaelic that I now the minister expected to Pictou. They all came and shook hands with me, and welcomed me cheerfully.

It? was happy for my companions and me that the two men went along, [?] otherwise we stood fair for a good threshing. The highlanders went? by and by to their dinner and finding the meat and bones in the pot were exasperated to the highest degree, against them who did it, and [?] revenge imagining that it

was done purely to affront them. It could not be done by any of the decent gentlemen who went to Pictou it must have been done by the two roadmen who went to Truro. They were so persuaded of this that the two most fiery of them set off after [?] to give them a drubbing; but having pursued them three or four miles without overtaking them, they returned, not forgetting however to publish that if ever they came to Pictou they might expect broken bones. I took occasion, when they returned home after finishing their job on the road to inform them that who put the meat and bones in the pot and from what motive it was done. They were satisfied; but I [saw it needful to caution?] them against such rashness hereafter.

Before night we arrived at Geo. MacConnells, the nearest house to Truro, having travelled 30 miles. This road better than [?] between Truro and Halifax; for as few horses had ever passed on it, the surface was not broken nor cut into holes like the other. I had a hearty welcome from George, but there was only one apartment in his house he took me over [?] lodging to his next neighbour's Will Smith in whose house there was a [?] of two. I was now arrived within the bounds of my congregation, and had a sample of it, but the sample was better than the [?]. W. Smith was an active, public spiritual man, but he did not live long

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[?] was to me the death of half the congregation. Having asked Smith where it would be most proper to have sermon against Sabbath? he answered Squire Paterson's, which was ten miles off; one half of which must be travelled by land and the other by water. I requested him to give notice of it as widely as possible. He said he would and did it so effectually that they came to the sermon from every corner in Pictou, except? the upper settlement of the last river. Next morning I moved down the West river towards the harbour and Squire Patersons. W. Smith accompanied me past two or three of the houses at which we called and delivered me to Hugh Fraser afterward an elder who engaged to see me safe at Squire Paterson's. We called at the remaining houses down the West river, then travelled three miles without a house when the harbour appeared, a beautiful sheet of water, very much like one of the highland lakes in Scotland, about 9 miles long and one broad. It is an excellent harbour, but its entrance rather narrow. Three rivers run into it; the West river falls into the west end or head of it, and the Middle and East river in to the south side of it. The rivers are small, none of them having a run of 30 miles, but the East river is as large as the other two and is often called by the highlanders the great river. The greatest detriment it sustains is by its freezing for 3 or 4 months in winter, so that no vessels can come in or go out. When I looked round the shore of the harbour I was greatly disappointed and cast down for there was scarcely anything to be seen but woods growing down to the water edge. Here and there was to be seen a [?] timber but in a small clearing which appeared no bigger than a garden compared to the woods. No where could I see two houses without some wood between them. I asked Hugh Fraser where is the town? He replied there is no town but what you see?. The petition sent home had the word township in it, whence I had foolishly inferred that there was a town in Pictou. The reader may have some conception of my disappointments, when he is informed that I had inferred also the existence of many comforts in the town, and among them a barber, for I had never been partial to the operation of shaving. My disappointments, especially this disappointment was immensely discouraging to me; for I looked on myself as an [?] from the church and society?. I saw that Nova Scotia and especially Pictou especially was very far behind the idea which I had formed of them. I renounced? at once all idea of ever seeing a town in Pictou. Nothing but necessity? kept me there for I durst not think of encountering the dangerous road to Halifax again and there was no vessel in Pictou to take me away and not money enough to pay my passage home. Hugh Fraser, having borrowed a canoe, paddled me

along with a good deal of labour, to Squire Patersons, but it was much nearer than going by land I was received by the Squire, and his lady with every mark of the most sincere kindness

