

DONALD McPHERSON (d. 1819)

Donald McPherson kept the Lac La Pluie post journal for the year 1817-1818. (HBCA, B.105/a/5) Another interesting document by him in the HBC Archives is his district report dated 30 May 1818 and covering 1816-1818, including his capture and imprisonment by the North West Company in the summer of 1816. (HBCA, B.105/e/1) There is also a letter, presumed to be by McPherson, to Lord Selkirk, dated 4 September 1816, describing conflict with the North West Company in the Long Lake area. (HBCA, E.56/1)

One source for McPherson's career is the Officers and Servants Ledgers for Albany River/Southern Department, covering the years 1811-1819. (HBCA, A.16/7, fo. 116; A.16/8, fo. 64; A.16/18, fo. 130d.-131). According to these, he was hired in 1811 as a 'writer' or clerk at a salary of £25 a year. By the time of his death he held the rank of Master (also listed as District Master) and received a salary of £50 a year.

The ledgers give his place of origin simply as Scotland. In 1811 he sailed to Moose Factory aboard the *Edward & Ann*, transferring to the *Prince of Wales* for the last part of the voyage, September 10 to 28. (HBCA, C.1/777). Unfortunately, the log of the *Edward & Ann* provides no details on passengers. While she made a brief stay at Stromness, Orkney, she picked up no passengers there. Passengers did embark at Stornoway, Isle of Lewis on July 23rd and 24th. This, coupled with the fact that McPherson is not an Orkney name, suggests that McPherson may have come from Lewis or elsewhere in the Hebrides. No documentation of McPherson's age has been traced but writers were usually young men.

The Lac La Pluie journal for 1818/1819 (HBCA, B.105/a/6) was probably kept by Robert Logan, the District Master. It records McPherson's death on Wednesday, 24 February 1819 (fo. 19):

...Mr McPherson with his Sled and 3 Dogs and an Indian Boy (the Rat's Son) went from the House to go to the Rat's Tent s day's journey from here. [Barthelen] Foizie [?] the young Carpenter went down the bank to assist in putting them across & to bring the Canoe back. Mr Logan cautioned Mr McPherson to be careful how he took the Dogs in to the Canoe with him, as the least thing would upset them. Mr McPherson was so positive that he

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embarked everything to make one trip of it and Melancholy to relate before they got to the other side of the River the Canoe upset – and all on Board with the Exception of one of his Dogs perished. during the remainder of this unfortunate day every search was made by the few of our people that is at the House – and by the NW people who kindly rendered every assistance upon this unfortunate occasion, 4 P.M. the Body of Mr Donald McPherson was found [and?] brought to the House by our people. [McPherson's coffin was made on February 26th (fo. 19d.) and the next day, the journal records]:

11A.M. sent an Invitation to the NW Gent^{lemen} to attend the Funeral of the Deceased Mr McPherson, which they all did at 2 P.M. Mr Jones [Robert Jones, who had rank of Master] read the Funeral Service, which when finished & the Grave made up – the NW Gent^{lemen} retired to Mr Logan's house & took a little refreshment 3 P.M. they all went back to their Fort. (fo. 19d.)

Letters of administration to McPherson's estate were granted to his widow, Charlotte on November 19th, 1822. (HBCA, A.36/10, fo. 118) His estate can be traced in subsequent volumes of the Officers and Servants Ledgers. (HBCA, A.16/20-22). These show that Charlotte later married Thomas Corcoran. [See Biog.] Charlotte and Donald's son, John McPherson, was sent to Britain in 1829. (HBCA, A.16/21, fo. 58d.-59) Under his name on the passenger list of the *Prince of Wales*, there is a note that looks like A. McPherson although the writing is small and difficult to read. (C.1/818, fo.3)

Thomas Corcoran, in a letter to his brother Richard at Rawdon, Quebec, dated 18 June 1839, writes at some length about John McPherson, who was an HBC employee for some years. (HBCA, E.204/1, fo. 29-30). In a letter to his step-father, John had told him he felt there was "little encouragement held out to natives like himself in this Employ." He was interested in joining Richard Corcoran on his farm. The biographical sheet for John McPherson shows that instead he continued to work for the HBC in the Columbia District, retiring in 1845. On 1 June 1842 Charlotte Corcoran had the estate account transferred to John's name. (HBCA, A.16/22, fo. 125d.-126) Thomas Corcoran, in his will, dated 1855, names his stepson, John McPherson, as one of the legatees. (HBCA, A.36/5, fo. 76-77)

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