

THE MUNROS AND MONTGOMERYS OF CRYSTAL SPRINGS

This wee booklet is written for the children of our family. Hopefully it will be read to you by your mother or father, or maybe even your grandmother or grandfather.

Today your last name might be Becker or Dunn or Young or Black, but a long time ago your last name was Munro or McKenzie. Or it might have been Montgomery or Gordon. Your name might even have been McCallum or Johnstone. These are the names of our great, great, great grandparents.

This is about our grandparents who came to America, Alexander McKenzie Munro and Janet Montgomery. They were brave enough to travel the oceans to seek a new life for themselves and for our family.

A special thank-you to all the uncles, aunts and cousins here and in Scotland who helped.

This booklet is mostly fact and perhaps some fiction. The dates and places are all correct, to the best of my knowledge. I only wish we had asked our grandparents more questions.

Enjoy.

Ralph Munro - Text

Ron Munro - Illustrations

This booklet is dedicated to Janet Montgomery Munro.
She was a remarkable woman.

D
1924



Alltœheraich Cottage

Scotland The Brave

A very long way from here, across the ocean, is a beautiful little country called Scotland. This is where our family came from.

Scotland is not a very big country. Our nation, the United States, is far bigger. Even states like California and Washington are bigger than Scotland.

Scotland is very beautiful with rushing rivers, fields of blooming heather plants, and valleys of green grass where sheep graze. In the northern part of Scotland, called the Highlands, there are some mountains that are covered with snow in the winter. The southern part of Scotland, called the Lowlands, has beautiful hills and valleys.

Surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean on three sides, Scotland has many pretty little harbors where the fishing boats anchor at night.

Someday you might go to Scotland and see some of the scenic little towns and villages like Lockerbie, Boreland, Oban, Salen, Lochaline, Beauly, Inverness, or Tobermory. In some towns almost every person has the last name of Munro, or McKenzie, or Montgomery, or McCallum.

Lord Lovat And His Castle

A long, long time ago in the Highlands of Scotland, there lived a very rich man. His name was Lord Lovat and he lived near a little town called Beaully. The Lovat family had lived in this part of Scotland for many years, and Lord Lovat owned a huge farm called an estate.

Lord Lovat decided that he wanted to build a large house called a castle. Most of the castles in Scotland were very old, but he wanted a brand new one.

The castle would be extremely large with many rooms. There would be a huge kitchen to prepare the food and many, many bedrooms for Lord Lovat, his family, and his friends to sleep in. It would be called Beufort Castle.

The castle would be made from blocks of stone so that it would be very strong. Many men would be hired to cut the large blocks of stone. They would bring their tools to the castle location each day and chip away at the huge rocks to make them exactly square for the castle walls. These men were called stonemasons.

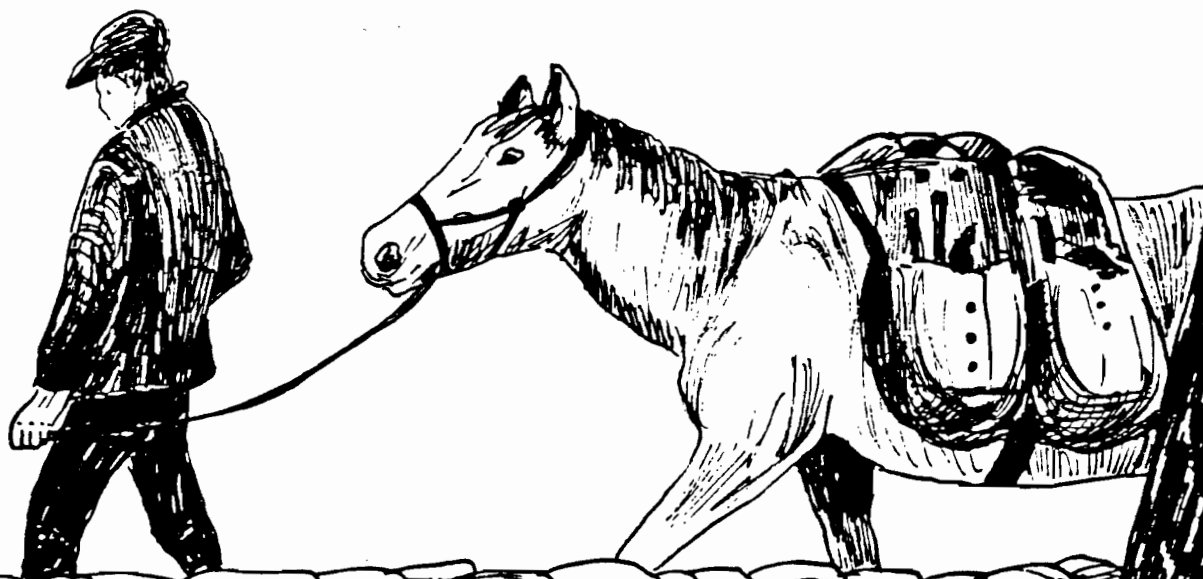
As the stonemasons worked, sometimes their tools would get quite dull from the hard stones they were cutting. Lord Lovat knew that the stonemasons had to have very sharp tools, and the only place to have them sharpened was a few miles away in the town of Beaully. This was a problem. At the end of the day, the workers were too tired to walk all the way to Beaully to have their tools sharpened.

