

CAMERONS, MACLEODS AND THE LOYALIST ROSE

by Major George D. (Duff) Mitchell, MC,CD,UE

Legend has it that the Loyalist Rose originated in the Damascus region of today's Syria and was brought to Britain by Crusaders in the 11th Century. Identified as "Maiden's Blush" of the Rosa Alba family it appeared in Renaissance paintings and is described as "a cupped, very double fragrant pale pink rose fading almost to white, bushy, densely branched, blooming well in June."

The role of Highland emigrants John and Mary Cameron of Inverness-shire in bringing this antique rose to the New World and safeguarding its Canadian future in the aftermath of the American Revolution is justly celebrated.

John Cameron's first loyalty, ironically, was to his clan and the House of Stuart. In his youth he was an ardent supporter of the Jacobite cause and the Highland uprising of 1745. He and three brothers served in the Jacobite army. Their father, Donald Cameron of Clunes (1680-1753), a clan leader, was too old to serve. One brother, Allan, was killed at the Battle of Prestonpans near Edinburgh in 1745 but the others, including John, survived the bloody Battle of Culloden in April 1746 that ended Stuart pretensions to the British throne.

The Cameron chiefs, like many Highland chiefs, paid a heavy price for their Stuart loyalties. Both Cameron of Lochiel and Cameron of Clunes had their estates torched and plundered. The women and children of the families were turned out of their homes, crops were burned and farm animals taken. Lochiel, badly wounded at Culloden, had his land confiscated, and was exiled to die in France. Donald of Clunes, because he was not involved in the fighting, had his lands restored early on.

After Culloden John Cameron of Clunes (1725-1824) was able to resume a Highland farm life, while his brother Allan's heir, Donald Cameron (1736-1827), succeeded as chief of Clunes. John's future bride, Mary Cameron (1739-1830), and her parents were also uprooted in Glen Nevis, Inverness-shire, but to a lesser degree. The future Loyalist Rose was probably nurtured from plants in gardens of Glen Nevis, not from those torched gardens of Clunes in Lochaber.

John and Mary Cameron were likely wed in Glen Nevis about 1761. Perhaps five of their ten surviving children were born in Scotland before they sailed for America in 1773, travelling via Fort "St. John and Lake Champlain" to the Mohawk River Valley where John leased a 100-acre lot in Kortright Patent, NY, from Sir William Johnson.

In May 1777 John and his eldest son Alexander Cameron (c1762-184?) left the family in the Mohawk Valley to enlist in the King's Royal Regiment of New York (likely near Fort St. John), but because of their ages, one too old, the other too young, they were discharged in July to rejoin the family and to serve as operatives in a British spy network until hostilities ceased. His post-war Claim for Losses included a certificate from Major (later Colonel) James Gray, commander of 1KRRNY, stating that John had been of "very material use to ...[those] on Secret Service" and to his being "a Good Honest Man." It was also noted that John assisted "scouting partys [sic] while in Tryon County, and in procuring intelligence."

As Loyalists, John and his family suffered periodic plundering by rebel neighbours until 1784 when they joined the northward trek of the dispossessed. He and his son Alexander were granted 200-acre Lot 6, 4th Concession, later designated within Cornwall Township, Upper Canada. John received the lot's W½ and son Alex, the E½. John drew a daily ration for 10 at first and Alex for one until he was married.

Cuttings of this ancient rose, which the couple had shepherded across the Atlantic and nurtured in upper New York, came with them to grow again in Upper Canada. They not only enjoyed its perfume and beauty, but from its flowers, stalks, leaves and hips, they could make medicines, tea and delicacies. Passed on by some family members and neighbours it still flourishes as a prized garden rose in Loyalist farms of Stormont and Glengarry Counties.

How this rose came to survive and thrive in Canada has only recently been revealed fully, especially how it links Camerons and MacLeods of Loyalist descent. John and Mary's daughter Margaret (Peggy) Cameron (c1775-c1840+) is said to have carried the rose shoots to their pioneer Cornwall lot. She wed Alexander (later Captain) MacLeod (1769-1850) in December 1796 and passed on the rose to some of their 11 children born in Locheil Township, but particularly to her daughter Mary MacLeod (1812-1875), when she married Captain Norman MacLeod (1810-1889) about 1840 and settled on Lot 25.9th in Kenyon Township near Dunvegan village.

Norman MacLeod had been commissioned to help quell the 1837-38 Rebellion. He was a great grandson of 'Big' Norman MacLeod (c1733-1794), a Loyalist who served aboard Royal Navy ships blockading the St. Lawrence to prevent arms and supplies being smuggled to American rebels, and later was the co-leader of the famed MacLeod migration from Inverness-shire to Glengarry in 1793-94. 'Big' Norman's son, 'Big' Alex MacLeod (1756-1836+), served with the 71st Regiment (Fraser Highlanders) in 1776-1784; late in life 'Big' Alex sought Loyalist status, which was denied in error. His son, Alexander MacLeod (1784-1842), wed Sara MacPhee (1791-1877) whose son became said Captain Norman.

