Bailiff Macaulay

by C.J.P. Hanna

Donald Macaulay was a servant of the Hudson's Bay Company and its close affiliate the Puget's Sound Agricultural Company for more than thirty years until his death in 1868. Well-regarded by such prominent fur trade figures as Hudson's Bay Company chief factors John McLoughlin and James Douglas, Macaulay is best known for his service during the 1850's as bailiff of the Puget's Sound Agricultural Company's "Viewfield" farm near Fort Victoria.

Macaulay was a Scot, born in 1805 on the shores of West Loch Tarbert, Harris, on the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides. Little is known of his early life. Later described as having been a crofter, Macaulay reportedly worked as a shepherd in Scotland before entering HBC service. At some point in his life Macaulay received a rudimentary education as he could read and write, though his grammar and spelling were often peculiar and sometimes a source of amusement to others.[1]

In his **British Columbia Coast Names** Captain John Walbran states that Macaulay crossed the Rocky Mountains about 1834 and then served aboard the HBC coastal trading brig **Llama** (or **Lama**) under Captain William H. McNeill.[2]

Donald Macaulay was probably the "Macaulay, a Lewisman" with whom Dr. William Fraser Tolmie went on a hunting expedition in July 1834 near Clarence Straits during the removal of the first Fort Simpson from the Nass river.[3]

By 1839 Donald Macaulay was employed as a labourer at the second Fort Simpson (now Port Simpson) on the northwest coast of British Columbia. The only surviving records of Macaulay's work at Fort Simpson mention him preparing bear skins for storage and attending natives bringing seaweed to the fort's vegetable garden. By 1841 Macaulay was one of three assistants to John Work, the officer in charge of Fort Simpson.[4]

Shortly after his arrival at Fort Simpson Macaulay married Margaret Snaach, a native woman, probably from the Tlingit tribe on the Tongass river. Like most marriages in the fur trade territory, the marriage was done "in the fashion of the country" without clerical blessing. While at least six daughters were born to Macaulay and his wife, the lack of records renders it uncertain exactly how many children they had.[5]

Macaulay remained at Fort Simpson until the late 1840's. The few remaining portions of the Fort Simpson journal reveal very little about Macaulay's life there, save that on one occasion he chased and wounded a large shark seen offshore and shortly after Christmas 1842 was caught in the fort storeroom tapping rum from a cask he had bored with a gimlet. Since Christmas day had been "gloomy and dismal with heavy rain all day" and the men's "Christmas regale" consisted of molasses, rice, flour and grease, Macaulay's theft of rum was perhaps understandable and apparently soon forgiven for no record of any punishment appears in the Fort Simpson journal.[6]

Despite the occasional transgression, Macaulay's reputation among his superiors was such that HBC chief Factor John McLoughlin described him in 1844 as one of the Hudson's Bay Company's three "Best common men" serving on the Pacific coast.[7]

By the summer of 1850 Macaulay had moved to Fort Victoria where HBC chief factor James Douglas, the Puget's Sound Agricultural Company agent at Fort Victoria, appointed him bailiff of the new PSAC "Viewfield" (or "Viewpoint") farm. While the Puget's Sound Agricultural Company (PSAC) was legally distinct from the Hudson's Bay Company, the two companies were very closely linked and Macaulay transferred from one to the other without difficulty.

Writing to the PSAC management in London, Douglas justified his appointment of Macaulay by describing him as "honest, careful and industrious" though "not a very active person."[8] In view of the crippling shortage of non-native labour at Fort Victoria during this period Macaulay was probably the best choice available for the position as he was semi-literate, had previously worked as a shepherd and was experienced in dealing with natives.

Under the initial unwritten terms of his appointment Macaulay received the use of the lands, buildings and livestock of Viewfield farm in return for providing the PSAC with half of any increase in the farm's livestock and half of the farm's profits.[9]

Viewfield farm was located at the southern end of the Esquimalt peninsula, at the mouth of Victoria harbour, and comprised about 600 acres of woods, rocks and grassland. While the PSAC later brought out bailiffs and settlers from Britain for their Craigflower, Esquimalt (or Colwood), and Constance Cove farms, Viewfield farm remained under Macaulay's control throughout its existence and received virtually no settlers from Britain.

