

Rural Voices: The Dougall Family Collection

Background Information and Collection Description:

The Dougall family collection, housed in the University of Guelph Archives' Regional History collection, contains a number of letters from Scottish immigrants over three decades in the nineteenth century. Also contained in the collection are items such as newspaper articles, maps, photographs, magazines and genealogical sources pertaining to the Dougalls, as well as Thomas A. Russell, Canadian industrialist and descendent of the Dougall family. This collection is useful in a number of facets, including migration, rural, and Canadian industrial history and can be divided into two distinct sections focusing first on the Dougall family, and second on the life of T.A. Russell. Examined together, these two fragments provide a vibrant narrative about migration, rural settlement, family strategies, gender and eventual industrialization in Canada's nation-building period. The collection was acquired by the University of Guelph in December 1988, donated by Dr. William D. Buchanan of Kippen, Stirlingshire, Scotland.

The Dougalls were a family of immigrants who left Kippen, Scotland on the ship *Ann Henzell* for Quebec City on May 30, 1844. Finally settling in Usborne Township, Huron County, were widow Margaret Harvie Dougall and eight of her nine children. These children were Andrew (b. 1807), Margaret (b. 1809), James (b. 1811), Henry (b. 1815), William (b. 1817), Janet (b. 1821), Helen (b. 1824), and David (b. 1827).¹ One of the other married sons, John, born 1813, who is the addressee of the letters, remained in Kippen as a watch and clock maker, as noted on envelopes included in the collection. Often individual sheets of paper sent to Scotland contained many letters by many writers, each signing their name and attempting to save space, and thereby money, on postage costs.

¹ Dougall Family Collection, University of Guelph Archives. *Genealogical information provided to T.A. Russell, by Peter Strang, September 29, 1933.*

The family emigrated from Scotland four years after the death of the patriarch, Henry, in 1840. Prior to, and just shortly following the migration of the Dougall family, Scotland had experienced famine and a number of Scottish farmers sought security by emigrating.² Until 1850, Highland immigrants, like the Dougalls, often went to Canada.³ Though there is nothing written in the letters describing Scotland prior to their emigration, the family sent two letters to John Dougall describing their voyage across the Atlantic.

Migration and Initial Settlement Letters:

In a letter dated 21 August 1844 from Hamilton, Canada West, Andrew Dougall sends his first letter home to Scotland following the family's journey. He states that it was an eight week journey and that they were all in good health for most of the time that they spent on the water, with the exception of some sea sickness and an arm injury previously sustained by sister Margaret. He then goes into detail about a storm that was experienced while off the coast of Ireland that, "...frightened all on board and drove [them] back about 10 miles...."⁴ He also states that on board were seven pipers and three fiddlers who provided musical entertainment. This statement adds an element of levity in describing the journey, which is not often portrayed in migration letters. In a letter sent in 1845, Margaret says that her mother hopes that John will consider coming to Canada following the birth of his youngest son. This desire to encourage John's emigration may account for the rather favourable description of the sea-voyage. Rather briefly, however, Andrew mentions the death of a child on 3 July 1844 and describes the funeral that was held by the captain of the ship. This

² This famine occurred in 1836-37 and again in 1846 as noted in D.F. Macdonald, *Scotland's Shifting Population, 1170-1850*. (Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, 1937) 147; and Michael Flinn, *Scottish Population History from the 17th Century to the 1930s*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977) 435.

³ Macdonald, 148.

⁴ Andrew Dougall, *Letter to John Dougall*, 21 August, 1844.

Hamilton 26 July 1852

Dear brother

I take the opportunity of writing you a few lines for the first time since I came to Canada to tell you perhaps about what I have been doing the little while I have been getting more to a knowing of the country of Upper Canada. He is a mixture of Scotch & Irish folks was Scotch but they have been in Lower Canada for a long time it is only three years since they came to this place but they are very respectable people as far as we know of here. The ones I heard we should go to London on the first day of June and we was raised in London that day. Brothers James, William, and David and a brother and sister of his and we had just our own baggage and it took us all we was one night in London and come home the next day. Mother and all and all strong was in the house when we came home we got supper and all went away but our souls too and I find it agrees comfort to me with travelling sometimes to very necessary and right to the Sign.

