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Alexander Munro, Early Schoolmaster "Boularderie, Cape Breton, March 7, 1847 "Sir: "Yours of Feb. 23rd I received March 5th and will be glad to give you what information I can respecting our school. Our system is called Stow's training system as taught in the Glasgow Normal Seminary, We ever keep in our view that to gain the confidence of children, is to become children, to join in their amusements and by this we soon come to a knowledge of the dispositions of those under our care. In school we endeavour to train them to think and reason, to cultivate the understanding, the affections and physical habits. In a word, we endeavour to train the whole man to make them good moral characters, "We open and conclude the school with praise and prayer, one of the children leading the psalm tune. Then a bible lesson is given to the whole school at once. As we belong to the Church of Scotland, we teach the doctrines of the bible as taught by it, and we find our Roman Catholic friends equally ready to answer the questions as the other children. "The whole school receives lessons in Geography, Natural History, etc. We have about 100 scholars. Branches taught: Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Grammar, Navigation, Latin, Mathematics, Algebra, etc. We have had 17 young men, 5 of them Roman Catholics, that came to improve themselves. They had been teaching before. They remained with us from 3 to 9 months. They are again teaching in different parts of the island. We have three at present. One from Whycomagh a married man, two Roman Catholics, one from Port Hood, the other from St. Peters. Boarding can be got in the houses near the school. We have the son of Geo. Handley Cage, Halifax, boarding in my own house. I could make it convenient to train teachers were the school fitted up for a model school. "Mrs. Munro learned the system in the Glasgow Normal Seminary and was appointed Mistress of a school of Industry in Manchester, England, which she left to come here. She teaches from 20 to 30 girls sewing and other female branches, besides assisting in other departments. "I will be most happy to give you any other information or answer any queries you may think proper to ask "Yours faithfully, A. Munro" Alexander Munro was sent out from Scotland in the early nineteenth century to help fill a void in the educational needs of the Scottish settlers in Boularderie. The area, like many others in Cape Breton at this time, was affected by increased population from Scottish migration. The majority of settlers were Protestant and Roman Catholic. Religion was very important in deciding where people settled. Roman Catholics generally settled on the south side of Boularderie Island; the Protestants, the north side. They tended to settle in family name groups. Basically two types of Scottish settlers came to Cape Breton. The Highlanders, Gaelic-speaking, tended to settle in rural areas. Here they were faced with the problems, and thus priorities, of food, clothing and shelter. The Lowlanders, more English-speaking, tended to settle in the mines areas intermingling more with the English. The Highlanders soon saw the need to have a command of the English language to be able to communicate with English-speaking settlers. A Rev, Farquharson, sent out from Scotland, in 1836 commented that less than twenty per cent of family heads could



read, and hardly anyone over thirty years of age. The task of education in Boularderie was undertaken occasionally by itinerant teachers. These people were of dubious qualifications; they often did not possess a licence and so did not gain support from the government of the colony nor from Scotland. The area was also served by only an occasional minister, that is, the north side of the island. Thus without schools and minister, the area became the pet project of Mrs, Isabella Gordon McKay of Rockfield, Scotland, She was a very active member of the Ladies Association of the Glasgow Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Lands, The Ladies Society had been formed in 1825 to promote religious interests in the North American colonies. The society aimed at remedying the religious and educational needs by attempting to provide the colonists with a means of self-improvement, Mrs, McKay's avid interest and personal support • she contributed from her own personal fortune • enabled the colonists to be provided with ministers, teachers, bedding, Bibles, school supplies and many other items. Mrs, McKay seemed to have been the backbone of the society. Following her death the society apparently disbanded. Along with her financial contribution, she maintained a correspondence with the people she sent out. Deeply affected by news of the deplorable conditions in Cape Breton, she was instrumental

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