Due to the great shortage of white labour at Fort Victoria, native labourers, usually hired at the rate of 2 blankets per month, were essential to the development of Viewfield. In addition to supplying their labour, natives also traded salmon, halibut, potatoes, shingles and canoes to the farm in exchange for clothes, blankets and firearms.[10]

In the early 1850's James Douglas was too busy with his responsibilities as colonial governor, HBC chief Factor and PSAC agent to devote much time to the close supervision of Macaulay who, as a consequence, was rather left to run Viewfield as he saw fit.

Sheep-rearing was the main activity of Viewfield farm, but it also had about two dozen cattle and a small herd of

horses by the mid-1850's. Unfortunately many of the sheep at Viewfield in the early 1850's died from lack of food, shelter and attention while scab often caused much of their wool to be lost.[11]

Instead of concentrating his efforts on providing food and shelter for the farm's large flock of sheep, Macaulay expended time, energy and resources breeding a herd of horses which were useless for the PSAC farms as they were too small to serve as draft animals.[12]

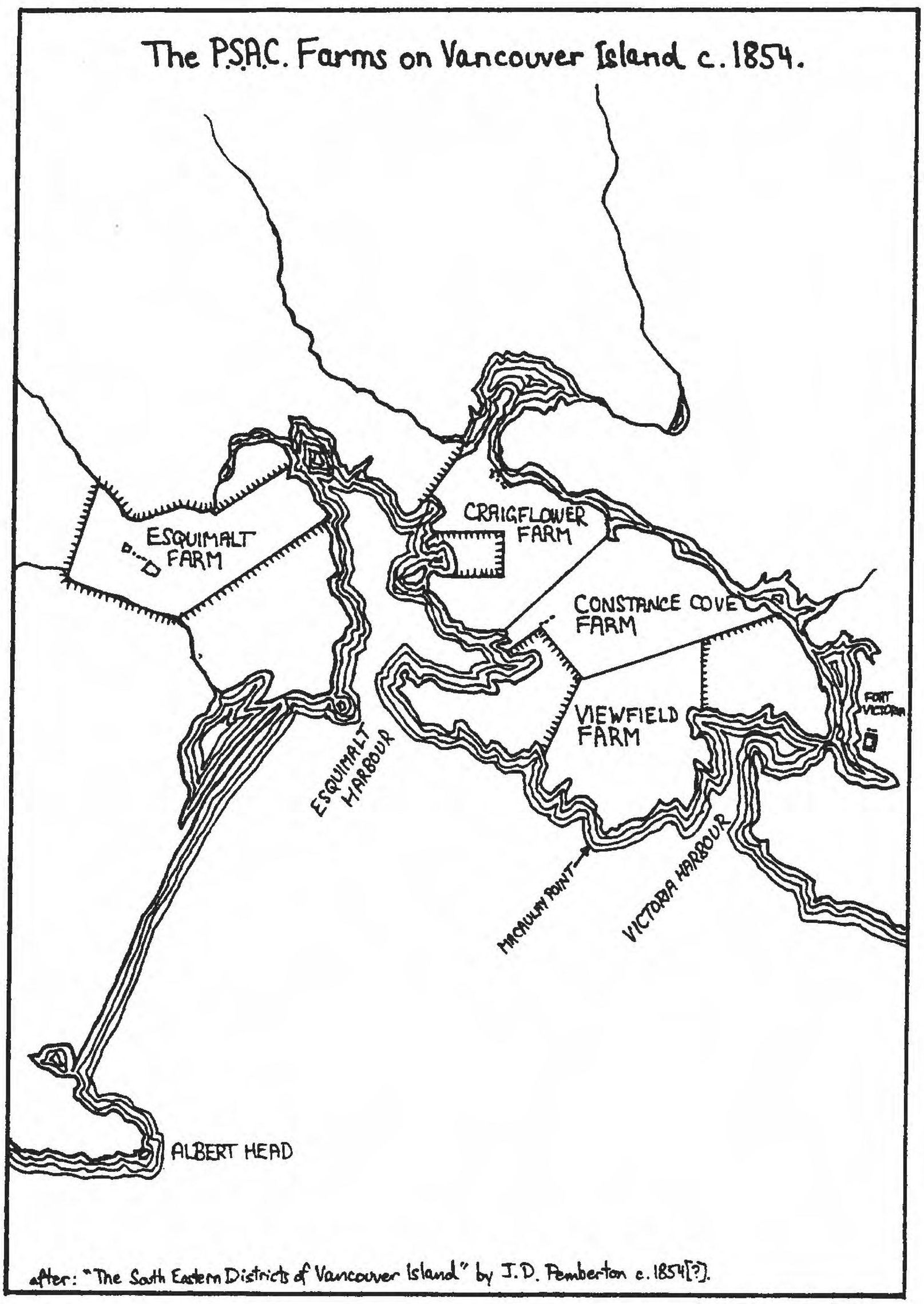
Though Macaulay's insufficient industry and attention hampered the development of Viewfield, his superiors in the PSAC, particularly James Douglas, bore some responsibility for the sorry state of the farm. After choosing a farm site with little land suitable for crops, Douglas placed a large flock of sheep on Viewfield farm before adequate shelter, food and care could be provided. The choice of the Southdown breed of sheep which required particular attention to their feed and shelter only increased the difficulty of caring for the flock.[13]