Then one of the stonecarvers said that he had an idea to solve the problem. He said that he knew a bright and hard working young man named Alexander McKenzie Munro. Why not hire Alexander to take the tools to Beaully?

Lord Lovat thought this was a good idea, and young Alexander was hired for his first job. He was twelve years old.

Alexander loved his new job. Each day he would put the harness and saddlebags on one of Lord Lovat's ponies. He would fill the bags with stonemasons' tools and leave for Beauly.

It was quite a walk. Depending on how high the water in the Beauly river was, he could choose from several routes; but almost always he chose the shortest road, which was about three miles. He would lead the pony along the edge of Balblair Wood to the Lovat Bridge. From there he followed the main road along the River Beauly toward town. He had to be careful when he crossed over the railroad tracks and passed the Beauly Station because the Highland Railway trains moved very quickly over the tracks, and they frightened his little pony.



When Alexander arrived at the Beaully Blacksmith Shop where the tools were to be sharpened, he'd make a few stops around town while his pony took a short rest. Soon the tools were ready and Alexander would reload the pony and start back to Lord Lovat's castle a few miles away.

Alexander worked hard and tried to learn all he could from the stonecutters. Soon he became an "apprentice," which means he was an official student of the stonemason's work. As an apprentice, Alexander made a few shillings each week. (A shilling is almost the same as our penny.) Alexander carefully saved his money and seldom bought unnecessary items. He was learning how to become a good stonecutter, and each week he had saved a few more shillings to put into his sporran. (A sporran is a Scottish purse.)

One day, when the work on the castle was about half completed, Alexander and his pony started to town. On the way there, Alexander saw a printed poster nailed to a tree. The poster announced a Fair to be held in just a few days. Alexander knew it would be a long walk to the Fair, but it would be worth it.

People in Scotland loved to go to a Fair in the summer months to see all the animals and agricultural displays. Another reason that he wanted so much to go to the Fair was because of his bagpipes. Alexander had already learned to play this difficult musical instrument, but he knew that sometimes a number of the best bagpipe bands appeared at the Fair. Maybe the Argyll and Sutherland Pipe Band would play. They were the very best band in the entire west of Scotland. Alexander hoped and hoped and hoped that they would be there.

A friend of Alexander's, William Halliday, was also going to the Fair. He said that a girl he knew, named Euphemia Montgomery, was going with him, and that she might also bring her little sister to the Fair. Alexander liked Will Halliday, and looked forward to meeting Will's friends.

The Fair

Alexander left very early in the morning. He and a friend caught a ride part of the way with a farmer who was taking a wagonload of produce to sell at the Fair. The farmer's horse was slow, but it was better than walking the long distance.

The Fair turned out to be even more exciting than Alexander had thought it would be. Exhibits were large, the bagpipers' competition was very exciting, and the foot races were extremely fast. A horse race was scheduled at noon, and the rich landowners from all over Western Scotland had sent their best horses to compete. Alexander and his friend crowded their way close to the finish line to see the end of the race. As the horses approached the final stretch, a sleek grey horse was in the lead.

Right in front of Alexander were Will Halliday and two girls. They all were cheering loudly for the grey horse. They shouted their encouragement and waved their scarves in the wind as the sleek grey mare pulled ahead and easily won the race.

