

# PICTOU COUNTY ROOTS SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

May 2026 Volume I Issue III

## UPCOMING DATES

The Monthly Meeting of the Pictou County Roots Society will be **Wednesday, May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2026**, at the temporary location of the New Glasgow Library. We will meet in the Community Room at 2pm. James Lees will be the speaker. Workshop to follow

Wednesday, June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2026 – Monthly Meeting of the Pictou County Roots Society

July 15<sup>th</sup> – Festival of the Tartans

Aug 22<sup>nd</sup> - Heritage Fair

## MEMBER UPDATES!

Submit your questions, interesting finds, photos or stories to be included in future editions. They can be emailed to [eacoadyDNA@yahoo.com](mailto:eacoadyDNA@yahoo.com). Timing of newsletters is still to be determined, but the more submissions from members the more often we can publish!

## PICTOU COUNTY ROOTS UPDATE

We would like to hear from you 😊

We have been working on filling our calendar with guest speakers for our monthly meetings, suggestions are encouraged to keep up momentum!

Q. Send your questions to [eacoadyDNA@yahoo.com](mailto:eacoadyDNA@yahoo.com)

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*Some family trees have beautiful leaves, and some have just a bunch of nuts. Remember, it is the nuts that make the tree worth shaking. –*

*Unknown*

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## Captain George MacKenzie

One by one the old men whose lives and actions are inseparably interwoven with three quarters of a century's history are passing away, leaving their places to be filled by those who in turn, if their lives are spared, will become the old man of another century. How often in the past few years have we been

constrained to exclaim. "our fathers where are they and the prophets do they live forever"? Howe and Johnston have gone, but their names and the fruits of their labor are impressed upon the pages of the country's history, and their memories engraved upon the hearts of the people. Their compeers too, in McPherson Fraser, Robert McGregor, Roderick McGregor, A.P. Ross, John McDougall, Isaac Matheson, James Kitching, William Gordon, and others whose names we might mention, have been called from the ranks of our people to enter upon the realities of the unseen and eternal. And now another has succumbed to the stroke of the inexorable "reaper whose name is death." Capt George McKenzie has answered the roll-call, his immortal spirit has returned to its giver, and his mortal remains have been consigned to the



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silent tomb. Who will fill the gap as he has filled it? Who in Pictou County. Aye in Nova Scotia, has not heard of "The Captain" as he was familiarly called, and who that knew him or enjoyed the privilege of his acquaintance will not miss him.

To write the history of Capt. George McKenzie, would be to write the history of New Glasgow. And to a large extent of Pictou County, We can only glance at a few facts.

He was born in Halifax, in December 1798, and consequently at the time of his death was in his 78<sup>th</sup> year. His father died in 1802 and his mother removed with five children, including the subject of our sketch, to Fisher's Grant the same year, When he grew up to youthful manhood, he turned his attention to shipping and shipbuilding, for which he appeared to have a natural talent. In 1820 he and John Reid of Little Hbr. built a schooner of 45 tons, at Boat Hbr. in which he shortly afterwards took a trip to the West Indies. She was called the "James William" the two men hewed the timber, took it from the woods and did all the work of building themselves. An event happened when he was about nineteen years of age which had the effect of bringing him into prominence among shipbuilders, a vessel built at some point in Pictou Hbr. was being launched when she struck, and after a good deal of labor, the owner in despair gave up the work of launching, George McKenzie volunteered to get her off and succeeded in doing so at the next tide. From that time he was a marked man. In 1824 he went with Robert McKay of Pictou to Superintendent work in his yard, and continued with him about three years. In Superintending the launching of a vessel for Mr MacKay at River John, he had the misfortune to get one of his thighs broken, he then settled down to business in New Glasgow, where he first built a schooner of 100 tons, and then a trader for Almons of Halifax, The "Sally" a barque of 350 tons one-half being owned by Henry Hatton of Pictou was his next adventure. A list of vessels built by him from this time down to 1865 would be quite an interesting item. We, however find it difficult at present to get a complete list. Among the number we may mention the "Sesorstris" the "Catherine Glen" the "John McKenzie" the "George". In 1850 he launched the "Hamilton Campbell Kidston" and in 1854 the "Sebastopol" and the "Magne Carta" When the Hamilton Campbell Kidston went home to Glasgow her appearance created quite an sensation, She was the largest vessel up to that time to sail up the Clyde. When this vessel was launched her stern took the bud and she stuck halfway down the launchways. In those days many a man would have been appalled at such an accident. The Captain however not daunted, set his men to work, and succeeded in launching her.

Considering the time, the shallowness of the water, and the appliances available for such a contingency, the successful launching of the "Hamilton Campbell Kidston" under such circumstances was a greater feat than the launching to the "Great Eastern". The "Magna Carta" also created great attention at the time as being the largest vessel built in the Province up to that time, If we mistake not her tonnage 1440 tons, The County of Pictou" launched in 1865 was the last vessel he built. She is still afloat and has been remarkably successful in her voyages, It is not too much to say that Captain MacKenzie, was the father of his craft in this country at least. By his enterprise and perseverance he gave shipbuilding an impulse which has had its effect through out the province.

