ALEXANDER MONTGOMERY

By: Helen Montgomery Meehan

Alexander, Master of Montgomery, had 3 sons -- Alexander who became 2nd Laird, Robert who founded the Braidstone branch of the family, and Hugh who founded the Hessilhead branch. Hugh was married to Jane Maxwell. Their son Sir John was killed on Flodden Field in 1513. Sir John was the father of Hugh -- known as "Old Hugh" -- who married a Houston lady. We don't know her name -- in Crawford's Baronage she is described as Houston's daughter. On Hugh's death in 1556 he was succeeded by his eldest son John who was married to a daughter of John Fraser of Knock.

Alexander the Poet

Genealogists disagree about the parents of Alexander the Poet. Some say he was a brother of John, but others including William Montgomery of Rosemount state that he was son of the fourth Laird John and the daughter of Fraser. Alexander himself tells us "I am one Germane born" and that is by no means impossible as many Scots served in foreign countries. Others say he was born in Hessilhead Castle. All agree that he was brought up at Hessilhead and sent to Argyllshire to be educated. Although fluent in Latin and having an excellent knowledge of the classics in his writing "he kept the Scottish language pure" and thus today his writings are studied by students of philology.

His best known work "The Cherry & the Sloe" is concerned with love and nature as well as being a moral tale. The sloe bush (blackthorn) in the valley represents evil while the cherry on a high rock represents the power of good. The poem begins:

> About a Bank of balmy Bews
> Where Nightingales their Notes renews
> With gallant Goldspinks gay;
> The Mavise, Merl, and Progne proud,
> The Lintwhite, Lark and Laverock loud
> Saluted mirthful May.
> The Cushat crouds, the Corbie cries,
> The Cuckow couks, the pratling Pyes
> To geck her they begin.
> The Jargoun, or the janglin Jays,
> The craiking Craws, the kekling Kays
> They deav'd me with their din.
> The painted Pown with Argos eyes
> Can on his Maycock call,
> The Turtle wails on withered trees,
> And Echo answer'd all
> Repeating, with grieting,
> How fair Narcissus fell.
> By lying and spying
> His shadow in the well.[1]

[1] See also June 1999, for another wording of the beginning of this poem.

Among the many devotional poems he wrote, the following is considered his best:

> O gracious God, my Guiltiness forgive,
> In Sinners Death since thou dost not delight;
> But rather would they should convert and live,
> As witnesseth Prophets in holy Writ;
> I pray thee, Lord, thy Promise to perfite
> In me that I might with the Psalmist say,
> I will thy praise and wondrous works unite
> Therefore, Father, be merciful to me.

Much of Alexander's poetry has melancholy themes -- this is thought to be caused by unhappiness in his personal life. His first great love Lady Margaret Douglas married his cousin Robert Montgomery of Skelmorly. He then admired Lady Margaret Montgomery, daughter of Hugh of Eglinton but she married Lord Seton. We don't know the name of the lady he eventually married.

Alexander spent some time in Holland and travelled on the Continent. While in the service of Regent Morton he held a position which gave him the title of Captain. When James VI became King, Alexander became Poet Laureate at his Court. The King included some of his poems in his "Revelis of Scottish Poesie" published in 1582. A sister of Alexander was the mother of Sir William Mure the poet who praised Alexander's poetry thus:

> Matchless Montgomery, in his native tongue
> In former times to the great sire hath sung;
> And often ravished his harmonious ear,
> With strains fit only for a prince to hear.
> My muse which nought doth challenge worthy fame,
> Save from Montgomery she her birth doth claim --
> Although his Phoenix ashes hath set forth
> Pan for Apolly, if compared in worth --
> Pretendeth title to supply his place,
> By right hereditar to serve thy grace.

Robert Burns was much influenced by the work of Alexander. Alexander died around the year 1611. We only know the names of two of his children -- Margaret and Alexander usually referred to as Prebend of Do.

Reverend Alexander Montgomery of Doe

In 1607, the Northern Earls O'Neill and O'Donnell -- who had to surrender their lands and Gaelic titles at the end of the Nine Years War -- fearing for their lives fled to the Continent. James I declared their lands forfeit to the Crown and a scheme for the plantation of these escheated counties was drawn up. The Montgomery family had already got lands in County Down.[2] Then George Montgomery of the Braidstone Branch, personal friend of James, was appointed by him Bishop of Raphoe, Derry, and Clogher (see article by same author in CMSI June 1997 and March 1999). The historian George Hill in his *Plantation of Ulster* wrote of the Bishop's

[2] See CMSI Dec 1996 & March 1997 by same author.

zeal in planting church lands and settling preachers in parishes. Many of his kinsmen were brought by him from Scotland and one of these was Alexander son of the Poet. He appointed him Prebend of Do in the Barony of Kilmacrenan not too far from his own residence in Derry. There is some confusion about the place name Do -- some writers in error called it "Ditto". However, the place -- now spelt Doe -- is in the Parish of Clondahorky on Sheephaven Bay. In Irish it was referred to "Caislean Na dTuath" or Castle Tuagh – pronounced duagh. A tuath or tuagh was an old Irish land division.