The girls and Will turned to Alexander to explain their enthusiasm. The grey horse was from the stables of the owner of their estate. The girls said that they had come all the way from near the town of Lochaline and that they lived on the Ardtornish (Ard-TORN-ish) estate. The estate owner was very proud of his horses, and the girls were excited to see a horse that they knew win the race of the day.

The older of the two girls introduced herself. "Euphemia Montgomery is my name and this is my little sister, Janet."

Morvern and the Montgomerys

Euphemia Montgomery and her sister, Janet, also had a long walk home from the Fair. It had been an exciting day, but the narrow road back down the Morvern Penninsula was long and dusty. As they finally came to the crest of the hill where they could look down into the long Glen Geal Valley, it was a relief to see their little cottage, called Alltaehanaich (All-TA-hahn-ick).

Alltaehanaich looked dim in the evening air as the sun had long since disappeared over the hills of Mull to the West. Janet and Euphemia excitedly told their father of the grey horse's win at the Fair. Mr. Montgomery knew the horse well. He would pass by its stable nearly every day as he tended to the estate owner's sheep in the adjoining fields.

The Montgomery family listened with great pride about the horse race. It wasn't every day that a horse from the Ardtornish estate won a race as important as this one. Janet went to bed that night thinking about the Fair and all the day's excitement. She also thought about Alexander.

Janet

Janet awoke early the next morning. As she arose in the little upstairs bedroom, she could already hear her father preparing to leave for the big estate house six miles down the road toward Lochaline. Her mother was preparing porridge in the kitchen, and two of her brothers had already left for work.

The Montgomery family was a large one. Janet, her parents, and her nine brothers and sisters, all lived in the little four-room cottage. Downstairs there was a kitchen, a modest little living room and two small store rooms with cupboard shelving. A fireplace on each end of the house warmed both the living room and the kitchen. Upstairs there were two bedrooms. Not much space for a family of twelve, but they always seemed to do fine.

On the north end of the house was a small stable where the milk cow slept. On the backside of the wee house was a peat storage shed. (Peat is sod or dirt cut from the ground, dried and burned in the fireplace as fuel.) Janet and her brothers and sisters were required to spend a good deal of time cutting the square blocks of peat from the hill just behind the shed. It would be needed to burn in the fireplace on cold winter nights.

Janet looked out the front door and across the valley. The sunshine was slowly moving down the hillside toward the Altachonrish (Al-TACH-on-rish) River. She had to hurry because it was a four-mile walk down to the Claggen (CLAG-un) School where she was finishing her own schooling, as well as learning to be a teacher's aide.

After a quick bowl of porridge, she started down the little single-track road. Smoke was rising from the chimney of the house next door (called Uileanm [YULE-in]) and the bridge over the wee creek separating the houses was slippery from the spray rising from the stream. As she rounded the bend near the "White Glen" where the river also turned, she could see the school ahead and the huge estate house was barely visible all the way down the valley. Past the estate house was the beautiful Loch Aline that entered into the Sound of Mull.

Janet loved the hills and valleys around Alltaehanaich. Perhaps the Morven Penninsula with the islands to the west was the prettiest place in the whole world. Sometimes her mother would take her to the Isle of Mull and even out to the Island of Ulva. Janet's grandmother McCallum had been born on Ulva, and her mother came from the beautiful, lush Aros Valley on Mull. How could any place be prettier than Lochaline (LOCK-all-in), Tobermory, Larachbeg, Salen on Mull, Killichronan, or the Islands of Iona and Staffa?

Sometimes her mother would tease her father, and if she wanted to especially give him a hard time, she would call him a "Lowlander." It was true. John Montgomery had come to Morvern herding the sheep. This used to be a part of Scotland where villages and people occupied nearly every little glen and valley. Several years before John Montgomery had arrived, something very terrible had happened. The large estate owners decided to clear out all the people of each valley on Morvern. The "clearances" were terrible and cruel as villages were burned and the poor people were driven away by the rich. After all the poor people had starved or left, the rich land owners had plenty of pasture land for raising sheep.

The sheep weren't native to this part of Scotland and the landowners went to the southern-most part of Scotland to buy sheep and hire people to herd them.

