

Randel “Randy” McDonell/McDonald U.E.L.
ca. 1762 – 1837

A Sketch of His Life

by Jim Willis
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Family oral history has always maintained that our branch of McDonell/McDonald is descended from the Scots Highland clan “MacDonalds of Glencoe.” At the present time, I have nothing to either confirm or refute that claim. However, I can trace our North American lineage back over eight generations with documented proofs.

Randy McDonell/McDonald was my 4th great maternal grandfather. I am descended from him through my late mother Mary Elizabeth “Betty” MacDonald (Willis). After providing proofs of my ancestry directly back to Randy, it was his military service with a loyalist provincial regiment known as the First Battalion of the King’s Royal Regiment of New York during the American Revolution and his subsequent inclusion on the U.E.L. Supplementary List (1829) that allowed me membership in the United Empire Loyalists Association of Canada in 1994.

Randy was born ca.1762 in the Mohawk Valley area of upstate New York then called the “*Province of New York*” in Tryon County. His military discharge dated December 24th 1783 states that his birth occurred within the “*Parish of Stone Arabia*” which is a small hamlet located near the village of Johnstown. It’s almost certain that his parent’s farm was located somewhere in this vicinity on acreage rented from local land baron Sir William Johnson. The Mohawk Valley was a very prosperous area where vast fields of wheat and corn were grown and dairy and beef cattle were raised. To date, Randy’s parentage has not been determined with 100% certainty. My research into this aspect of his life continues.

Student enrollment records dated March 1769 indicate that Randy was attending the newly-built Johnstown Free School located at the corner of Main and Williams Streets in Johnstown. The construction of this rectangular, two-storied, wooden frame school house had been the brainchild of the charitable Sir William Johnson and had been funded by him. Randy’s school master was Edward Wall, a strict Irishman who, besides teaching the three “R’s”, imposed his code of mannerly behaviour on the students with a long stick. Wall’s living quarters were on the upper floor of this yellow building.

Nothing more is known of Randy until 1780 when he was about 18 years old. By then, the American Revolution had been underway for almost five years. He had probably spent those years working on his parent’s farm and furthering his education when circumstances allowed. It is likely that the McDonell’s loyalty to the Crown was either highly suspected or known to neighbours by that time. The divided community was in great turmoil as anti-British fervor gripped the rebels. With acts of hostility and frequent

cruelty, the rebels harassed any fellow citizen holding political beliefs favouring the Crown. In reality, the rebel paranoia was not always without justification as many people with as yet undetected loyalist leanings, acted as spies and scouts for the British military right under rebel noses. And going one step further, loyalist “safe houses” had been established throughout the Valley and beyond.

With threats of death, torture or imprisonment hanging over their heads, their homes sometimes burned, and with lands, property and firearms being summarily confiscated, many destitute loyalists had already escaped north to Canada. There were two *main* routes for those fleeing the Mohawk Valley; northeasterly up through the Champlain Valley via Lake George and Lake Champlain towards Montreal, or northwesterly through Oswego to Niagara. Upon their arrival at either destination, most of the able-bodied men enlisted into newly-formed “provincial” military units which in part were sponsored by the British. Primarily, their goals were to help defend Canada from further rebel invasions such as those in 1775/76 and secondly, to have the capability of returning *en force* to northern New York in an effort to destroy rebel crops and grain reserves which at that time were being used to help fuel George Washington’s Continental Army in other theatres of the war. It was of equal importance during these incursions to rescue any trapped or imprisoned loyalists and provide them with safe passage to Canada as refugees.

In May 1780, a large raiding party of 450 men from various loyalist units and 80 native allies sailed south down Lake Champlain to Crown Point and then marched overland on a difficult four day journey through dense forest towards Johnstown and nearby rebel farms. Spearheaded by the King’s Royal Regiment of New York (KRRNY) also known as the “*Royal Yorkers*”, these seasoned soldiers were headquartered at Fort St. Johns about 25 miles south of Montreal on the Richelieu River. Shortly after escaping the Valley himself in 1776, the regiment had been raised and outfitted by loyalist Sir John Johnson, son of the deceased Mohawk Valley patriarch Sir William Johnson. Sir John was a very able commanding officer whose gallantry and shrewdness had been proven many times over. It was during this Johnstown expedition that Randy again comes to our attention.

Arriving just north of Johnstown on May 21st, the loyalist force quickly turned aside resistance from elements of a surprised Tryon County Militia leaving 11 rebels dead without loss to themselves. In a fanning formation, they continued their attack in a southerly direction across the countryside. Targeting the farms of the most troublesome rebels, they proceeded to cause havoc throughout the Johnstown agricultural area. Offering little resistance, civilian rebels fled south and crossed the Mohawk River in their boats. The raiding party did not follow. In little more than 24 hours, loyalist forces had torched 120 rebel homes, barns, granaries, grist mills and corn reserves. They had also driven-off livestock, seized dozens of horses and captured 27 of the enemy. Sometime during the course of these operations, over 140 members of persecuted loyalist families and 30 disenfranchised negroes stepped forward asking to be taken to Canada. Others, mostly young men asked to be recruited into the ranks of the KRRNY. Randy McDonell

was one of these young volunteers. The soldier whom he approached was Conrad Coons. The date was May 22nd, 1780.