Reverend Alexander was married to Margaret Conyngham -- sister of Reverend Alexander Conyngham who first came to Ireland as Prebend of Inver and Killymard in the South of Donegal.[3] Reverend Alexander -- usually referred to by his title Dean which he was granted in 1630 -- was the ancestor of the Conyngham family in Slane. Margaret died in 1675 and on her tomb in Doe which has the Hessilhead and Conyngham arms united in a shield is inscribed: "Here lyeth the body of Margaret Montgomery, alias Conningham, who was wife of Mr. Alexander Montgomery, who deceased the 18 of June, Anno Domeni 1675."

Alexander's name is not inscribed on the tomb but Alexander McCausland composed his epitaph which contains the lines:

> One man, ye have seldom seen on stage to doe
> The parts of Samuel and of Sampson too;
> Fitt to convince, or hew an Agag down,
> Fierce in his Arms, and priestlike in his gown.
> Now judge with what a courage will he rise
> When the last sounds the great Assize[4]

Alexander and Margaret had two sons, John and William. We only know of William because he is mentioned in John's will as William of Lisduff, Co. Longford. John, known as John of Croghan, was the ancestor of several of the Irish branches of the family such as the Montgomerys of Beaulieu, Ballyleck, Bessmount, Braidrim and Convoy, and deserves an article of his own.

An Early Hawaiian Deed

September 7, 1849

Know all men by these presents, that I, Kekauonohi, of Honolulu, Island of Oahu, for and in consideration of the sum of eleven thousand dollars, to me this day paid in hand by Isaac Montgomery, also of Honolulu, Island of Oahu, . . . convey unto him, the said Isaac Montgomery, and to his heirs, executors, adminsitrators and assigns, for ever, all that certain lot of land, situated in the Island of Oahu, aforesaid, and described as follows: Commencing at mauka north corner or point of this land at place called Lae Kekaa, at bend of Pearl River, and running along edge of Pearl River, makai side, taking in three fish ponds called Pamoku, Okiokilipi and Paakule to open sea, thence following along the edge of the sea (reserving all the reef in front) to end of stone wall by sea, in land called Kupaka, at the makai west corner of this land, thence running north 25° E. 283, direct to place of commencement, including an area of acres 2,444 as per plot hereto annexed. * * *

In witness whereof, the said party, Kekauonohi, has hereunto set her hand and seal at Honolulu, this 7th day of September, A. D. 1849.

Kekauonohi was the widow of the late high chief M. Kekauonohi. In 1858, the Supreme Court of Hawaii heard a case between Daniel Montgomery, a brother of Isaac, and Levi Haalelea, an heir of Kekauonohi over the fishing rights on this land. *Haalelea v. Montgomery*. It is interesting to note that Daniel's attorney in that case was a John Montgomery, though no family reltiaonship is mentioned. Within a few days, Isaac deeded the property to Charles W. Vincent. Two later cases in 1862 find Isaac Montgomery suing his brother Daniel, again over this piece of land. *Montgomery v. Montgomery*. At some point a business called the Puuloa Salt Works was operated there by Mr. Vincent, who transferred the property to Daniel in 1855.

In the 1862 case, Isaac Montgomery claimed that he had induced his brother Daniel to come to Hawaii and paid his passage, and that Daniel arrived on 17 February 1855, in very destitute circumstances. Daniel denied that he was destitute, claiming that he was skilled in shipbuilding, as well as having general business qualifications, and with sufficient means at his command to establish himself independently.

Other items of possible interest in these cases include that Isaac was apparently married, though his wife's name is not mentioned, but no wife is mentioned for Daniel. There may have been some connections to California since Isaac is said to have gone there in 1848 and returned to Hawaii in 1849. However, California would have been a logical point to sail to or from regardless of family connections there. Another case was filed in 1863, when John Montgomery sued Daniel to collect his legal fees.

It would be interesting to know if there are any descendants of Isaac or Daniel, or the attorney John Montgomery. Also, some of our members might be interested in finding out what is presently located on this old Montgomery battlefield.

[3] See in CMSI September & December 1997, March & June 1998 by the same author for information about the connection between the Montgomerys in these areas and the Conynghams.

[4] *Montgomery Manuscripts*.