Janet's father and his family had lived in the Lowlands around Lockerbie for as long as the family could remember. At the little church cemetery in Boreland the graves dated back to the 1600's. They lived at Stobohill, Mirron Hill, and Righead. A strongly religious family, they knew the sheep and raised them well.

The Journey North

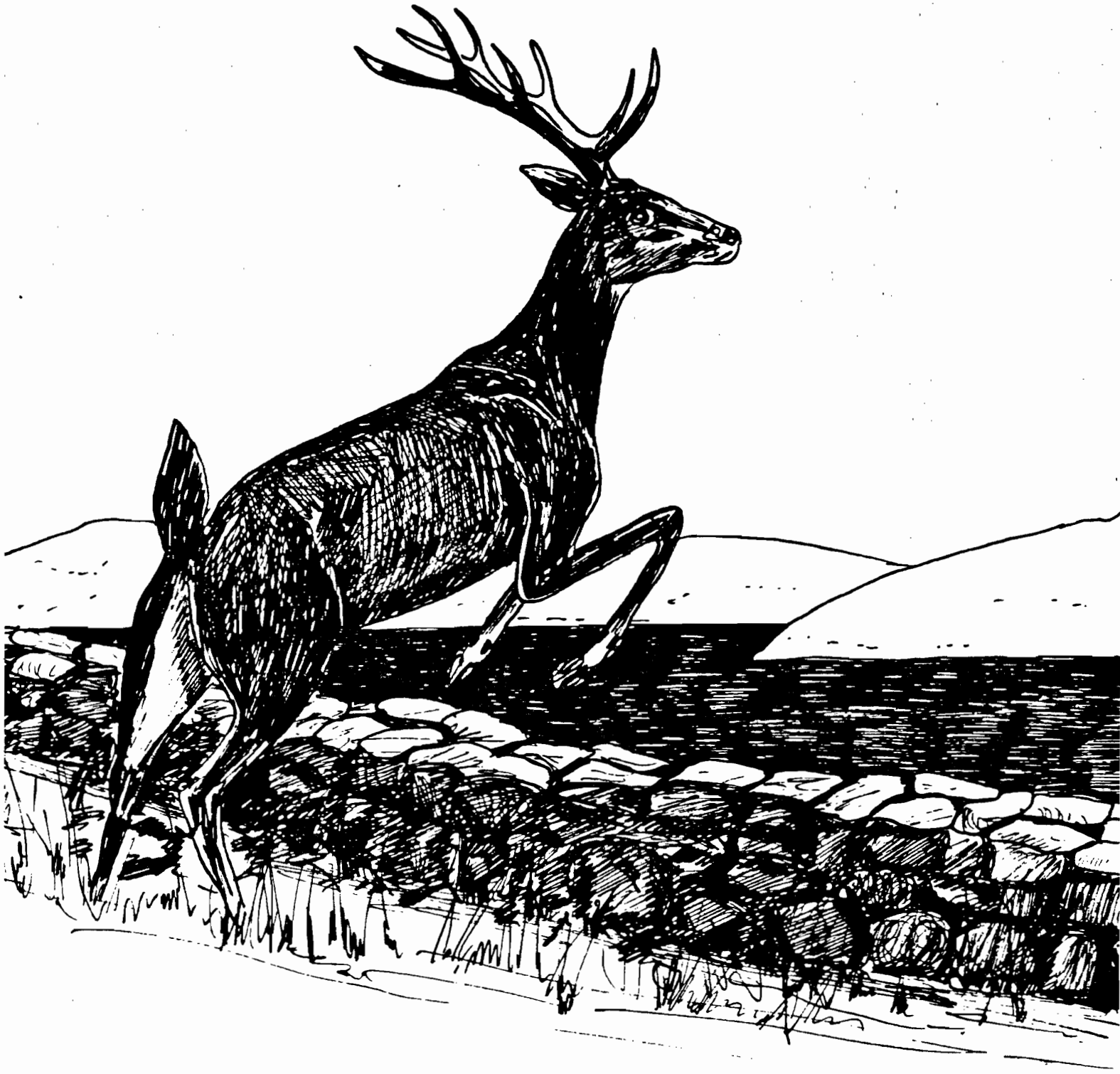
When young John Montgomery had an opportunity to herd sheep to Morvern and the hope of a real job in the west of Scotland, it was the chance of a lifetime. He left the Lowlands and his family behind. John, with some other single boys from the area and their prized border collies, herded thousands of sheep Northwest -- up the River Nith Valley, past Glasgow and along Loch Lomond, over the hills past Loch Long and Loch Finnes. At Bonawe they barged the sheep across Loch Etive on a flatboat and headed north for the long walk around Loch Linnhe. At Corran they put the sheep on the ferry boat, finally arriving at Lochaline several days later.