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They were of the very first settlers of Pictou, and had all along maintained [?] character; and now rejoiced in the prospect of enjoying public ordinance which they had been so long deprived. The afternoon I spent partly in [?] for tomorrow, and partly in getting accounts of the state and people of Pictou. The first settlers of Pictou were about a dozen of families from Maryland? in the year 1765. In 1773 came the ship Hector loaded with Highlanders [?] sent out by the Philadelphia company to settle large grant of [?] Pictou. About 30 families but many of them left Pictou for Truro, Onslow and Londonderry? towns in Colchester, for the families who had been in Pictou before could not afford [?] provision for third part of them; but they almost? all returned after some year [?] of these settlers suffered incredible hardships in bringing provisions from Colchester? without roads, horses or money, but earning? them by hard labour. One or two years onward came about 15 families emigrants from Dumfries shire to St. John's (now Prince Edward Island) who had been almost starved to death there, and gladly exchanged [?] want for the scanty allowance of Pictou. On the fall of 1783 and spring of 1784 some above 10 families of soldiers mostly [?] who had been disbanded after the peace with the United States in 1783, and some of their officers having half pay. The same summer brought 8 families of highlanders by the way of Halifax. There [?] a few of the families were Roman Catholics, Episcopalians etc., but they [were mostly?] Scotchmen and Presbyterians. They were settled round the shores of the harbour and on the sides of the rivers, except two families one on the East river and one on the west who chose to go two miles for the sake of better land. Such was the account I had from Squire Paterson of the first settlement of Pictou. His own house was rather the best in Pictou and the only framed one. There were only eight log houses in the whole settlement that had two fire places.

The Squire gave orders to lay slabs and planks in his barn for seats to the congregation, and before eleven o'clock next morning I saw the people gathering [?] hear the gospel from the lips of a stranger, and a stranger who [?] [?] of consolations in his own soul and but little? hope of communicating them to hearers. None came by land except a few families who lived to the right [?] of Squire Patersons for a few miles. All who came from the south side of the harbour and from the rivers had to come by water, in boats or canoes, and I doubt not but all are? craft in Pictou [?] in requisition. It was truly a novel sight to me to see so many boats and canoes carrying people to sermon. There were only 5 or 6 boats but many canoes [?] from one to seven or eight persons. The congregation however [?] large, for numbers could not get ready their craft, the notice was so [?] I observed that the conduct of some of them coming from the shore to the barn was as if they had never heard of a Sabbath; I heard loud talking and laughings and singing and whistling even before they reached the shore. They behaved however with decency as long as I continued to speak, and some of them were evidently much affected. I [?] to explain to keep?

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[in the forenoon?] in English. That is a faithful saying and worthy of all [?] and in the afternoon in gaelic. The son of man? is come to seek? and to? save etc.. I had been afraid of the want of proper presenters?, especially for the gaelic, as I knew in Scotland that readers were scarce in the North Highland but I was happily disappointed, for W. Smith did very well in the English and Thomas Fraser in the Gaelic. The first words which I heard after pronouncing? the blessing was one of the gentlemen of the army calling to his

companions, come, come [?] go the grog shop, but instead of going with him they came toward me to bid me welcome to the settlement, and he came himself at [?]. I could not be displeased with their politeness, still I was not pleased for there was no savour of piety in their talk. There were a number of pious people there who would gladly have spoken to me but as they told me afterward they had not courage to show themselves in such company. By regrets means I had a worse opinion of the place than it deserved. Gentlemen stayed some time and while they did, we had little else among us [?] profanation of the sabbath. Perhaps I was of worse timidity myself for all that I did to repress this profanation was some faint attempts to turn the talk to a more profitable. It? soon turned back. When they were gone Squire Paterson's family [?] no hindrance to religious conversation. Mrs MacMillan converted?. By Squire Patersons direction I gave out sermon next Sabbath on the East river at the head of the tide, and the 2d sabbath on the harbour a few miles from Squire Patersons; and the sermon continued alternately at these places for about 2 months, when the people agreed to have two meeting houses, one on the west side of the east river half a mile below the head of the tide to accommodate boats, and the other on the east/west? side of the west river two miles below the head of the tide, and alternate sermons to be at these places till winter when a winter regulation should be made. These two places were 10 or 11 miles apart. No road to either.

Near the beginning of the week I went up the East river to get acquainted with the people and be near the place of preaching next Sabbath. Except two families the whole population of the East river, [?] was from the Highlands; but few of them, or of those in other parts of Pictou could read a word. Several people applied to me for baptism next Sabbath. I was in great [?] with some of them and not then only but often afterward, and doubtless often erred, not knowing what to do with them especially for their ignorance. Those whom I thought quite unfit I advised to delay it for some till they got more knowledge and concern, and to come to again after some time and converse on the subject, and that it was far safer for them to wait till they were fit for it than to receive it with out the blessing of God. One of these thought fit to stand up in the congregation next Sabbath, and say with a loud and angry

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voice, That I was good for nothing; and did not deserve the name [?] a minister and that he would never pay me a shilling as I refused to baptise his child. Some of those near him endeavoured to still him but in vain till he got out his blast. I was sorry to hear him but said [?] some of the neighbours in the course of the week made him believe that he was liable to heavy fine and frightened him greatly, so that least? I should take the law to him?, he came and acknowledged his great pride and folly and begged me to pardon him. I told him I had no thought of taking the law and advised him to consider how he could escape the anger of God for such behaviour, that God's grace never produced such conduct as his, and that he needed to ask Gods pardon for offending him and troubling his people and imposing? himself.