As bailiff of Viewfield Macaulay did not wine and dine his visitors as lavishly as did other bailiffs, such as Captain Edward Langford at Esquimalt farm, but his kindness and hospitality to visiting naval officers from H.M.S. **Thetis** in 1853 was such that they gave him a silver cup in appreciation. Since Viewfield farm had the only stable of horses on the PSAC farms at that time, the officers' gratitude probably stemmed in large part from Macaulay providing them with mounts during their visits to Fort Victoria. [14]

As an individual Macaulay appears to have been rather a local character. in his **Reminiscences** Doctor John Sebastian Helmcken described Macaulay as "a most trustworthy man," "long and spare" in build, who spoke "peculiar English."[15] Among the anecdotes Helmcken recorded about Macaulay were a court case in which Macaulay suddenly became more "deaf" than usual when called upon to submit evidence, and an incident when he claimed to have cured Helmcken's horse of the grip [sic] by placing a roasted shoe over its muzzle.[16]

After their arrival at Fort Victoria Macaulay and his wife had been officially married and their daughters Margaret, Mary Ann, Catherine and Sara baptized by the HBC chaplain Robert John Staines. During Macaulay's time at Viewfield two more daughters, Margaret and Mary Ann, were born. The eldest, Mary, was married to William Henry McNeill, Jnr. in June 1853 and Flora married James Tod in October, 1857.[17]

Macaulay's family, like many other HBC families, straddled both white and native societies. While Margaret Macaulay continued to visit her relatives on the Tongass river until the early 1860's and her brother Joe worked on Viewfield farm in exchange for clothes and blankets, her daughter Mary insisted upon a band and wedding procession around the little settlement of Fort Victoria when she married McNeill in 1853.[18]



In April 1854 James Douglas was succeeded as PSAC agent at Victoria by Kenneth McKenzie, bailiff of the PSAC's Craigflower farm. Described as "well meaning" and "thoroughly honest," McKenzie was also said to possess a "hasty temper and unsound judgement."[19] Five years after McKenzie's appointment a senior HBC officer, Alexander Grant Dallas, was moved by McKenzie's record as PSAC agent to report to the PASC management in London that "a more unfit man . . . could not have been selected to exercise the control and direction" of the PSAC farms.[20]

Mckenzie soon found much to fault with Macaulay, describing him in private as "a very stupid ignorant man and not one at all adapted to have charge of a farm" and Macaulay's flock of sheep as "the most deplorable looking stock (he) ever saw . . . "[21]