John Montgomery was proud of his "Lowland heritage," but somehow he knew that he was destined to live in the Western Isles for the rest of his life. When he met Mary McCallum, John felt it was one of the best days of his life. They were married on a beautiful spring day, June 6, 1848, and soon the little sheepherder's house called Alltaehanaich became their home. They named their children after parents and grandparents. The names John, Janet, Anne, Isabelle, Mary, Lachlan, William, George, Alexander, Tom, Duncan, James, Donald, Euphemia and others, were then, and continue to be, the names of the Montgomery and Munro descendants.

Alexander and the Exciting News

Alexander Munro could hardly believe that his ears were hearing what they heard. The foreman on the job was extremely proud of the work Alexander had been doing, and soon he would be promoted. He had long yearned to join "the men" and learn to cut stone instead of carrying the tools for the carvers. Within just a few days he could join the men in the stone yard. Alexander would start his training to learn the stonemasons' trade. He was so excited that he could barely sleep each night. Sure, he would miss the pony and the daily walks to Beaulieu, but even the experiences along the road had become a little boring.

On his last day carrying the tools, Alexander was returning from town quite late in the evening because the blacksmith had been very busy and all the tools hadn't been ready when Alexander arrived. As he passed through the trees near the Beaulieu River bridge, a huge stag jumped from the bushes alongside the road. The deer looked magnificent in the evening light as it walked across the road.



Alexander knew that all the deer belonged to the estate and only family and friends of Lord Lovat could shoot the deer. Watching the big stag jump the low stone wall beside the road and wander into the trees, Alexander thought to himself, "Someday I am going to live somewhere else, somewhere that the Lairds and estate owners don't own all the land, all the houses, all the streams, all the salmon, all the beaches and all the deer."

The New Job and a Replacement

Alexander did well in his new job. He trained ten hours each day, six days a week, for many years. Often he would think of the Montgomery sisters, Euphemia and Janet. Especially Janet. He wished that he could see her again.

Another young man replaced Alexander at his "tool carrying" job. The boy was a friend of Alexander's named Peter McDonald. Peter was a fine young man and they would remain friends the rest of their lives.