Although Conrad had been a soldier since the regiment's formation in June 1776 and was three years older than Randy, it's probable that he and Randy had known of each other prior to the war. Both were from established Mohawk Valley families whose paths had likely crossed many times. Besides, the KRRNY already had two other soldiers named "Coons" who had joined with Conrad four years earlier. And now, 17 year old Gaspar Coons was one of the young men who was enlisting at the same time as Randy. It seems logical to assume that the Coons boys were brothers or cousins, or a combination of both. And as the surname "Coons" implies, these young men were descended from the German Palatines who were amongst the first white settlers of the Mohawk Valley in the early part of the century.

Realizing that rebel army reinforcements were probably not far away, at about 10AM the following day the loyalist raiders gathered their human cargo of civilian men, women and children and commenced a disciplined, brisk retreat through forest trails northwards to Lake Champlain and then Canada. But just as the march got underway, Conrad Coons fell ill and was unable to continue. It appears that he was hidden away by Randy and three other new recruits, but where they gained refuge, remains a mystery. I can only speculate that it was at a loyalist "safe house" somewhere in the vicinity. Nonetheless, within a few weeks Conrad had recovered and was strong enough to lead Randy and the other young men into Canada. On June 28th, after a grueling journey of at least ten days, the party of five arrived safely at Fort St. Johns.

Now a private in the King's Royal Regiment of New York, Randy was assigned to "The Colonel's Company." His regimental number was A-11. It was one of ten companies that formed the regiment. The majority of the 65 men in his company were seasoned veterans who had seen considerable action since the KRRNY's inception in 1776. During the summer following his enlistment, Randy and his company were rotated into garrison duties at Coteau-du-Lac, a small but very strategic fortification located 30 miles west of Montreal on the St. Lawrence River.

Coteau-du-Lac was situated at the narrowest part of the entire river. Very dangerous rapids spread the breadth of the waterway and an *almost* inaccessible island was located directly in the middle. Known as "Prison Island", here were incarcerated the most violent of rebel prisoners. Sentry duty on this island was one of the responsibilities of Randy's company.

But Coteau-du-Lac was most highly recognized as a staging area for the shipment of essential goods to upriver military posts including those at Oswegatchie (*present-day Ogdensburg*), Fort Haldimand on Carleton Island, Oswego, and Fort Niagara. Goods were transported by sleigh in the winter from Quebec City and Montreal, warehoused at Coteau-du-Lac until spring, and then loaded onto bateaux above the rapids and transported upriver after ice-out under KRRNY guard. And during Randy's time at Coteau-du-Lac, Royal Engineers with the assistance of the garrisoned soldiers were also

nearing completion of a narrow lock canal which would ultimately allow bateaux and Durham boat traffic arriving from either direction to safely by-pass the rapids. It was the first *lock canal* constructed in North America.

After his posting to Coteau-du-Lac in mid-summer 1780, information pertaining to Randy's military career becomes sketchy. Another and much larger raid into the Mohawk and Schoharie Valleys was led by Sir John in October of the same year with seven of the ten KRRNY's companies participating. Although old military documents indicate that the Colonel's Company remained at Coteau-du-Lac during this time period, it was not unlike Sir John to handpick certain soldiers from companies left behind and muster them into his plans for a specific purpose. And Randy, being one of the most recent Mohawk Valley recruits, would have had the most up-to-date intelligence of the areas about to be invaded. Besides the likelihood of him being very fit and able to endure the rigours of such a march, he was also literate, and this came in handy when enemy messages were intercepted. However, since no record has been found to confirm this suspicion, this may or may not have occurred.

Nonetheless, military documents do reveal that by May 17th 1781, Randy and his company had been transferred downriver to garrison the outpost in the village of Pointe Claire on the north shore of Lac St. Louis (*a brief widening of the St. Lawrence*) above Lachine and closer to the fortified town of Montreal. His company remained in Pointe Claire for at least a year, and then sometime in 1782, they were again moved and assigned to garrison duties in Montreal. It is here, a little over a year later on December 24th, 1783, after peace has been declared, that the First Battalion of the KRRNY was officially disbanded and all members received their final pay and discharge papers. Unmarried soldiers were allowed free room and board in barracks until spring. If married soldiers and their families didn't already have suitable quarters, they were billeted in homes throughout town at government expense.

During his three-and-a-half years in the military, it's safe to assume that Randy had his share of adventures. Being on "garrison duty" only meant that an individual company *was based or worked out of* a particular location. Often, there were any number of companies in garrison at one site. In practice, elements of a company, either singularly or in a group, would range widely from their posts when seized with a specific assignment. Besides providing very effective fighting men in support of the Crown, the KRRNY regularly penetrated enemy territory in risky scouting and intelligence gathering missions and prisoner exchanges. They also delivered goods via bateau to the upper St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario military posts, employed its own tradesmen and provided a general labour force for the construction and repair of bateaux, fortifications and canals. And at some point in the summer of 1783, the KRRNY seconded an estimated 30 men for on-the-job training as assistant surveyors under the tutelage of the Surveyor General's Office. Randy was one of these fortunate soldiers.

When the war ended later in 1783 and the KRRNY disbanded on December 24th, Randy and men from this same team headed by Chief Surveyor Louis Kotte and Deputies Patrick McNiff and John Collins went to work for Stephen DeLancey - Inspector of Loyalists.

DeLancey was in-charge of all things concerning the well-being and eventual settlement of the loyalists. Embarking from their Lachine headquarters on 1st March 1784, 26 of these men, some of whom had been tasked in the previous year with the plotting-out of five Cataraqui Townships at the eastern end of Lake Ontario, were now tasked with surveying five of the eventual eight Royal Townships along the north shore of the St. Lawrence River. Their intention was to have much of their work completed by 1st June in order to accommodate the anticipated arrival and settlement of disbanded loyalist soldiers and their families.