Ever since I accepted the Synod's appointment I had been concerned lest there were no elders in Pictou because in that case I could not have a regular Session, without getting elders from Scotland; for I could not fall in with the idea that I had in myself the power of making elders; because such power implied that I could to myself whatever they and I could, and of course that they were useless. I could not expect the blessing of God upon such a session, and so I determined to have no elders made till I would have ordained elders along with me in ordaining them. On the east river and on the harbour I could not find out that there were any elders in Pictou. It was therefore a great happiness to me that I heard of three on the East river who had been ordained in Scotland; viz Thomas Fraser and Simon Fraser who had officiated in the parish of Kirkhill with my late respected and dear friend the revd Alexander Fraser and Alexr Fraser alias [?] from Kilmorack. It was an addition to this happiness that on obtaining acquaintance

with them, I found them possessed of considerable knowledge and pleasing appearances of piety. I was now relieved from my fears about a regular Session; as nothing also was necessary to the exercising of their office here but the call of the congregation, which I hoped would be obtained in due time if God would prosper my labours.

Next Sabbath I went by water from the East river to the place mentioned above to preach. The boat was crowded with people, and notwithstanding all that I could do to restrain them, their tongues [?] through the [?] at least the restraint continued but short while when some one would forget and break through. But when we drew near to the place of preaching, to which all the boats and canoes were pointing, the scene described before was completely renewed. Their singing and whistling and laughing

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and bawling filled my mind with amazement and perplexity. I took occasion to warn them of the sin and danger of such conduct and [?] them to consider by whose authority they were required to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. My warning and exhortation were not altogether thrown away but there was not much reformation, till the gentlemen belonging to the army favoured us with their absence, which they did when sailing ceased to be a pleasure, by the coolness of the weather as they were the main cause of the evil when they retired, those who had been excited by them were more easily restrained. But on the return of summer there was a visible alteration for the better, in the mean time however I often thought that my sermons did more harm by reasoning profanation of the Sabbath, than good by communicating instruction. As I had not yet seen the middle river I took an opportunity to visit it this week. It is the smallest of the rivers, and had only 11 families on it, four of them emigrants from Dumfries, the rest highlanders. Here I got acquainted with Robt Marshal a man worthy of being had in everlasting remembrance. He and his family suffered everything but death in Prince Edward Island by hunger and nakedness; for though they had plenty of clothes of all kinds when came there he had to part with every article of them that could possibly be spared for provision. Soon after he came to Pictou, he lost a most amiable consort, and for some time had a great struggle in bring up his family; but he was filled with the joy and peace of believing, and abounded in hope not only of everlasting happiness, but of hearing the joyful sound of the gospel in Pictou. He was afterward an elder, and a great comfort to me, but for many a day he had go to hear sermon in an old red coat which an old soldier had given him, and a weavers apron to hide the [?] rags of his trousers. He had I believe the poorest hut in Pictou, but many a happy night did I enjoy in it. Robert marshal was eminent for honesty and plainness, for charity liberality of sentiment and public spirit. He was very useful to the young generation to teach and [?] and direct them; and would reprove the greatest man in the Province as readily as the least, for any plain [?] of the law, as profane swearing, or travelling on Sabbath. In time he got over his poverty, but he had his trials as well as his comforts all his days. It was not till the next time I visited the middle that I became acquainted with Kenneth Fraser, an amiable Christian, whom I never met without a smile on his countenance. At home he had been under the ministry of the Revd Thomas MacRay in Lairy, Sutherland. He remembered so many savoury notes of Mr. MacRay's sermons, that I could not but have a high opinion of the character of

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It was little encouragement to me that I scarcely saw any books among the [?] Those who spoke English had indeed a few books which they had brought with them from their former abodes, but scarcely one of them had gotten any addition to their stock ever since. Almost all of them had a bible and it was to be seen with some of the Highlanders who could not read. There was no school in the place. Squire