At sea as a Captain, he was daring, clearheaded, calm even under the most difficult circumstance, prompt in dealing what was to be done and energetic in having his plans carried out. At times lookers on would consider him harsh & imperious. But he was nevertheless kind and tender hearted. He was the embodiment of honor and integrity. Scrupulously honest himself in every wanting. The Captains who were trained under him always speak with affection. They partook largely of his energetic impulsive spirit, and to this their success as shipmasters may be largely attributed. He took a lively interest in the political affairs of the country and represented the County in the House of Assembly from 1855 to 1863, He was Liberal in politics very decided in his political views and yet he always won the respect of those whom he differed. And maintained warm personal friendships among political opponents as always ready to aid in promoting the general welfare.

He married in 1831 Sarah McGregor daughter of the late Dr. McGregor. She still survives him, although in a infirm state of health. A son and daughter were born to them, The son died in childhood The two daughters married! Georgine to Mr Andrew Walker, and Sarah to Dr. William Mitchell, Mrs Mitchell died about a year ago,

The Captain himself was the last surviving member of his father's family. His mortal remains were interred yesterday at Riverside Cemetery, The Coffin placed on a bier was carried by two relays of working men and was followed by a large

concourse of people from all parts of the county – upwards of 80 having come from Pictou on a special train. All anxious to pay the last tribute of respect to the memory of the deceased, whom nearly everybody regarded as a friend.

And thus it ever is, the surging throng of humanity is pressing on, on, while ever and anon the Angel of Death marks out his victims and great haps are made, one day it is the aged, then somebody in the prime of life drops, then the young and tender plant, we linger sorrowfully for a time around the still form, and look into the yawning grave, speak words of comfort to the sorrowing ones and then close up the ranks and we press on in the great battle of life, How wise are they who live on constant remembrance of the sad truth, that all flesh is grass and all the glory of man as the flowers of grass and yet cheered by the blessed assurance that “The Gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.”

**Article found in the Eastern Chronicle, March 23, 1876**

Article from the Vangie Way Collection Eastern Chronicle 1875-1876 (Pink Binder)

THE PICTOU COUNTY ROOTS SOCIETY PRESENTS:

» HOW TO READ  
**Old Handwriting:**  
 A TALK AND WORKSHOP



PRESENTED BY **DR. JAMES LEES**  
 WEDNESDAY, **13 MAY 2026**, AT 2 P.M.  
 AT THE **NEW GLASGOW LIBRARY**

Located at the Aberdeen Business Centre, 610 East River Road, New Glasgow, N.S.  
 (the entrance is at the back corner of the mall)

**Contact Us**  
**Pictou County Roots Society**  
 In the New Glasgow Branch of  
 the Pictou – Antigonish  
 Regional Library  
<https://www.pictoucountyroots.ca/>  
[roots@parl.ns.ca](mailto:roots@parl.ns.ca)

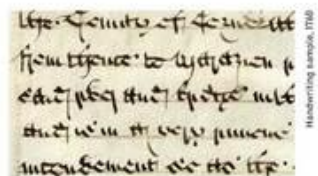
Do you read **old documents**?

Do you need tips when reading **old handwriting**?

Join us for a **talk about paleography**—the study of historic writing systems, and the practice of reading them.

This event will include a **workshop** to help people read different samples of handwriting. Dr. Lees, curator of the Pictou County History Museum and owner of Dominion Historical Consulting Ltd., will focus on handwriting from the 1700s, the 1800s, and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Please feel free to bring writing samples that you would like Dr. Lees to examine—and hopefully decipher!



LEARN MORE AT [WWW.PICTOUCOUNTYROOTS.CA](http://WWW.PICTOUCOUNTYROOTS.CA)

# Genealogy & Library Update

## Heritage Room Updates :



In August, the library is hosting **Heritage Alive: Living History Fair**. It will be an afternoon of sharing and learning with displays throughout the library. **We are looking for participants** who want to set up a display of family, business, sports teams, or community histories. These displays could be as simple as photographs and a family tree. Anyone interested can talk to Susan or email at [sparker@parl.ns.ca](mailto:sparker@parl.ns.ca)

The library was approved for a summer student. They will be working in the Heritage Room from June to the end of August scanning the *Evening News* and indexing the issues. They will also lead a digitization lab in June or July and that will offer to digitize documents, photos, and VHS tapes from the public.

Genealogy wise, there have been even more requests from the U.S. looking for births and baptism records. We also received a request for information on the old jail building in Pictou and the jailers.

A collection of obituaries was donated to the library in the Fall and is now available in the Heritage Room. The obituaries were clipped from newspapers between 2007 and 2019. Our high school student Penny is working on an index.