Letter to John Dougall by Henry Dougall, 1852. University of Guelph Archives, Regional History Collection.

image is more in tune with other migrant letters and the dangers immigrants faced while crossing the Atlantic.⁵

Upon arriving in Canada, Andrew states that they were required to stop at the quarantine station for a day, at Quebec for two days, and Montreal for another two days, all for quarantine purposes. He writes that they paid a little over two pounds sterling for their passage to Kingston and then describes their venture inland. He records that they went down the Rideau Canal, were four days on the road to Kingston, and then to Toronto, after which they took a steamer to Hamilton, the location that Andrew was in when he wrote this first letter home to Scotland.

Andrew explains that they stayed in Hamilton for one month and he was responsible for going “up the country to look out for a settlement and after looking about for 8 days [he] fixed on the lot next to George Moir.”⁶ Moir is spoken of with a sense of familiarity, and it seems that Andrew writes to John about Moir as though they were already acquainted, possibly old family friends. The 1881 Canadian Census states that George Moir was born in

⁵ For further reference to immigrant letters, see Wendy Cameron, Sheila Haines, and Mary McDougall Maude, *English Immigrant Voices: Labourers' Letters from Upper Canada in the 1830s*. (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000).

⁶ Andrew Dougall, *Letter to John Dougall*, 21 August, 1844.

Scotland in 1820, and that he, like the Dougalls, was Presbyterian.⁷ It appears that the Dougall family lands were chosen with definite kinship ties and Scottish roots in mind. This provides an excellent example of the shaping of rural immigrant communities along ethnic lines and chain migration. The maps included in the collection are of Usborne Township in Huron County and are historical atlases from 1879, which clearly show the Moir lands and their close vicinity to the Dougall family farm, and eventually, the Dougall children's homesteads.⁸ Andrew Dougall signs this letter and gives his return address, to which, he says the family will soon be moving: "Concession 2, Lot 35, Township of Usborne, County of Huron, Upper Canada, North America."⁹ This address is further substantiated by the 1871 and 1881 Canadian Census.

Rural Voices and Family Strategies in Huron County:

Letters, like the ones written by many of the Dougall family members, give voices to the rural settlers who helped establish communities and social ties. Huron County at the time was being settled by many different immigrant groups, as described in the letters and by scholars.¹⁰ The Canada Company, formed by John Galt, began a settlement campaign of the area, encouraging emigration from Great Britain, Ireland, Germany and Holland.¹¹ Huron officially became a county in 1841.¹² Usborne Township specifically experienced an influx

⁷ Library and Archives Canada, *1881 Canadian Census Online*, 2004.
http://www.collectionscanada.ca/02/02010803_e.html

⁸ Dougall Family Collection, Historical Atlas of Usborne Township, 1879. Also found in *The Canadian County Atlas Digital Project*, McGill University, 2001.
<http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/CountyAtlas/printresults.php>

⁹ Dougall Family Collection, *Letter to John Dougall, 21 August 1844*.

¹⁰ Dougall Family Collection, *Letter to John Dougall, Kippen, Stirling, Scotland, 1849*; see also James Scott, *Huron County in Pioneer Times*. (Seaforth: Huron Expositor, 1954) 54; and Scott, *Settlement of Huron County*. (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1966).

¹¹ Scott, *The Settlement of Huron County*. (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1966).

¹² Scott, *The Settlement of Huron County*.

of immigrants shortly after the Dougalls arrived, with its population spiking from 283 inhabitants in 1845 to 1484 settlers in 1852.¹³

