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And I think from this Gaelic poetry that has survived, you can often get a very clear glimpse into social history, what was happening. What you cannot go to other records for. But it's also interesting to find that historical records that do remain are sometimes complemented by information we get from some of the songs. In Mabou, for example, the McKean papers--general records of the area which were kept by the Honourable William McKean. When you go through those for the early days, you find that this area was a much more productive area than you would maybe think. You had some ships being built; you had produce being exported to other areas. It was a very, very busy place, and a very fertile place. If you read the songs of the poets, you find that this information is complemented there. So, the songs are useful in that respect. You might get glimpses into history that you wouldn't get from reading a census, for example. (Sure. In a census, they don't count the fiddlers.) No, true. Whereas, the songs mention them. And sometimes even by name. You're sometimes given clues as to who was an excellent dancer. (Those uses would be there whether this was good poetry or average or quite poor. Are these poets of merit as poets?) Certainly. Especially some of them. I keep going back to Allan the Ridge because he is the greatest. His son Alexander was also a very good poet, but not as great as his father. But he still maintained the tradition. John the Hunter was a very, very accomplished poet--elegant, you know, meters--everything rhymed--very accomplished. (Who else do we have?) Okay. In Mabou, they were really mostly related. The MacDonalds-- so we start with The Ridges. The Hunter. Then you have the Turner MacDonalds. (When we say The Ridges, we're talking about?) Al? Ian and his son Alexander. But then, Al? Ian's brother Donald is mentioned, not as a great poet, but who could compose. There was another cousin called The Big Painter, another MacDonald, another excellent poet. The Turner MacDonalds were also cousin groups. Alexander Turner MacDonald--an excellent local poet--he's left some very, very good material behind, some of it very witty, some of it very funny. You had Angus MacDonald, again a cousin, Aonghas MacAlasdair. There was also Alexander MacLean, Al? as daire MacEoghain Ban, an excellent poet in his own right. A lot of his songs are in praise of the MacDonalds. Probably there was MacDonald history in his own background. So, the influence of these people was tremendous in this. Now, there were others. These are just some. But they were the main ones of the early days. (Was "The MacDonalds of Keppoch" composed here or in Scotland?) It was composed here, I believe. Oh, I think it must have been, because it's a mature poem. It is Allan the Ridge talking. It's on the MacDonalds of Keppoch, about his people. And as far as I can tell • this is again my own opinion--I think this type of martial poetry had died out in Scotland. Iain Lom MacDonald of Keppoch was noted for this--a sort of a savagery in his war poetry. And I believe that Allan the Ridge was steeped in this before his arrival. And he composed this. It's the ultimate celebration of a clan. It's savage

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