For the most part, each township was surveyed back from the shoreline into numbered concessions with each concession divided into rectangular 200 acre lots of mostly wooded land. Basically, each man, depending upon his former military rank would be entitled to a minimum allotment of 200 free acres in lieu of their demonstrated loyalty to the Crown as soldiers during the revolution. Widows of loyalist soldiers who had died or been killed during the war were entitled to the same measure.

Allocation of the land was as simple as picking a small piece of paper or “*ticket*” from a hat. On each ticket was printed a concession and lot number and that was where you were expected to build a home and clear the land. It’s unclear how long Randy continued surveying the townships. The muster roll of disbanded soldiers dated October 13th 1784 suggests he was still with the crew and working in the (New) Johnstown (*present-day Cornwall*) area at that time. However, as *bona fide* refugee loyalists, and later the questionable “*late loyalists*” continued to flood into Canada over the next few years, new surveys were ordered further along the north shores and inland of Lakes Ontario and Erie. Consequently, Randy may have worked as a surveyor for only a year or two, but then it may have been for three, four or five years.

One thing we know for sure is that Randy had a girlfriend. Her name was Hester, the daughter of loyalist refugees Joseph and Mary Proctor *nee Fanning* who came into Canada from Balstown, NY soon after cessation of hostilities. Although there is much room for speculation, the question as to *when* and *where* they had met will likely never be answered. Nonetheless, on July 4th, 1785 Randy and Hester were married in Montreal by Reverend David C. Delisle, minister of the Christ Church Anglican congregation. Delisle was of Swiss origins whose native tongue was French. His command of English is said to have been very poor. Since the Christ Church members did not yet have a church of their own, the local Recollet Fathers were continually having their arms twisted by local British authorities into temporarily *loaning* their chapel to accommodate Anglican events. It was here that 23 year old Randy and 21 year old Hester were wed. It was the same stone chapel that Randy’s newly acquired father-in-law may have visited 25 years earlier as a young British redcoat.

The 27th (*Enniskillen*) Regiment of Foot was originally formed in 1689 as an Irish regiment of the British Army, but by the mid-1700’s a potpourri of Protestant Irish, Scots and Englishmen embodied their ranks. With the Seven Years’ War looming on the horizon,

orders were received in December 1755 to initiate a recruiting drive in the West Yorkshire town of Leeds in northern England. No recruitment rolls have yet been found for this period, but circumstantial evidence suggests that it was here sometime in 1756 that Joseph Proctor enlisted into the 27th. Assigned to a company of light infantry commanded by 31 year old Captain Philip Skene, Joseph and his regiment were sent to North America one year later to help bolster British forces. Arriving in Halifax as part of a great convoy from Cork, Ireland in July 1757, the regiment remained quartered there while awaiting further orders. The Seven Years' War had already been underway for a year and the French were doing well.

Finally, in early autumn, the regiment was instructed to sail down to New York City and go into winter quarters at Fort Edward up on the Hudson River. On July 8th 1758 during his first major action, Joseph was wounded during the disastrous assault on the French-held Fort Ticonderoga situated at the south end of Lake Champlain. He returned to Fort Edward, recovered from his wounds and almost one year later in July 1759, marched northwards again to Ticonderoga whereupon it was discovered that the French were in the midst of evacuating the fort with the intention of heading northwards to reinforce their defenses in Montreal and Quebec City. This time the fort was taken without major resistance. A few days later, Crown Point was found deserted.

Joseph and his regiment remained on garrison duties at Crown Point until August 1760 when orders were received to march north to attack Montreal. However, standing in their way at the top of Lake Champlain was Ile aux Noix, a formidable French fortification which had to be taken before continuing their march. After several days of British bombardment, and suffering few casualties, the British again forced the French to abandon their position and retreat towards Montreal. Quebec had fallen to Wolfe only a year earlier. Arriving near Montreal in early September, Joseph witnessed the vastly outnumbered French capitulate without firing a shot. The surrender was signed on September 8th.

After three months of garrison duties in Montreal, the 27th returned through Lake Champlain to Crown Point for the winter. By August 1761 they had been ordered back down to Fort Edward and then in October, further down to Staten Island. It was from there in late 1761 that they sailed for the West Indies. After a series of hard-fought battles in January and February 1762, Joseph's regiment was instrumental in the capture of the French island of Martinique. In March, Granada capitulated without bloodshed and from June 6th until the Spanish surrender in mid-August, the 27th and other British regiments laid siege to the heavily fortified city of Havana, Cuba. Although taking many casualties, Joseph's company had been one of the first through the breached wall when they stormed Moro Castle, one of Havana's primary strongholds.

Returning from Havana, the 27th Regiment arrived in New York City in October 1762. It's perhaps during this time while on furlough, Joseph was either reunited with or met Mary Fanning for the first time. The date of their marriage is unknown, however their daughter Hester was baptized April 23rd 1764 in the Reformed Church of Schenectady. Joseph received his official army discharge on July 24th 1763.