Upon arriving in Huron County, clearing land was a major priority for settlers, and this was certainly the case for the Dougall family. Andrew mentions this in his letter, describing it as 'wild land' and that it is a "Scotch settlement and a fine cuntry [sic] if it was... cleared."¹⁴ After the initial clearing and settling of the land, it is evident that the Dougalls began to farm instantly, growing a number of different crops. James Dougall says in his letter that they were able to grow wheat and potatoes; Andrew describes leeks, cabbage, herbs, flowers, apples, fruit, and oats that are grown quite easily on the land. Often the discussion of the crops takes place in letters sent in the early winter months, presumably following the harvest period, which would involve long hours in the field, and therefore, little time to write. The family apologizes in nearly every letter for their sporadic correspondence due to their farm obligations. It does appear, however, from the letters that growing crops is not a difficult adaptation for the Dougall family, suggesting their rural roots in Scotland, and the fertility of the land in Ontario. They also describe the climate and its differences from what they are used to experiencing. They explain in a number of letters how the weather is much more extreme and that acclimatization was at times difficult. Many later letters into the 1850s and 1860s describe the buying and selling of land that is going on in their community, as younger siblings begin to marry, have children, and begin their own farms. These plots are visible on the Historical Atlas Maps included in the collection.

Also integral to the letters is the evidence of family strategies for survival in the New World. It becomes clear that the family decides to supplement their agricultural income with waged labour. In late 1849, a letter is written about William going to work for an individual

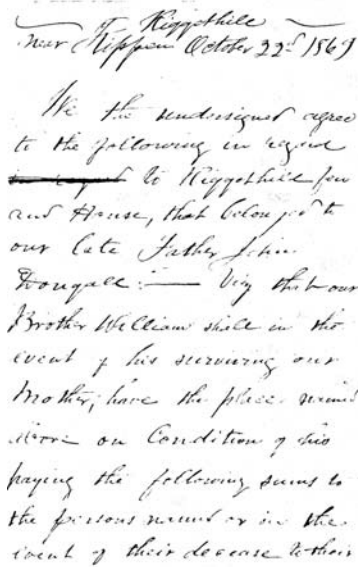
¹³ Scott, *The Settlement of Huron County*.

¹⁴ Dougall Family Collection, *Letter to John Dougall, 21 August 1844*.

by the name of Mr. Rodger, chopping down wood, one mile from the Dougall farm. William states that he is responsible for chopping down fifteen acres and he in return will receive twenty-five pounds sterling. In the same letter, he describes Henry's ventures in setting up his own house and shop, again indicating involvement in mercantile activities to supplement, or possibly to replace, farming as a main source of income.

In a letter dated 15 July, 1857, there is a description of David's threshing machine. It states that he is doing a good business with it, and then goes on to explain the market highs and lows in comparison to previous years. This in depth knowledge of agricultural capitalism, as well as the Dougall family's ability to afford and maintain a piece of large farming machinery, suggests that the strategies which they adopted upon arrival in Canada paid off for them immensely.

Another element to this collection is an informal family agreement that was signed pertaining to John Dougall's home in Kippethill, Scotland. It explains that should John pass away, the estate will be bequeathed to William Dougall and he is in turn required to pay his brothers twelve pounds, ten shillings; and his sisters twenty-one pounds sterling. This is a wonderful example of inheritance and of family strategies for the equitable distribution of land and capital, taking into consideration gender discrepancies and related to that, one's ability to own land and profit from the holding. It also demonstrates the family strategies that stretched across the ocean, continuing familial ties despite immigration. Many other land agreements are included in the collection. They are provided by the extensive genealogical research done by a descendent of the Dougalls. These sources provide an account of real estate commerce in Huron County at the time, as well as land prices and business ties within the community.


 of Riggohill
 near Nippon (October 22nd 1869)
 We the undersigned agree
 to the following in regard
~~to~~ to Riggohill, farm
 and House, that belong to
 our late Father John
 Dougall:— viz that our
 Brother William shall in the
 event of his surviving our
 Mother, have the place until
 upon condition of his
 paying the following sums to
 the persons named or in the
 event of their decease to their

Segment of will agreement signed 22 October 1869
 by Mary Dougall and her sons and daughters Robert,
 John, William, Elizabeth and Margaret Dougall.
 University of Guelph Archives, Regional History
 Collection.