Norman and Mary's son, Alexander MacLeod (1845-1924), wed Flora McDonald (1850-1923) about 1876. She passed on the prized rose to her daughter Isabella Rachael (1881-1956) who became Mrs. Fred K. MacLeod (1872-1960) about 1905, residing on Lot 26.8th Kenyon, also near Dunvegan. Their daughter, Flora Margaret MacLeod (who wed Cecil Johnston in 1948), has provided much new detail about the MacLeod ties to this rose. Long widowed, she now lives with her daughter Isabelle in Ottawa. Still alert in her mid-nineties, Flora says her brother Alexander MacLeod (1911-1989) "had a green thumb and soon became the prime rose gardener." In August 1943 he married another 5th generation Cameron descendant and distant cousin, Ethel (Campbell) MacLeod (1914-1978), also a former teacher of Glengarry, but then near Timmins, Ontario, where he was again teaching. By 1954 they resettled in North York, Toronto, with their four children who kept Ethel busy. There, Alex continued as a teacher, but also maintained a flourishing garden in Willowdale where nitrogen in the soil gave his roses a brighter hue.

Ethel delved into the history of their ancient rose and first garnered publicity for its Loyalist aspect in the National Geographic Magazine when its lengthy article, "The Loyalists," featured a picture of the couple's Loyalist rose in April 1975. About a year later, 200 years after the KRRNY was first formed, she registered "The Loyalist Rose" with the International Registration Authority for Roses. She then donated it to The United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada to mark the Bi-Centennial of the American Revolution and the coming of the Loyalists to Canada. Her Cameron lineage also became recorded in Scottish history. Coincidentally, Alex sold cuttings of the rose to help fund the Toronto and Governor Simcoe UEL branches.

Shoots of the Loyalist Rose are now being sold by the Governor Simcoe and Hamilton Branches of UELAC – memorials to the persevering lives of John and Mary Cameron, who survived into their 100th and 92nd year respectively.

Postscript: Scottish historian John Stewart says of the burial ground of the Camerons of Clunes that "no more peaceful or secluded spot can be imagined."

The resting place of John and Mary Cameron in Stormont makes a poignant contrast to this public acclaim. Their remains lie in unmarked graves in a half-acre Presbyterian burial ground, generally called the Cameron cemetery. But no Cameron descendant now owns it or its surrounding E½ Lot 6. The one legible tombstone, that of their youngest son, Lt.Col John Cameron (1779-1867), however, includes their burial records. The neglected burial plot is overgrown with shrubs, riddled with animal burrows and possibly threatened by a nearby active quarry. About 26 grave foot-markers were counted in the late 1970s, when some restoration work was attempted.

Mrs. Mabel E. (Cameron) MacLean of Summerstown has drawn attention to the sad state of the cemetery for years and has gained some support among historians of Cornwall for her efforts to restore and save it. She and Doris Ferguson of Williamstown in 2001 had Loyalist roses planted at St. Andrew's

United Church, Williamstown – one of Ontario oldest kirks. Also of the St. Lawrence Branch, Margaret J. Cameron has graphically related how her Loyalist ancestor Donald Cameron (176?-1809), a Highland-born son of John and Mary, became a pioneer casualty and one of the first buried at the Cameron cemetery. Hopefully, a decision can be made to surround this burial ground with fencing to preserve it for posterity and to have the Loyalist Rose growing there instead of a tangle of weeds and shrubs.

The Loyalist Rose was planted at Ottawa's Experimental Farm in May 1998, but under the name of Maiden's Blush and has recently been abandoned. It is being replanted there as the Loyalist Rose on June 8th, 2006

ENDNOTES:

1. Fred H. Hayward, UE, "A Loyalist in the Garden," *The Loyalist Gazette* (Spring 2003); and the Rose description, plus its coloured picture, are taken from note cards printed for the United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada, Governor Simcoe Branch, 1997.
2. John Stewart of Ardvorlich, *The Camerons (A History of Clan Cameron)*, 208-211; Eric Linklater, *The Prince in the Heather*, 10 & 16; and Sir Thos. Innes of Learney, *Clans, Septs, and Regiments of the Scottish Highlands*, (7th Ed., 1965). Lochiel died in 1748 exiled in France, but his son Charles was restored to their Highland estate in 1759, where "Achnacarry" or 'Castle Cameron' still stands
3. John Cameron of Clunes' Petition #323 for losses d/28 Jan. 1788 at Montreal is on PAC Report #49 of 1904, p. 394. It states he was at "St. John's, Lake Champlain" in 1773, i.e. that the family travelled through Canada en route to Tryon County, NY.
4. *Ibid*, p.394; BGen E.A. Cruikshank, *The King's Royal Regiment of New York, w/Master Muster Roll, etc.*, by Gavin K. Watt, 176-177; and J. Ross Robertson, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, 103. Maj (Col. ret.) Jas. Gray had 26 years of British commissioned service, mainly overseas w/42nd Regt. (Black Watch) and then with 1KRRNY, which he led from mid-1777.
5. Norman K. Crowder, *Early Ontario Settlers: A Source Book*, 39; and William D. Reid, *The Loyalists in Ontario: Sons and Daughters of the American Loyalists of Upper Canada*, 47-49; *Loyalist Lineages of Canada* (Vol. II, pp. 154-156); and Cornwall Twp. Lot 6.4th Land Register, p.328. Son Alex sold his E½ lot (less its "Presbyterian burial ground") and re-settled in the early 1820s in Nissouri Twp., Oxford Co., UC.
6. Mrs. Mabel E. (Cameron) MacLean, UE, George M.W. Anderson, CMA, CMH, UE, and Margaret J. Cameron, all of the St. Lawrence Branch, Mrs. Eileen (Campbell) MacGillivray of Dalkeith, Lochiel Twp. (per Hugh P. MacMillan, DLit.), and Mrs. Flora M. (MacLeod) Johnston now of Ottawa have provided much source material to the author.
7. Macleod, *op. cit.*, (Revised Ed.), 24-25, 112, 158, 189 and 190.. 'Big' Alex's certificate begins with "Seventy Regiment of Foot" but is signed by "Thos. Stirling, Col. 71st Regt." 'Big' Alex was a comrade-at-arms in the 71st Regt. of my Loyalist ancestor, Archibald 'King' McGillivray (c1756-1836). They were the two scouts sent to Glengarry in 1791 and became the two travel foremen who aided the two co-leaders, 'Big' Norman and cousin Kenneth MacLeod (1745-1815), bring the epic MacLeod migration to Locheil Twp. by June 1794.
8. Alexander F. MacLeod (1911-1989), BA (Toronto), son of Fred Kenneth (vs given Farquhar) MacLeod (1872-1960) and Isabella Rachael MacLeod (1881-1956), taught in Glengarry public schools, then worked for an uncle in a construction firm at Seattle, WA, followed by more teaching in Vancouver, then in northern Ontario, and finally at Timmins. By then his bride-to-be, Ethel (Campbell) MacLeod (1914-1978), had become acting principal of a nearby Porcupine school, but they were wed in August 1943 during holidays in their native Glengarry County.
9. *The National Geographic Magazine*, (April, 1975), "The Loyalists," 510 et seq. Also *Glengarry News* (May 1978), "Former teacher traced history of Loyalist Rose," a tribute to Ethel MacLeod's life. Briefly, after Glengarry schooling, as a graduate of Ottawa Normal School, Anna Ethel Campbell of McCrimmon, Kenyon Twp., became a dedicated teacher in Glengarry and later went north to Porcupine (Ont.), as an acting principal. She acquired a keen interest in Canada's Scottish heritage and contributed to histories of the local Cameron, Campbell and MacLeod Clan Societies. As well she was an active member

of Genealogical, Bible and Loyalist societies and her local Willowdale Presbyterian Church from where she was buried. For such a keen volunteer, it is sad that her life was cut short by a brief yet sudden illness.

10. Stewart, op. cit., 211. Ethel (Campbell) MacLeod (1914-1978) last lived in Willowdale, N. York, Toronto, ON.

11. Fred H. Hayward, UE, op.cit., 15.

12. John Stewart, op. cit., 210.

13. In 1984 Margaret Cameron of Long Sault, Cornwall Twp., wrote the stirring tale (read over CBC radio) of how her great great grandfather Donald Cameron was killed by a falling tree while building his log cabin on Lot 21.4th Finch Twp. in March 1809. "It took three days on the Indian trail to carry his body on boughs to reach the small graveyard on his father's farm near Cornwall's South Branch Road. A small fire was kept burning on the hillock to thaw the ground where the grave was to be dug ..." Donald's wife, also Highland born, Nancy (Ann) Cameron (1779-c1858), gave birth to her son 'Big' Duncan Cameron (1808-1890) soon after their arrival – the first white male born in Finch and grew to be a man of six feet five inches. He did most of the tree clearing in the days before power tools. His son, Donald Cameron (1847-1920) "had been a Reeve and later an auditor for Finch Township covering over 30 years."