In 1764, when Chief Pontiac was on the warpath (*aka Pontiac's Uprising*), Joseph mustered as a Sergeant in a New York provincial regiment. He subsequently went on campaign with Colonel John Bradstreet to Fort Niagara and beyond. In his own words, Joseph describes his experiences during that brief war as having, "*endured most incredible hardships from hunger and fatigue.*" After the bloody uprising was quelled, he retired to the tranquility of farming and family life in the Balstown area less than 10 miles north of Schenectady. But that life-style only lasted until the outbreak of the American Revolution, little more than a decade later.

In May of 1777, Joseph and 40 other loyalist men from the Balstown area led by recruiting officer William Fraser of the fledgling McAlpin Corps, were on their way to Canada to enlist when they were intercepted by a large contingent of rebel militia somewhere in the vicinity of Schroon Lake. Clearly outnumbered and with many of their party unarmed, the loyalists didn't resist and were subsequently paraded down to Albany and all thrown into gaol. The length of Joseph's imprisonment is not known, but he was eventually paroled and allowed to return to his farm after signing a rebel warrant promising to remain neutral throughout the duration of the war. He was cautioned by the tribunal that he would be hanged should he not honour his pledge. Nonetheless, all of these men, either by parole or escape, were free in time to join Daniel McAlpin's new loyalist corps and to participate in General John Burgoyne's doomed offensive campaign from mid-summer through to October 1777.

In his petition (*for another land grant*) dated 1793, Joseph stated that he was appointed to the rank of Sergeant by Captain William Fraser, but to what extent he became involved in the 1777 Burgoyne campaign or how long he served with McAlpin I do not know. I strongly suspect that he resigned from the corps shortly afterwards and returned to farming. By then he was somewhere between 40 to 50 years old with responsibilities back in Balstown. But his age didn't lessen his enthusiasm for the military because he again attempted to enlist in October of 1780 or 81 when the KRRNY visited Balstown on another raid. However, he was dissuaded from doing so by Captain William Morison who advised Joseph "*to remain where he was, as he could render the British troops most essential aid by directing and adjusting their scouts.*" And, according to a witness statement given many years later by Captain Thomas Fraser (*bro to William*), Joseph became of "*great service*" to the scouts as he did guide them and "*supplied them with everything in his power.*" At war's end, Joseph, Mary and their children Hester, Thomas, and Margaret were escorted into Canada by Colonel John Campbell and his men of the Canadian Indian Department.

Following their July 4th 1785 wedding, it appears that Randy and his new bride soon took possession of the lot that Randy had chosen a year earlier in Royal Township 5, or as it was later called, "*Matilda.*" Because of the heavy influx of loyalist soldiers during 1784 and the fact that up until that time only the two front concessions of RT5 had been surveyed, the soldiers were initially allowed only half-lots of 100 acres each. Consequently, Randy and Hester settled on the 2nd Concession, W ½ Lot 17, (*at or near present day Iroquois*).

Patrick McNiff's survey map of November 1786 confirms their habitation on that particular lot and a Provision List dated August 31st 1786 indicates that the couple did not have any children by that time.

However, it appears that things began to change in 1787 when sometime during that year, Randy and Hester celebrate the arrival of their first born, "John." In the absence of a birth or baptismal record, John's birth year has been determined by the age he gave on documents in later life and then simply counting backwards (*i.e.* 1st Leeds Militia muster rolls). And on November 8th of that same year, with the survey of Matilda Township now more or less complete, Randy was given a land board ticket for 200 acres on the 5th Concession, Lot 24. It was signed by John Collins, Deputy Surveyor General. Although the official patent for this property was received in 1803, Randy and Hester chose to remain (*at least for the time being*) on the lot where they had settled in 1784 and instead, sold the 5th Concession property many years later.

Randy and Hester don't come to our attention again until April 29th 1791 when their son Randel (Randy Jr) is born, and then two years later on June 13th 1793, son James comes along. Both infants are baptized at the newly-constructed Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church by Reverend Samuel Schwerdfeger. The church had been built in 1791 and would have been located near present-day Morrisburg (RT4 or Williamsburg). *Whether or not the original site of this church may have been flooded during the Seaway opening, I am not sure.* Witnesses or "sponsors" to the baptisms were friends and former soldiers of the KRRNY, Martin and Maria Staelin/Staley, and Lucas and Elisabeth Veeder. As their surnames indicate, these were people of obvious Palatine descent and like Randy, former residents of the Mohawk Valley.

At some point prior to 1795, Randy and Hester made a decision to leave their home in Matilda and relocate some 50 miles further west up the St. Lawrence River into a part of old RT 8 which had since been designated "*Yonge Township*" (County of Leeds). This decision seems to have coincided with Joseph Proctor's recent (1st March 1794) acquisition by Land Board Certificate of 200 acres also in Yonge Twsp. Up until that time the Proctors had been living in RT7 or "*Augusta*" where many of Joseph's old soldier friends had settled. Consequently, as Joseph and his family are moving onto their newly acquired land on the Broken Front Concession, W ½ Lot 22 and E ½ Lot 23 in Yonge, it's conceivable that Randy and his family could have been doing the same a few miles away on the 3rd Concession, Lot 21. Randy's property appears to have been a vacant Crown lot whereupon he would have entered into a lease agreement with the government.