In an attempt to rectify the poor state of Viewfield farm McKenzie held a public auction of horses from Viewfield farm in July 1854 and cut off Macaulay's supplies from Fort Victoria in early 1855 until Macaulay ceased to kill Viewfield sheep for food.[22]

The 1855 census of Vancouver Island provides a dismal portrait of Viewfield farm. Only 35 of the farm's 600 acres were under cultivation and the total agricultural production of all crops in 1854 came to less than 200 bushels which was clearly inadequate to support the 675 sheep, 24 horses and 35 cattle on Viewfield farm in 1854.[23]

In the summer of 1855 McKenzie had the flocks of Craigflower and Viewfield farms combined at a new sheep station located north of Fort Victoria at Lakehill in an attempt to provide better forage for the animals and reduce the incidence of scab among the flock. The new sheep station was a success until the fall of 1856 when Macaulay accused McKenzie of taking the best lambs from the Viewfield flock. When McKenzie then permitted Macaulay to drive the Viewfield flock back to Viewfield farm Macaulay instead drove it to the farm of Captain William H. McNeill where it promptly got the scab again. McKenzie then refused to provide Macaulay with a loan to pay off his debts while Macaulay refused to provide monthly reports on Viewfield farm, failed to send 100 Viewfield ewes to Constance Cove farm, and mislabelled his wool shipments to McKenzie.[24]

Macaulay was aided in his disputes with McKenzie by the absence of explicit written agreements regarding the terms of his employment. Also important was the support given Macaulay by members of the local HBC hierarchy, such as Governor James Douglas, whom McKenzie had antagonized. McKenzie was placed in the difficult position of having to discipline a rebellious subordinate and social inferior who was able to state that the Governor was his "friend and advisor in all cases."[25]

Despite complaints about his management, Macaulay remained in charge of Viewfield farm until his contract as bailiff ended in September 1857. Viewfield farm was then combined with Constance Cove farm while Macaulay rejoined the HBC as an "Indian Trader" at Fort Victoria and took up residence on Humboldt street in the village of Victoria.[26]

In October 1859 Macaulay professed to be greatly offended when one of his acquaintances, the Attorney General of British Columbia, George Hunter Cary, became embroiled in a personal dispute with another local lawyer and politician, David Babington Ring. Claiming that Ring had "stigmatised" Cary, Macaulay publicly challenged him to a duel with a variety of weapons, ranging from rifles at 80 yards to Bowie knives in a dark room. Ring prudently ignored the challenge and Macaulay quickly abandoned his blustering challenge as unbefitting his position as "a gentleman and a man of honour" when Cary was sent to cool his heels in Victoria jail for inciting violence.[27]

Whether Macaulay was acting alone in this ridiculous affair or serving as a "stalking horse" for Cary's supporters is unclear, but the erudite language of Macaulay's challenge and its revocation indicate that Macaulay was probably assisted in their composition by persons better educated than himself. The incident can only have helped to cement Macaulay's reputation as a bit of a character.

By early 1860 Macaulay had apparently overcome the debts he amassed while serving as bailiff of Viewfield as he owned a lot in the James Bay district of Victoria which enabled him to vote for George Cary in the March 1860 elections to the Vancouver Island House of Assembly.[28]

At the end of May 1861 Macaulay returned to his old post of Fort Simpson. Apart from a brief note in the fort's journal that he had become drunk on liquor traded from a coastal trading schooner, Macaulay's service at Fort Simpson was apparently without incident. In July 1862 his daughter Catherine married Pym Nevins Compton, an HBC officer serving at Fort Simpson. When news of gold finds on the Nass river reached Fort Simpson in August 1862 Macaulay reported the news to the Colonist newspaper in Victoria.[29]

Macaulay's report to the Colonist is the last known account of his whereabouts until his death six years later. Macaulay apparently remained at Fort Simpson until the late 1860's when he returned to Victoria and was placed in charge of the HBC floating powder magazine. In September 1868, six months after the magazine was moved to Esquimalt harbour during a Fenian raid scare, Macaulay died while fishing in Esquimalt harbour when his hand became entangled in the anchor line of his small skiff and he was pulled overboard and drowned. Macaulay's wife, Margaret, survived him for only a few months and died in July 1869.[30]

Though a relatively unimportant figure in British history, Donald Macaulay is an excellent example of the class of men who with their native wives played an invaluable and often overlooked role in the society and economy of the fur trade by serving as interlocutors between white and native societies. Despite his failings, Macaulay's loyalty to Hudson's Bay Company and his general reliability caused him to be repeatedly given positions of responsibility in Hudson's Bay Company service. The accolades he received during his life outweigh the oftenmerited criticisms he also received.

