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Notes on my visit to Mrs. Barbara McPhee

Mrs. McPhee is the grand daughter of Alexander MacDonald, b. 29 October, 1863, d. March 1, 1952

Dr. Alexander MacDonald graduated from McGill in 1889. He was born in Mongenais, Quebec. [His name is spelled McDonald in the McGill calendar and sometimes is listed as being born in Mongenois, Quebec.]

He spoke Gaelic and French before attending school, where he learned English. He learned to speak French by playing with the French children living opposite his home.

MacDonald initially decided to enter the ministry. He changed his mind after recovering from tetanus, having developed an interest in medicine while recovering. He presented himself to the Faculty with \$2.50 in hand and said that if they let him in, he would repay anything he owed. He rented a room on Bishop Street in return for milking the cow, walking it to the mountain for pasture and milking it in the evening.

He practised all his life in Vankleek Hill, Ontario. He purchased a building and made it into a hospital which lasted many decades. Surgeons would come from Montreal to perform complicated operations. MacDonald always cut the hospital grass. This building still stands, enlarged, and is the MacDonald Residence for seniors, on 24 Bertha St. Vankleek Hill. Patients often paid him in kind.

He looked after the nuns in a local convent (now closed, originally a Belgian order) plus any other clerics, at no fee. Towards the end of his career, he received an ornate card celebrating his 50 years of service, containing \$50. He loved the card.

Mrs. Barbara McPhee
1405 McFee Road
Vankleek Hill, Ontario
K0B 1R0

Presented Dr. MacDonald's 1889 Bausch & Lomb microscope to the Osler Library on 17 May, 2010.

Pamela Miller
18 May, 2010

Wednesday

Dear Sam,

I am enclosing the papers
& the card that the sisters at the
convent sent to my grandfather
on Christmas long ago - isn't
it beautifully done?

The hospital was a ten
bed one: eight single-bed
rooms and one two-bed room.
It had a large bedroom for the
nurses if needed. There was
an operating room with a room
off of it for sterilizing
instruments. He had his
own X-ray machines and a
dark room for developing the
films.

A couple of tales:

- some years ago an elderly man told me that when he was a young fellow he had had to hold a lantern on high to give more light to help my grandfather to better see while he was sewing up a fight victim at the Bulldog Tavern!

- a little baby girl, born in the hospital, died there some weeks after her birth: she had been left there, unwanted; my grandfather had her buried in his own plot in the local cemetery, & the tiny stone is still there with - only the name "Pauline" on it.

I enjoyed meeting you so much, Pam, & I'm delighted that you saw the wild turkey. We also have deer, the occasional moose, the odd fisher, raccoons & skunks! I feed four raccoons & skunks & a wild pussycat each night on the kitchen deck - they had a hard winter.

Thank you for the Oster Library newsletter & for the seventy-five books - they are fascinating & are very much appreciated. I do want to thank McGill for accepting the microscope - I know that my grandfather would indeed be pleased!

Best regards,

Barbara
(McRae)



Token of Gratitude
to dear Doctor Macdonald
for his 50 years of devoted service.
With Congratulations and
Best Wishes of Health &
Joy and Prosperity.
Ad Multos Annos!
The Sisters of Saint Mary
in Canada and the United States.

May your Christmas be Happy,
filled with delight,

Where old friends and new in
pleasure unite,

A day that is Merry, and sweet
to recall,

Followed at length by the best
year of all.



Snapshot... of my grandfather taken
- surreptitiously- in the early 1940s
He HATED having his picture taken.



Dr. Alexander MacDonald
MDCM 1889 - McGill
seated far left

(? with classmates in front of Arts Bldg.)