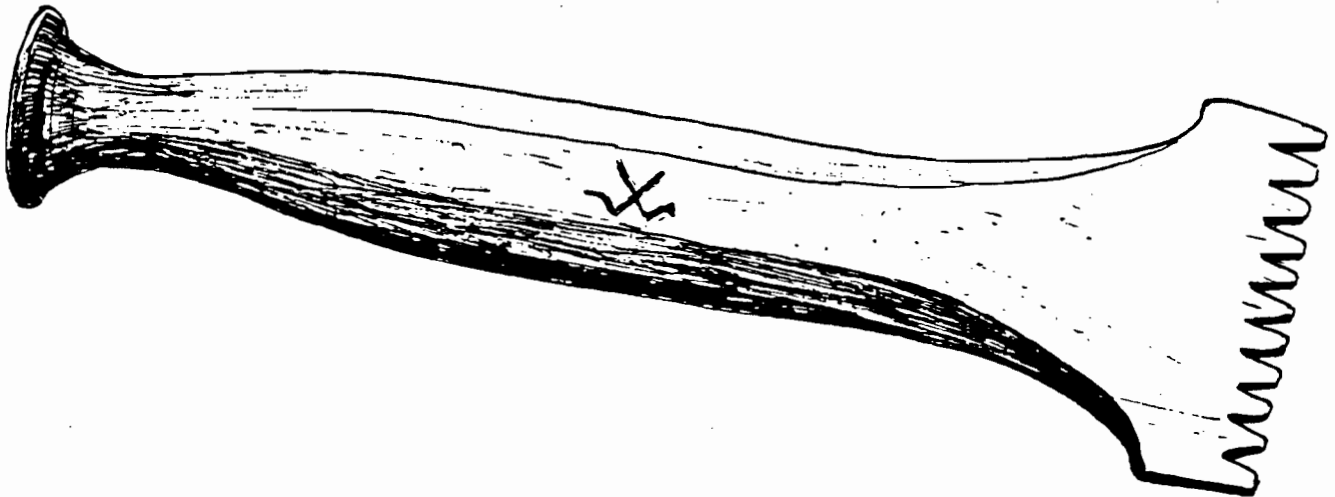
Alexander Makes His Mark

The castle was magnificent as it rose into the air. When Alexander was allowed up on the scaffolding to work, he could see the fields and hills for miles around Uiray (YOUR-ray) Parish. Once in the Autumn, when the leaves had fallen from the trees, Alexander was sure that he saw smoke from the chimneys of Inverness.

His work, always under strict supervision, got better and better. Both he and Peter McDonald had been told that if they kept doing well, it would soon be time for them to receive their "mark." A mark was kind of like a cattle brand. All of the stonecutters had heard about the cowboys in Texas, across the Atlantic Ocean, and how the cowboys put a special mark or brand on each cow to show their ownership of the animal.

Alexander knew that each stonecutter and each stonecarver had his individual mark, sometimes called a "bench" or "banker mark." It was a symbol of pride that they received after apprenticeship and they would always use the same mark. The mark would be put on each major stone they cut or carved for the rest of their lives.

The day that Alexander received his mark, he thought it looked much like a cattle brand. It was a proud moment in his life because he knew that now he was a fully-trained stone mason. That night Alexander asked the local blacksmith to carefully chisel his mark into the handle of each of his stonecarving tools. This is how they looked:



With pride he wrote to Janet Montgomery and told her of his accomplishment. He had "made his mark."

Janet And The Letter

Janet's mother was at the wee Lochaline store a few days later when she was informed that there was mail for the Montgomerys over at the Post Office. It was another short walk down to the pier and on to the Post Office, and she went in haste. It had been raining for more than a week and the sky looked as if another storm was sweeping up the Sound of Mull. Storms were frequent at this time of year, and Mrs. Montgomery didn't want to get caught in a downpour.

The letter surprised Janet's mother. The family didn't receive much mail, and then to find the letter was for Janet caught her off guard. It was postmarked Beaully (BYOO-lee), way up in the Highlands, from someone named A. K. Munro. Who could A. K. Munro be?

On her way home, Mrs. Montgomery passed by the Claggen School. Janet looked quite surprised to learn that the letter was for her. She quickly tore open the envelope as she explained to her mother about the Munro boy she had met at the Fair. Janet read the letter and she felt proud of Alexander's accomplishment in "making his mark." That night she wrote back to him. Her handwriting was beautiful as she told Alexander of her life on the Morvern Peninsula.

