

Sources for Social History of the Maritime Provinces in New Zealand Archives

Maureen Molloy

Volume 17, numéro 2, spring 1988

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/acad17_2arc01

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

The Department of History of the University of New Brunswick

ISSN

0044-5851 (imprimé)

1712-7432 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce document

Molloy, M. (1988). Sources for Social History of the Maritime Provinces in New Zealand Archives. *Acadiensis*, 17(2), 215–217.

ARCHIVES

Sources for Social History of the Maritime Provinces in New Zealand Archives

ALTHOUGH MOST EMIGRANTS FROM THE Maritime Provinces moved west, either to other Canadian Provinces or to the United States, some sailed halfway round the world to settle in northern New Zealand. The most famous of these emigrants departed from Cape Breton and settled with their minister, Norman McLeod, in Waipu. However, migrants from Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and other areas of Nova Scotia also made their way to New Zealand in the 1850s and 1860s. Some letters and documents belonging to these settlers are now held in New Zealand archives. They provide a small but valuable source for scholars of the 19th century social history of the Maritimes.

The largest collections of archives derive from the St. Ann's-Waipu migration. These are held in two repositories: the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington and the House of Memories, Waipu. The Turnbull Library holds two collections of papers. The MacLean Ms. Papers 32 are the personal and business papers of Sir Donald MacLean, the first Commissioner of Native Lands for New Zealand. MacLean took a special interest in the Waipu settlers, lending them money in their first year in New Zealand. He later used the success of Waipu to propose that an immigration scheme be set up to encourage communities of Nova Scotians to transport themselves to New Zealand, arguing that "such colonists...derive a peculiar value from the manner in which they transplant themselves to these shores, bringing along with them their religious and educational establishments, already in operation". File 483 of the MacLean papers contains two letters written by Norman McLeod to MacLean, in which McLeod discusses his financial affairs, the state of the community at Waipu and personal and religious divisions which were growing in the community, the latter evidently fueled by McLeod's feud with his daughter. The theme of an organised effort to transport Nova Scotians to New Zealand recurs in seven letters in File 470, written by John Munro, one-time M.P. for Victoria County, who emigrated to New Zealand on the *Gertrude* after an electoral defeat in 1856. The earlier of these letters chronicle Munro's attempts to persuade the New Zealand government to grant a block of land at Parua Bay for the *Gertrude* passengers, to reimburse Munro for those passengers whose migration he had subsidised and to commission him to bring more Nova Scotians to New Zealand. Later letters deal with Munro's family and his economic circumstances. His financial state declined after the migration, probably because he was never able to recoup costs from the New Zealand government. These letters are devoted to his

financial affairs and his attempts to enlist MacLean's help in finding his estranged son, Alexander Munro, who was working as a surveyor for the Native Lands Commission.

The collected papers (MS Papers 248) of Norman Roderick McKenzie, author of an early history of the Waipu settlement, are also held in the Turnbull Library. File 21 of these papers contains seven letters written to McKenzie's uncle, father, and grandfather by relatives and friends in Sutherlandshire, Cape Breton and Kincardine, Ontario. The McKenzie correspondents were well-educated and articulate. Each letter details the economic circumstances and social conditions experienced by its author. They are poignant because they chronicle the experiences of kin living in Scotland, Ontario and Cape Breton within a seven year period (1851-1858). Young Kenneth McKenzie's careful assessment of his "good prospect for the futer [sic]" in southern Ontario contrasts with the chilling account of the hazards faced by his cousins who had remained in Sutherlandshire.

The House of Memories at Waipu holds mid-19th century letters and documents which are at present uncatalogued. Legal historians will find the papers belonging to James Sutherland, Justice of the Peace and Commissioner of Roads for Boularderie in the 1840s and 1850s, to be of some interest. This collection includes deeds of sale, bonds to keep the peace, an assignment of a prisoner to Gaol, a declaration of paternity by an unwed mother, as well as legal documents pertaining to road construction and rights of way. On one deed of sale the wife was required to make a separate declaration that she freely agreed to sell the land and was not doing so under duress from her husband. The Sutherland Papers include the Deed of Charter for the *Breadalbane*, which carried about 200 Nova Scotians, Sutherland among them, to New Zealand in 1858. The House of Memories also has numerous other letters and documents. Some of these are original; others are transcriptions of photocopies donated by descendants of the original settlers. They document, in some detail, aspects of family, social and religious life in Cape Breton between 1854 and 1875.

In addition to the Waipu ships, there were at least four other passenger ships which carried Maritimers to New Zealand. These were the *Union* (1856), the *Prince Edward* (1858) and the *Pakeha* (1863) out of Prince Edward Island and the *Seagull* which sailed out of New Brunswick in 1862. Among the thirty or more Nova Scotian passengers on the *Seagull* were the McLeod brothers, who dominated the lumber industry in the country just north of Auckland, along with two other Nova Scotian families, the Finlaysons and the Gibbons. The Owen family from Prince Edward Island has deposited a group of letters (MS 1164) dealing with their migration in the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum Library.

A final and, perhaps most fascinating, set of letters is held in the Alexander Turnbull Library (Micro MS 10). These were written by Kenneth Campbell McKenzie of Cape Breton to his brother Murdoch. Kenneth was a gold miner in

Denver and in the Sacramento Valley. The collection consists of six letters (20 pages), five of which describe his life in western mining camps between 1858 and 1862. These letters detail working conditions in the gold fields, but are of special value for their account of the social life and mutual aid among the expatriate Cape Breton miners. These men continued to live in 'Cape Breton' communities even when thousands of miles from home. In the final letter, written from Auckland while en route to the Otago goldfields, McKenzie recounts a meeting with Waipu men in that city. He was invited by them to visit Waipu and, although the letters end at this point, we know that he eventually married a Waipu woman and settled among the Cape Breton community at Hikurangi, thirty miles north of Waipu.

Although the sources listed above are not especially numerous, they are rich in detail and description of the lives of those relatives of the migrants who remained behind. For historians interested in first hand accounts of mid-19th century life, they provide a glimpse of the conditions and attitudes of ordinary people attempting to maintain family ties over formidable distances.

Further inquiries should be directed to:

Manuscripts Inquiries,
Alexander Turnbull Library,
P.O. Box 12349,
Wellington,
New Zealand.

The Librarian,
Auckland Institute and
War Memorial Museum,
Private Bag,
Auckland 1,
New Zealand.

The Caretaker,
House of Memories,
Waipu, Northland,
New Zealand.

MAUREEN MOLLOY