At least 48 children were born to Macaulay's daughters Mary McNeill, Flora Tod, Sarah Mordaunt, Catherine Compton and Margaret Hankin/ Loring. No records have yet been located for Mary Ann Macaulay.

Mary McNeill and Flora Tod (later spelt Todd) bore at least ten and fourteen children, respectively, and lived out their long lives on the large McNeill and Tod(d) farms near Victoria. Catherine Compton and her husband had three children, but she and her husband died within nine months of each other in 1879 and 1880 with the unfortunate result that their children were left destitute and a least one was placed in the Protestant Orphanage at Victoria. Sarah Macaulay married one Alfred E. Mordaunt in 1869 and bore four children before she and her husband died in 1880 and 1882, respectively.[31]

Margaret Macaulay married the pioneer Hazelton merchant Thomas Hankin and bore seven children before his death in 1885. In 1889 she married one Baron Alfred von Wilke – better known as Richard Ernest Loring – the Indian Agent at Hazelton, and three children were born to them. Fluent in the local native languages, Margaret Loring accompanied her husband on all his official trips in order to serve as his interpreter. In the early twentieth century her daughter Constance Cox, née Hankin, continued the family tradition as interlocutors between white and native societies through her recording of the history and traditions of natives in the Hazelton area.[32]

Macaulay Point, Macaulay Plains, Macaulay Road and Macaulay School within the former boundaries of Viewfield farm commemorate Donald Macaulay and his family.

* * * * * * * * * *

Christopher Hanna is a recent graduate of the University of Victoria with a special interest in British Columbia's colonial period.