The new Proctor and McDonnell properties were located in the vicinity of a small settlement called Mallorytown and close to what had become an important forwarding post on the St. Lawrence River aptly known as *Mallorytown Landing*. There does not seem to be any reason for Randy and Hester to have undertaken such a major change in their lives other than for a desire to be in close proximity to the Proctors. It would have involved a move of perhaps 25 miles upriver for the Proctors, and twice that far for Randy and his family. And notwithstanding the distance, it would include the building of two new homes and the clearing of woodlots for agricultural purposes. In most respects, it was like starting all

over, but by 1794, Randy had the additional responsibility of young mouths to feed. However, by examining Randy's character as best I can, it seems likely that this operation was well-planned. In fact, depending on how long he had worked for the Surveyor General, Randy may have at one time surveyed the land he was in the midst of settling and had made friends and minor government connections in the area years earlier. In any event, by June 12th 1795, Randy and his brother-in-law Thomas Proctor were already listed on local tax records as "*Rateable Inhabitants*" of Yonge.

And as an interesting side note, sometime in 1795 Randy made a land claim for W ½ Lot 22 on the 1st Concession which must have been vacant at the time. If this application ever proved successful, it would have put him directly across the road from Proctor property. However, it would seem that Randy never seriously pursued this claim and in 1821 it was officially patented to William LaRue. For the most part, due to the outcrops of rocky Canadian Shield terrain, the Broken Front Concession was not very good farming land.

Shortly after Randy and his family arrived in the Mallorytown area, another son Samuel was born. Similar to his older brother John's birth, Samuel's birth year of 1795 or 1796 has been calculated by back-dating old 1st Leeds Militia rolls. And on October 14th 1802, the fifth son Daniel (*through whom we descend*) makes his appearance. When Daniel is born, Randy is about 40 and Hester 38 years old.

Besides their five sons: John (1787); Randy Jr (1791); James (1793); Samuel (1795/96); and Daniel (1802); Randy and Hester had two daughters, Mary and Esther. Unfortunately, research has not yet ascertained their dates-of-birth and it's only by speculation that we might figure where they fit into the scheme of things chronologically.

Although Randy relied primarily on farming for his livelihood, his years spent in school as a youngster in the Mohawk Valley, boded well for him in later life. Many loyalists had not enjoyed the luxury of a formal education and no matter how hardworking or intelligent they may have been, most from the farming class were illiterate including his father-in-law Joseph Proctor. Bearing in mind that he had been chosen in 1783 as an apprentice surveyor likely due in large part to his literacy, by 1797, only two years after his arrival in Yonge, Randy had landed a job as a tax collector for the township.

Additionally, an inspection of the "*Minutes of the Quarter General Sessions of the Peace*" (*held at the 2-storey log courthouse in Johnstown - 3 mi east of Prescott*), reveals that Randy was called to jury duty on many occasions during the early 1800's. Although jurors were paid a fixed sum and compensated for their expenses, it was still quite a feat considering the round trip distance of approximately 60 miles and the mode of transportation being either by boat or on horseback. A two day trial likely would have entailed a three to five day absence from home. In 1808, the criminal and administrative courts were transferred to Brockville and in 1810, Randy and one other man by the name of "Wing" were appointed "*Surveyors of Roads*" for Yonge.

It was also in 1808 that Hester's father Joseph Proctor received another 200 acres for his services to the Crown during the Revolution. He had petitioned for this additional grant

15 years earlier based on the fact that he had been appointed a Sergeant by Captain William Fraser during his brief tenure with the McAlpin Corps during the Burgoyne campaign in 1777. After examining Joseph's proofs, the Land Board people apparently agreed and on the 8th August issued him a patent for 200 acres on the 6th Concession, Lot 22 in Yonge. By 1808, Joseph was about 70 years old. Whether Joseph or his heirs ever made personal use of this lot is unknown, otherwise it was likely leased-out or just left vacant. Whatever the case may have been, it was not sold until 1831. By then, Joseph would have already departed this earth.

On June 18th 1812, the Americans declared war on Great Britain for the second time in 37 years. The conquest of Canada would be "*a mere matter of marching*" predicted American politician Thomas Jefferson. And so with another invasion of Canada looming on the horizon, 50 year old Randy again found himself at odds with his former countrymen and prepared to defend his adopted homeland. In August of the same year, Randy swore allegiance to the Crown and as a member of the 1st Leeds Militia, was commissioned as a Lieutenant in Captain James Breakenridge's Rifle Company. Four of his five Canadian born sons were eager to bear arms against the enemy (*Daniel was too young*) and were subsequently assigned to rifle companies, troops of horse and in Samuel's case, the Provincial Light Dragoons stationed at Fort Wellington in Prescott under Captain Richard Duncan Fraser.

Although they took the occasional casualty, the 1st Leeds had a much easier time of it during the War of 1812 than many other militia units serving in various locations throughout Upper and Lower Canada. While elements of the 1st Leeds participated in two major engagements at Ogdensburg and *perhaps* at Crysler's Farm, for the most part their duties consisted of important scouting and sentry service along the trails, roads and water routes of the St. Lawrence River corridor. Detecting any American movement up or down the river would have been of invaluable intelligence to British military authorities in Kingston or Montreal who were expecting invasion forces to attack at either location. Such information would have been quickly relayed to them by a series of dispatch riders like young Samuel McDonald.

It's highly probable that the 1st Leeds skirmished from time to time with small parties of American forces who may have been sailing the river or encamped on one of the islands, but if these occurrences were ever recorded, they seem to have been lost to Father Time. However, I do have in my possession, a copy of an interesting letter dated 7th August 1813 from Colonel Joel Stone (*Commanding Officer 1st Leeds Militia*) addressed to Noah Frier Esquire, Military Secretary to Commander-in-Chief, Kingston. In one paragraph of the letter, Stone recommends that "*Lieut. Randy McDonald be the officer to take charge of a detachment of 20 men of the 1st Leeds Militia to be employed on the King's Road to the eastward between the house of Lieut. John McNeil and the dwelling house of Mr. Henry Trickey.*" Whether the intent of this letter was to order the men out as a labour force or for sentry duty, I am not sure.