Gendered Images of Settlement:

One of the most unique and important elements to this collection is the gendered voice that it provides to the rural historian. Letters written by Margaret Dougall and about the women in the family are quite telling in their descriptions. Margaret Dougall was thirty-five years old when she emigrated. She was unmarried, as was her older brother Andrew, and remained at home with her immediate family. She generally makes a contribution to letters sent and is one of the most frequent and detailed letter-writers of the collection. Her writings generally focus on family ties, births, deaths, marriages and other issues pertaining to kinship. In a very poignant letter to her brother John and sister-in-law, she describes her current relationship woes.¹⁵ She says that she expected she would be married by six months after arriving in Canada. Margaret also discusses a correspondence that she had going with someone named Mr. McGregor who said he was coming to Canada, but “would not promise to marry if he heard that [she] was not behaving right.”¹⁶ She seems quite distressed about this comment and stated later in the letter that when she first saw him at a dance in Canada, she was determined to keep her distance. Her description of the dance and the events that

¹⁵ Dougall Family Collection, *Letter to John Dougall, 1848*.

transpired were also very detailed. She states that everyone took notice of her as she danced with many men, sat on their knees if they asked, and spoke to Mr. McGregor as she would a stranger. It appears that she never spoke with him again after that event as she heard he had returned to Scotland without notifying her of his departure. Margaret explains that she was to have married him the previous new year, but postponed the marriage, as he had planned to work in New York State and she had no intention of going there with him. This event seems to be quite upsetting to Margaret and is also a wonderful example of social events and gendered expectations of unmarried individuals during this time. McGregor's comments are also indicative of desired qualities in a young wife.

Margaret Dougall writes home to her brother that there is opportunity for young men in Canada. She explains that they may obtain land, farm on it, and make enough money to live on and leave some to their children. She also speaks briefly about women's work on the homestead; an issue often ignored altogether. She states that, "Helen and Janet have plenty of work here raking leaves and burning wood. It is thought a very mean thing for a school girl to go out on hire...."¹⁷ In these two short sentences, much can be ascertained about women in nineteenth century Huron County. First, she makes it clear that young women were responsible for manual labour outdoors, clearing the land and contributing to the family economy. Second, she explains that there were expectations of women and gendered ideals in the rural community, forbidding them from waged labour outside of the home. Third, one may question whether or not these 'school girls' were in fact attending, or had attended, an institution of formal education, as Helen and Janet were twenty-one and twenty-four respectively.

¹⁶ Dougall Family Collection, *Letter to John Dougall, 1848.*

¹⁷ Dougall Family Collection, *Letter to John Dougall, 1845.*



Left to Right: Alexander Fowlie, Margaret Fowlie, and Margaret (Dougall) Fowlie in a photograph taken before 1857, in or around Exeter, ON. University of Guelph Archives, Regional History Collection.

Dougall Family Postscript:

The letters indicate that Margaret eventually married Alexander Fowlie on 25 February, 1851. She was unfortunately widowed following unknown circumstances, as Alexander Fowlie was found dead on a road as stated in a letter dated 1857. They had their own land, which Margaret maintained with the help of her brother James and through tenant workers.¹⁸ Also part of the collection was an agreement signed by Margaret Fowlie, stating her marriage to Alexander Fowlie and her lawful responsibility for the land, dated 1875. The collection's extensive genealogical information indicates much information on the siblings that could otherwise not be ascertained through the letters alone. This research is one of the most integral elements to the collection, buttressing the primary evidence provided through the letters. William eventually married and secured a farm of his own. Henry became a farmer and carpenter and he too was married. Andrew and David remained on the family homestead until their mother's death in 1862. Andrew remained a bachelor and eventually David bought the family farm from him once he married. Helen and Janet both married and farmed with their families. It was one of Janet's sons who undertook the genealogical

¹⁸ Catharine Anne Wilson, "Tenancy as a family strategy in mid-nineteenth century Ontario." *Journal of Social History*, Summer, 1998.

project. James, as mentioned above lived with Margaret to help her farm for a period. Margaret Dougall Fowlie had a daughter by the name of Margaret (Mary) Fowlie who married Thomas Lamb Russell in 1875. On 17 April, 1877, Thomas Alexander Russell was born; a fourth generation Scottish-Canadian, industrialist, and the individual to whom the second half of the collection is dedicated.