Paterson had built a small house and hired a teacher for a few months now [?] then for his own children. In three or perhaps four other places three or four of the nearest neighbours had [?] hired a teacher for a few months at different times, and this was a great exertion. What was more discouraging, I could not see a solution? in Pictou where a school could be maintained for a year, so thin [?] scattered was the population. Besides many of the highlanders were perfectly [?] different about education for neither themselves nor any of their ancestors [?] never lasted its pleasure or its profit. But afterward I found that children made quicker progress in the small and temporary schools with which [?] people here were obliged to content themselves than they did at home in the? large and stationary schools: and I found it easier than I had thought to [?] the highlanders to attend to the education of their children, so far as to read? the Bible. I made it a rule to inculcate this duty upon parents [?] [?] to them about baptism. 60 schools are now in Pictou District, but almost [?] of [?] get? by? hiring a man by the year or half year.

This week I went to Truro and preached to the Presbytery and people by [?] had a long conversation the ministers about union to no effect. They better acquainted with? the state of the Province insisted that as the grounds of difference? at home had no existence here they should not [?] our communion but being a stranger, thought that the change of place made no material difference and insisted that they should condemn here what I condemned at home here. Am [?] [?] took place which continued in some degree while [?] two ministers lived?. This want of union was no small trial to me as I was [?] and there were three of them.

There were so few houses in Pictou with any accommodations that I could no convenient place for lodging. On the East river there was one house within half a mile of the place fixed upon for erecting? house which has two fire places here I had to fix, for there was none equal to it within four miles of the other [?] of public worship. Still it was very inconvenient, for the heads of the family [?] to sit and sleep in the room, and I had to sleep in closet off the room; but [?] could not better myself. This circumstance fixed my lot on the East river for [?] day. After two years I got into a house where I had a room for myself.

During the whole of harvest and the fall I [?] preparation for building [?] any of the meeting houses. This discouragement with the rest? affected so that if I could have left Pictou I would have done it even late in the fall saw? little fruits? of my labour. Still providence was in many respects favourable?

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Though public worship? had been conducted in the open air, till we were compelled by the cold to go into a fire house yet we were never disturbed with a shower. Towards the end of September the Session agreed that there was need of an increase? of elders, two for each river and one on the harbour. This was [?] to the congregation, who soon after chose the following persons – Donald MacRay, Peter Grant, Robert Marshal, Kenneth Fraser, John MacLean, Hugh Fraser and John Patterson. I name them because they were my companions, my support and comfort when Pictou was destitute and poor and I was with out the assistance of a co-presbyter. They have all given in their account, as also the three ordained in Scotland, and I trust they have done it with joy and not with grief. They were not ordained till next May.

The upper settlement of the East river being further off from the place of public worship than any other part of the congregation it was agreed to let them have the sermon in their own settlement three Sabbaths annually, and I agreed to give them [?] week days beside. This arrangement continued till a second Minister came to Pictou when they got more?. I saw them the first time early in October, and on Sabbath they came all to hear with great joy and wonder for they had not indulged the hope of ever

seeing a minister in their settlement. They had very poor accommodations. I had to sleep on a little straw on the floor.

A little before winter set in I went to Merigomish a small settlement about 10 miles or rather 15? [?] from Pictou preached to them on sabbath, and visited several of the families. Having no prospect of a minister to themselves they begged of me to visit them as often as I could, and as far as depended upon they put themselves under my charge. I promised to do for them what I could, and accordingly I gave them annually less? or more supply for near 30 years when they got a minister to themselves [?] William Patrick [?] application? from with out? the bounds of my own congregation was [?] to me Instead? I might be called the Minister of the North? Coast of Nova Scotia, rather than of Pictou for at that time there was no other Minister along the whole north coast, except one church of England clergyman near the east end of the Province.

On Novr 15th winter set in. We had a few showers of snow before but they melted? [?] but the snow of that day continued until the middle of April, and some of it till May. I was tired of winter before New year day; but before march was over I forgot that it should go away at all. The snow became gradually [?] was between two and three feet deep; when women could travel only where a path was made and man [?] themselves to snowshoes. We had now to alter the [?] preaching entirely. People could not [?] in? a? house? with out fire and they could not travel far. It was therefore [?] I should preach two Sabbaths the East river, two upon the harbour, two upon the West river, and two upon the Middle river,

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and then renew the circle, till the warm weather should return.