After 30 months of oftentimes brutal warfare, it was the American invaders, who, not having achieved their objectives, retreated. They had been repulsed by a combined force

of professional British redcoats augmented by regiments of full-time Anglo and French Canadian soldiers, militia, provincial marines and native allies. Left in their wake were shattered families, thousands of human casualties, and portions of the Canadian countryside charred by the American scorched-earth style of warfare. But save for enemy raids upon Brockville and Gananoque, Yonge Township and the surrounding area escaped most of this drama. And with a degree of good fortune, the McDonald men all returned home safely.

There are few details of Randy's life known after the war. However, when assessment and census records began to record place of residence in 1817, we learn that Randy has divided his 200 acre lot into halves. While he and Hester occupy the West ½ with 30 acres cleared and presumably under cultivation, Randy Jr. occupies the East ½ with 20 cleared acres. By then, Randy Jr. is 26 years of age. The remaining brothers, John, James, Samuel and Daniel are listed as living on the property, but with no specific information.

Three years later in 1820, the Yonge assessment and census rolls shows that Randy and Hester still have one male dependent and one female dependent living under their roof. These individuals are likely Daniel, and perhaps Esther. And living elsewhere on the property; Randy Jr and his wife Polly have one son while James and his wife Catherine also have a son. John and his wife Mary have two daughters. Interestingly enough, the assessment record also reveals that Randy owns one horse, Randy Jr. has two horses, James one horse and John one horse. By 1820, Randy is 58 years old.

Over the course of the next few years, Randy's original 200 acre lot continues to be divided amongst three of his sons. While he and Hester remain in their home on the front of the SW corner of the lot, Randy Jr has moved entirely off the original McDonell property and taken-up residence on the 2nd Concession, W ½ of Lot 16. In so doing, he has transferred ownership of his S ½ portion to Daniel and the N ½ portion to John. And so now, Daniel is living moreorless next door to his parents on the SE corner of the original lot. At some point between 1820 -1830, Samuel has moved to Lansdowne and James with his family are preparing to move across the river into the U.S..

By the mid-1820's, Randy & Hester's children decided to apply for their 200 acre land grants to which they were entitled by virtue of their status as sons or daughters of a United Empire Loyalist. But Randy soon found that through his own oversight many years earlier, his name had not been included in the original UEL list and therefore found it necessary to petition the Executive Council at York to ensure that his name be added to the new Supplementary List. His first petition of 1826 was rejected due to "*insufficient proofs*", but over the course of the next 2 ½ years, he satisfied the Council with additional material providing proof that he had been born in the American colonies, that he had been a loyal subject to the Crown, that he had joined the Royal Standard prior to 1783, and that he had been a soldier in the King's Royal Regiment of New York.

Consequently, Randy's name was finally added to the UEL Supplementary list on March 7th 1829 and the children inevitably received their entitlements. By that time in history, the location of available crown land was normally many miles distance from home. Whether or not the grantees chose to settle these lots, sell them at a later date, or take cash

in lieu of, was entirely at their own discretion.

As a matter of interest, old colleagues and neighbours who supported Randy's petition and supplied sworn affidavits to the Executive Council included: Barny Fredrick; John Munro; Justice of the Peace Benjamin R. Munsell; George Shank; and Silvester Wright. If Randy had applied earlier for his UEL designation as he should have done, it would have been a simple task to provide the Executive Council with a generous number of "proofs," but because he waited so long, many of his friends had already passed away and obviously could not provide written testimony for him. By 1829, Randy was 67 years of age.

On January 30th 1827, Randy's son Daniel (*my 3rd gr.grandfather*) married Caroline Elizabeth Booth of Elizabethtown, daughter of Vincent Booth UE. Officiating was Reverend William Smart of Brockville, a Presbyterian minister who regularly made his rounds throughout the surrounding rural communities on horseback. Eleven months after Daniel and Caroline's marriage, my 2nd gr.grandfather Vincent Booth McDonald was born on December 29th 1827. Sadly, Caroline died five weeks later on February 3rd 1828, presumably as the result of post natal complications. She was only 19 years old.

Within a few years, Daniel married again, and in time, this union produced children. While *our* McDonald lineage runs directly up through Daniel's first born Vincent, Daniel's offspring through his second marriage eventually created another branch of the McDonald clan in the Mallorytown area. Evidence of this still exists today and occasionally causes a little confusion. In reality, the only relationship we have with this secondary branch is that we share Daniel, his parents Randy and Hester, and everyone who came before them as "*ancestors in-common.*" We sometimes refer to descendents of this branch as our "half-cousins."

Tragedy again struck the family sometime ca.1835. Esther, daughter of Randy & Hester had married a John Fairchild June ca.1821 and the couple had taken-up residence in Yonge on the 4th Concession, Lot 24. The 200 acre parcel had been a gift from Peter June, father of John F. The couple soon established a family of at least four children, Sarah, Mercy, Thomas and James who, according to family oral history, were all under ten years of age when they were stricken with diphtheria and died within days of each other. The children were buried side-by-side in graves marked by a large stone about 60 feet from their log dwelling. It has always been said that the parents were so distraught that they packed-up their belongings, sold the farm to a man called Quinsey and quickly left the country for Connecticut where John F. June had been born in 1799. Information is sketchy, but there may have been a son David (*born 1826*) who escaped the disease and went with his parents to the U.S.