Thomas Alexander Russell Biography:

The collection's contents pertaining to T.A. Russell are generally genealogies, biographies and obituaries from newspapers. In 1933, Peter Strang, a cousin of Russell's completed an extensive genealogy of the Dougall and Strang families and sent it to Russell. It is from this research that much information is drawn and used to put the Dougall family in context with their relatives in Scotland, as well as in Canada. From this collection's sources, much can also be discovered about the life of T.A. Russell.

Russell was born into a farming family. He earned a political science degree from the University of Toronto in 1899, and in 1900 he became the Executive Secretary of the Canadian Manufacturing Association. During his tenure at the CMA, he was able to increase membership by 400 percent and began *Industrial Canada*, a magazine intended to advertise CMA ideals.¹⁹ In 1901, he was offered the position of General Manager of Canadian Cycle and Motor Company (CCM) which was looking to revamp their company following a declining market for the bicycle. Russell accomplished this goal by beginning the manufacture of automobiles and in 1904, CCM brought out its first car, the Russell Model A, named after him.²⁰ The Model A was marketed on its Canadian manufacture and on its high quality. In 1911, CCM became the Russell Motor Car Company, and CCM was maintained as a branch of this business. By 1915, however, an American company bought out the only

¹⁹ Jaroslav Petryshyn, *'Made to a Standard': Thomas Alexander Russell and the Russell Motor Car Company*. (Burnstown: General Store Publishing House, 2000) 16.

Canadian owned company ever to produce, market, build and sell automobiles strictly to Canadians.²¹ Following the demise of the Russell Motor Car Company, T.A. Russell became president of CCM, and in 1930, he became president of Massey-Harris until his death in 1940. In 1987, he was posthumously inducted into the Canadian Business Hall of Fame, and the program from the evening's events is included in the collection.



Thomas Alexander Russell, date unknown. University of Guelph Archives, Regional History Collection.

Assessment of the Source—Uses and Limitations:

One newspaper article in the collection stated that there was no keeping Thomas Alexander Russell down on the farm after he had seen Toronto. This statement is not only indicative of creating an arbitrary hierarchy of worthy labour in Canadian history, but it is also demonstrative of the extensive rural depopulation that took place at the time. The collection as a whole is useful in examining rural history in many forms. The letters provide

²⁰ Petryshyn, 23.

²¹ Petryshyn, 129.

a portrait of nineteenth century migration and initial settlement. They continue throughout three decades following immigration and show the continuing adaptation and flourishing of one Scottish-Canadian family. Social historians would find this source important as it is filled with details of everyday life on a farm in Huron County, Ontario. The Russell section of the collection is equally as important to both rural historians and those studying industrial Canada, as it demonstrates one individual's move away from the land and unprecedented success in Canadian business. Also, gendered views and family strategies are rich in this collection, providing a rare opportunity to take a glimpse at the gender ideals and methods of survival that were both proscribed and pervasive in nineteenth century Canada.

Conversely, it is limited by the fact that only one side of the dialogue between Canada and Scotland is available. It may be helpful to know what family members in Scotland were curious about learning with regards to settling in Canada. What questions were answered by the Dougalls, and which were deemed irrelevant, unnecessary and inconsequential? Also, it lacks in its temporal regularity. It would be helpful to see a record book, diary, or other daily log of experiences, if it was available, to understand what events were considered the norm and which were irregular or extraordinary. There is a considerable gap in time as well. Though the collection covers material from 1844 to 1987, the time between 1869 and the 1930s is very sparse. With the exception of a few photographs of the Fowlie family, the Russell family and T.A. Russell himself, there is very little information about the third generation and their rural practices.

Conclusion:

This source is undoubtedly very rich in its depiction of rural Canadian life and in the transition from a rural to urban focus. It shows the definite progression of one family from pioneering and working of the land, to rural capitalism and eventually to unprecedented

success in Canadian industrialism. Included in this progression are the details and minutia of everyday rural life that are so important to fully reconstructing settlement and gender history. The Dougall family collection is important, not only to Scottish, migration, and rural historians, but to Canadian history as a whole, as it documents the lives of many generations of Canadian settlers and their part in establishing homes, farms and communities.

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