FOOTNOTES

1. Brian Charles Coyle, "Problems of the Puget's Sound Agricultural Company on Vancouver Island: 1847 - 1857," Simon Fraser University, M.A. Thesis, 1977, p. 12; Doroth Blakey Smith, ed., The Reminiscences of Doctor John Sebastian Helmcken, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1975), p. 153; Christ Church Cathedral, Marriage Register; Saint Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Victoria, Burial Records, information from Dr. Allan O'Neil, archivist. The spelling of Macaulay's varies. Macaulay signed the marriage register as "McAulay," but Macaulay is the form adopted by geographers and used in this paper.
2. John Walbran, British Columbia Coast Names, (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1909), pp. 309-310. "Log of the HBC brig Lama, 11 Dec. 1832-02 Dec.1833," BCARS, notes a "John McCaulay, Assist't Steward" who was "Sent on shore at Fort Simpson" c. 1833. The other sources cited in this paper almost certainly refer to Donald Macaulay.
3. (William Fraser Tolmie), Physician and Fur Trader, (Vancouver: Mitchell Press, 1963), pp. 286-287.
4. Hudson's Bay Company, Columbia District, "Establishment of Servants: Coasting Trade Establishment, Outfit 1839," BCARS, lists "Donald McAulay" at Fort SImpson; E.E. Rich, ed. , The Letters of John McLoughlin from Fort Vancouver to the Governor and Committee, Second Series, 1839-1844, (Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1943), pp. 372-374; "Fort Simpson Journal," 1 March and 10 April 1843, BCARS.
5. Christ Church Cathedral, Marriage and Baptismal Registers; "Fort Simpson Journal," 15 November 1842.
6. "Fort Simpson Journal," 24, 25, 26 and 29 December 1842, 1 March and 10 April 1843, BCARS.
7. Rich, ed. The Letters of John McLoughlin . . ., pp. 372-374.
8. Coyle, p. 12.
9. Ibid. pp. 12-13.
10. Coyle, p. 52, and various undated chits, Kenneth McKenzie Collection," BCARS.
11. Coyle, pp. 51-53; Kenneth McKenzie to Andrew Colvile, 23 December 1842, "Kenneth McKenzie Collection," BCARS; "The Census of Vancouver Island, 1855," British Columbia Historical Quarterly, Vol. IV (January 1940), pp. 51-58.
12. Coyle, pp. 51-53.
13. Coyle, pp. 51-53.
14. Victoria Daily Colonist, 23 May 1861, p. 3.
15. Helmcken, p. 153.
16. Ibid.
17. Christ Church Cathedral, Baptismal and Marriage Registers.
18. "Fort Simpson Journal," 8 January 1862; chit dated 30 March 1855, "Kenneth McKenzie collection;" Helmcken, pp. 153-154.
19. A.G. Dallas to PSAC, May 1858, quoted in Coyle, p. 62.
20. Ibid.
21. Kenneth McKenzie to Andrew Colvile, 23 December 1854, "Kenneth McKenzie collection;" Kenneth McKenzie to Andrew Colvile, 31 March 1854, quoted in Coyle, p. 138.
22. Coyle, pp. 51-53; W. K(aye). L(amb)., "Diary of Robert Melrose," British Columbia Historical Quarterly, Vol. VII (January 1943), pp. 203.
23. W. K(aye). L(amb)., "The Census of Vancouver Island, 1855," British Columbia Historical Quarterly, Vol. IV (January 1940), pp. 51-58.
24. Coyle, pp. 51-53.
25. Kenneth McKenzie to Donald Macaulay, 12 March 1856, "Kenneth McKenzie collection."
26. Victoria Gazette, 15 October 1859, p. 2; Edward Mallandaine, First Victoria Directory, (Victoria: Edward Mallandaine, 1860), p. 32; and Kenneth McKenzie to Donald Macaulay, 28 February 1857, "Kenneth McKenzie collection."
27. Gazette, 15 October 1859, p. 2; Colonist, 21 October 1859, p. 2.
28. Vancouver Island, Sherriff, Poll Books, Victoria Town, 22 March 1861.
29. Colonist, 15 September 1868, p. 3; "Fort Simpson Journal," 30 May 1861, and 16 November 1862; Christ Church Cathedral, Marriage Register.
30. Colonist, 21 September 1868, p. 3, and 31 July 1869, p. 3.
31. BCARS, "Vertical Files;" Christ Church Cathedral, Baptismal, Marriage and Burial Registers; St. Luke's Church, Victoria, Baptismal, Marriage and Burial Registers; Saint Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Marriage and Burial Records; Cridge Centre, Victoria, "Register of Orphans at Protestant Orphanage;" Peter Baskerville and others, 1881 Canadian Census: Vancouver Island, (Victoria: Public History Group (University of Victoria), 1990); Eric Sager and others, The 1891 Canadian Census, Victoria, British Columbia, (Victoria: Public History Group (University of Victoria), 1991); Victoria Standard, 11 August 1879, p. 3, 24 January 1880, p. 3, 30 January 1882, p. 3; Colonist, 23 January 1880, p. 3, 17 February 1886, p. 3, 13 January 1912, p. 6; Victoria Times, 13 January 1911, p. 7, 15 September 1911, p. 20.
32. Canada, 1891 Census, British Columbia, New Westminster District, Nominal Roll; BCARS, "Vertical Files;" Christ Church Cathedral, Baptismal and Marriage Registers; St. Luke's Church, Baptismal, Marriage and Burial Registers; Colonist, 5 July 1871, p. 3, 13 January 1991, p. 6; Times, 13 January 1911, p. 7.

(BCARS = British Columbia Archives and Records Services)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Mrs. J. H. (Madge) Hamilton for the use of her notes on Donald Macaulay; Dr. Allan O'Neil, archivist of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Victoria for checking church registers; and the staff of the (Bishop) Cridge Centre, Victoria, for checking records of the Victoria Protestant Orphanage.

Haida Mortuary Pole in Thunderbird Park, Victoria, B.C.