While I don't doubt the general crux of this sad story for one moment, the fact that the deaths have always been attributed to diphtheria leaves me wondering. While diphtheria may be a likely diagnosis, it is also a fact that there were intermittent cholera outbreaks in the area throughout the suggested time period of their deaths. And I don't believe John F. and Esther ever made it to Connecticut since John F. June shows-up living just across the St. Lawrence River in the settlement of Orleans, NY (near Alexandria Bay)

in the 1850 NY census. Esther must have died much earlier to that date since the census reveals that John F. had a new wife 20 years his junior and by 1850 they had children of their own.

The original site of Esther and John F.'s homestead has all but disappeared. Deserted 175 years ago, Mother Nature has long since claimed the house and any outbuildings that may have existed. The house was situated on a slight knoll in a wooded ravine and faced towards the edge of cultivated fields. The site has been swallowed by the forest again and hardwoods and undergrowth now obscure its past. All that remains is a shallow pit which probably served as a root cellar underneath their home. A laneway or narrow road which once passed by the front of the house up along the interior edge of the ravine, is now, other than to a trained eye, indiscernible. An archeologist would appreciate this isolated site if he or she could find it.

The gravesites of Sarah, Mercy, Thomas and James are another matter. Succeeding generations of McDonalds have continually honoured the memory of these unfortunate children by handing down the story and visiting the gravesites. Over the years they have cleared saplings and underbrush away and ensured that the large stone which marks the graves never sank into oblivion. From time to time, they have erected crosses. Such was the case eight years ago when my wife Jan and I were guided to the site by my late kin, Alfred and Jack MacDonald. Growing-up in the immediate area many years before, the brothers and their siblings, sister Verna, brother George, and various cousins had been introduced to the site as youngsters by their grandfather John Randal MacDonald who owned an adjoining farm.

On this occasion, we each carried a sturdy cross of 2 X 4 inch lumber which had been constructed by Alfred only a few weeks earlier. Attached firmly to the base of each cross was a fence-grade steel bracket and spike. Each white cross bore the name of one of the deceased children. When I last visited the site with family members George MacDonald, Jim Robertson, Ron Griggs and my son Damian almost three years ago, the crosses were still in very good condition. And through the efforts of family members past and present, I have recently learned that the Brockville Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society have recommended to government that these four little graves be officially recognized as an "Historical Site."

On February 16th 1837, Randy McDonald passed away at the age of 75 years presumably from natural causes. Besides being an accomplished farmer, he was also a tax collector, many times a juror, a surveyor, and a loyal soldier in two wars. His legacy should also remember him as the consummate husband, father, grandfather and good citizen. Randy was interred in what was to become the first McDonald family plot in the Mallorytown Cemetery. Nearby were the remains of his daughter-in-law, the former Caroline Elizabeth Booth who had died eight years earlier as wife of Daniel McDonald and mother to their infant son Vincent Booth McDonald. Following his death, Randy's estate was administered by his eldest son John and family friend Peter LaRue.

Hester McDonald nee *Proctor* outlived Randy by 12 ½ years and was 85 years old when she died in August 1849. She was buried beside her husband. Although I have not checked the census rolls, it seems logical to assume that Hester continued to live beside Daniel following Randy’s death and may have even lived with him and his family during the last few years of her life.

At the time of her death, Hester had not only been predeceased by her husband Randy, but also by her two eldest sons and likely her daughter Esther. At the relatively young age of 46 years, Randy Jr. died inexplicably in October 1837 just eight months after his father, and then in 1839 or 1840, John died at about 53 years of age. With Samuel seemingly out-of-the-picture in Lansdowne, James still living in the U.S., and daughter Mary living in Plattsburg, NY with husband Truman Hilliard a native of Vermont, it’s apparent that Daniel was the only second generation McDonald remaining in the Mallorytown area.

Notes

The surnames of McDonell and McDonald were absolutely synonymous for many years. The decision to amend the name of McDonald to that of MacDonald seems to have been made by our ancestor John Randel McDonald shortly after the death of his father Vincent Booth McDonald in 1910. He did this in spite of the fact that he had been baptized “McDonald” and had his own children baptized “McDonald.”

This is the story: Apparently, John R. became involved in a conversation one day with some recent Scottish immigrants and he told them that he was of Scots descent. “No, you can’t be!” exclaimed one of the new Canadians. “If your ancestors were from Scotland, then your name should be spelled MacDonald and not McDonald. If you spell it McDonald, then you’re Irish!” Well, it seems that being called an Irishman didn’t sit too well with John R. and being the new patriarch of the family now that his father was gone, he made a proclamation that he and all of his children must change their name to MacDonald. All family members complied and it remains so to this day. However, the secondary branch never felt the need to change the spelling and that is why the two related branches of McDonald that still exist in the Mallorytown area, rightly or wrongly begin their surnames with a different prefix.

Little did John R. realize that the latest research strongly suggests that after leaving Scotland ca.1700 or earlier, that our ancestors did indeed spend a number of years in Northern Ireland before sailing on to North America.

<i>Our line of descent:</i>	John Randel McDonald/MacDonald,	Born 1865	Married 1887	Died 1945
	Matilda Stafford	1862		1927
	Vincent Booth McDonald	1827	1848	1910
	Eliza Ann Hogeboom	1830		1906
	Daniel McDonell/McDonald	1802	1827	1879
	Caroline Elizabeth Booth	1809		1828
	Randy McDonell/McDonald	ca.1762	1785	1837
	Hester Proctor	1764		1849

I have not gone any further than John R. MacDonald because he is the common denominator for all reading this precis. We are all descended through one of John R.’s children, grandchildren or great grandchildren.

Epilogue

- Page 1 - There is a slight discrepancy in Randy's age. His discharge dated December 24th 1783 records his age as 19 years on that date. If that is correct, then it is likely that his birth year was 1764. However, his grave monument says he died on February 16th 1837 at the age of 75 years. If that is true, then his birth year would have been 1761 or 1762. Therefore, pending the discovery of more concise information, I decided to compromise and use ca.1762 as my basis for Randy's age estimations throughout this text.
- Page 1 - The Johnstown Free School which Randy attended as a boy, still stands at the same location in Johnstown, NY and has been preserved as a NY State Heritage Site.
- Page 2 - After having survived some of the most vicious Northern Department engagements of the Revolutionary War, Randy's friend and fellow soldier Conrad Coons settled close to him in Matilda in 1784. Later that summer, 25 year old Conrad died in a drowning accident leaving behind a wife and young son.
- Page 2 - Fort St. Johns no longer exists. It eventually fell into decay and was demolished. It would have been located in present-day St. Jean-sur-Richelieu, QC on the site where L'Ecole Militaire Royale now stands.
- Page 3 - By 1780, the KRRNY's basic uniform was a scarlet red wool jacket trimmed in royal blue, black slouch hat, and beige or off-white breeks tucked into the top of sturdy calf-length moccasins. Armed with a .75 cal flintlock Brown Bess, the men wore a leather cartridge box, canteen, and generally a hatchet or large knife on their belt. If on extended active duty, a durable canvas knapsack containing essentials, and a rolled blanket would be carried on their backs. Prior to 1780, the men were issued dark green jackets.
- Page 3 - The military post at Coteau-du-Lac, QC still exists much as it did in Randy's time. The lock canal which he likely helped build has now been excavated. The entire grounds are open to the public as a National Historic Site.
- Page 5 - The Recollet Fathers were chaplains to the French military. The Recollet monastery and the attached chapel in which Randy and Hester were wed in 1785 had been built in 1723 within the walled town of Montreal. It was eventually seized by the British and the monastery turned into a military barracks. Later on, the chapel was used as an Anglican church and then as a church for the Irish community. This elegant, stone, multi-level complex was demolished in 1867 to make room for a growing city and more modern architecture.
- Page 6 - Born into a respected family in London, England in 1725, Captain Philip Skene gained the reputation as that of a courageous and intelligent leader. Already an experienced soldier when he joined the 27th Regiment of Foot and came to Canada in 1757, his services were rewarded near the conclusion of the Seven Years War with a large tract of land near the south end of Lake Champlain at Wood Creek. He soon developed a prosperous settlement on this property which consisted of approximately 30 families. Named "Skenesborough," it occupied the site of present day Whitehall, NY. At the outbreak of the American Revolution, he declared his loyalty to the Crown and fought with General Burgoyne. During the course of this campaign, he had his horse shot from underneath him on two occasions. He ultimately had his property confiscated and returned to England. He died in June 1810 at his home (Addersey Lodge) near Stoke Goldington in North Buckinghamshire.

Page 6 - Fort Ticonderoga has been restored and the ruined fortifications at Crown Point still stand. Both are U.S. National Historical Sites. Fort Edward on the Hudson River has long since disappeared.

Page 10 - A contingent of the Provincial Light Dragoons fought at the decisive Battle of Crylser's Farm on November 11th 1813. Whether or not young Samuel McDonald was an active participant is unclear.

Page 12 - One of my prized possessions is a small leather bound bible said to have been a childhood gift to my gr.gr. grandfather Vincent Booth McDonald. Unfortunately, it is well-worn and missing the first few pages which would have included a publication date. However, on the front inside board in childlike handwriting, Vincent has neatly scripted his first name. At some later date as an adult, Vincent has written his name in full. His wife Eliza Ann did the same - signing her name as "Mrs. Vincent B. McDonald." I have been told that this bible was the one which the McDonalds carried to church each Sunday while riding to Mallorytown in their horse and buggy.

Page 14 - Randy's son James and his family (wife Catherine and perhaps an older son) returned from the U.S. in the early 1850's and took up residence in the village of Newboro where James became a merchant of some sort. Catharine was blind at the time. James died in Newboro in August 1866.

Daughter Mary lived with her husband in Plattsburg, NY for their entire married lives. They had one son and one daughter. Mary died in 1881 at the age of 84 years. This information indicates a birth year of ca.1797 in Yonge, perhaps a year or two after the birth of Samuel.

To the best of my knowledge, other than for his birthdate and War of 1812 service, Randy's son "Samuel of Lansdowne" has never been researched.

Page 14 - The Randy McDonald plot in the Mallorytown Cemetery contains the remains of at least seven persons. The existing granite monument, an obvious replacement to the original stone markers, may have been erected by Vincent B. McDonald after the death of his wife in 1906, or more likely by John R. MacDonald sometime after the death of his father (Vincent B.) in 1910. In addition to the seven names noted on the monument, I believe there's a possibility that the remains of Randy Jr. and perhaps his older brother John were also interred here.

James G. Willis, U.E.
January 2009