Completion of the Castle

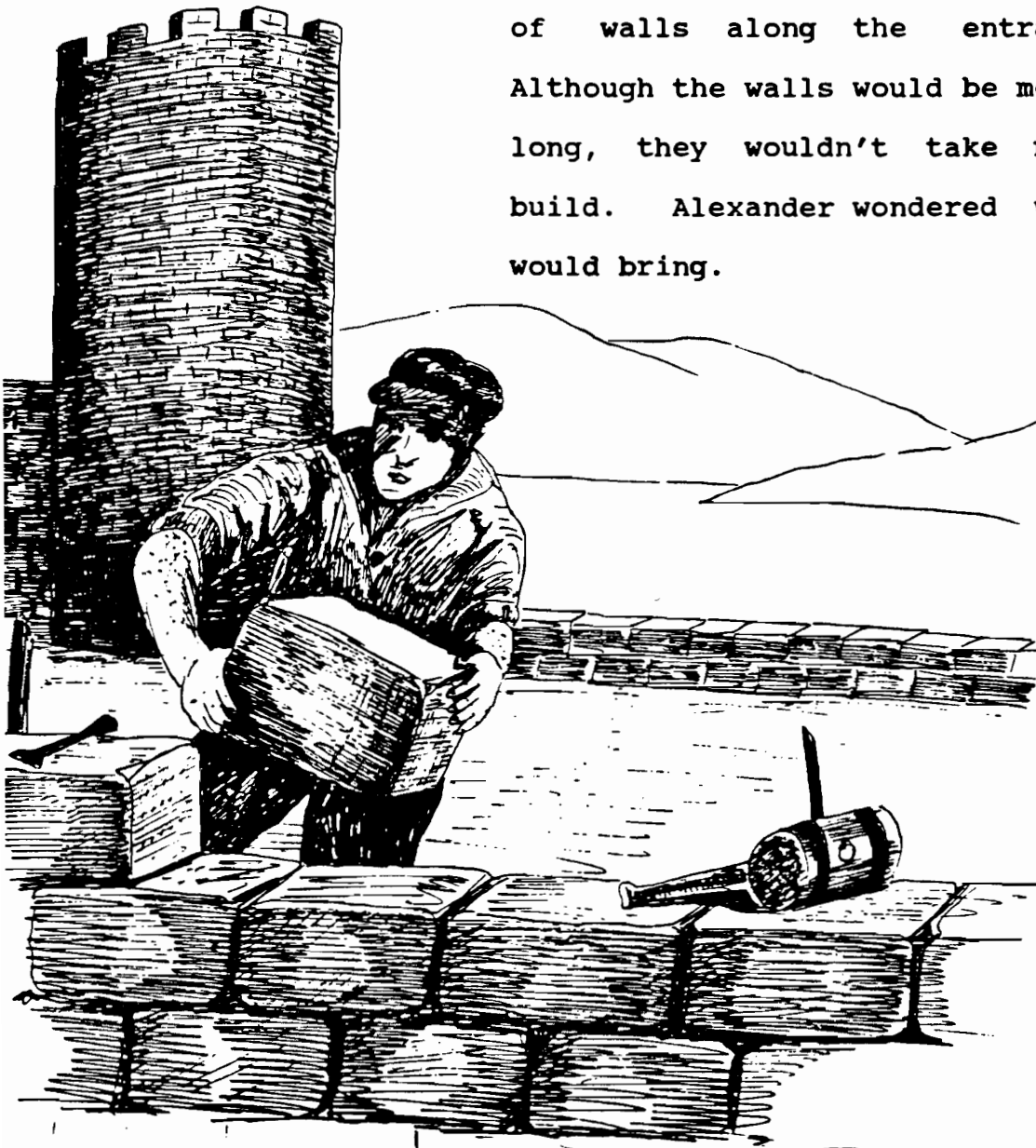
Beaufort Castle looked magnificent in the morning light. Nearly seven years had passed since Alexander had been hired to carry the tools for sharpening.

The chimneys and towers rose several stories into the sky. From the top of the roof on the towers, Alexander could see for miles. It was spectacular, especially when he looked east, down the Beaully River toward Beaully Firth and Inverness. To the north he saw Muir of Ord and the Black Isle.

Alexander's family had lived for generations on the East side of the Black Isle. Their farm overlooked Cromarty Firth and across to the village of Dingwall. Balnabeen (BALL-na-bean) Farm was a beautiful place and Alexander's family had worked for Lord Lovat and lived there for decades.

Alexander looked all around the countryside from high on the castle roof and wondered what his next job would be.

Already the grounds were being prepared around the castle. Trees were planted and dirt sifted for the garden. The only job left for the stonemasons was to utilize all of the scrap stone left over for construction of walls along the entrance driveways. Although the walls would be more than a mile long, they wouldn't take many months to build. Alexander wondered what his future would bring.



The Call to America

Halfway around the world was a new country, the United States of America. Once it was a British colony, and for a country so young, it had already experienced numerous disputes, wars and rebellions.

Alexander read of America in the Inverness newspapers. Nearly every day there was an article about this new land where property was free, jobs were plentiful, and the citizens could actually vote in every election. Alexander was fascinated by stories of the wild west, cowboys, Indians, cattle drives and buffalo hunts. The rich British families were investing huge sums of money in Texas ranches, and relatives of Alexander's friends wrote home about their farms in Virginia and Pennsylvania.

Occasionally he would see a copy of Scotland's most prominent west coast newspaper, the Oban Times. It would always cover happenings in Lochaline and the Morvern Peninsula. That would make Alexander think about Janet Montgomery. What would her future bring? What would his future be?

Janet's brother, Tom, was talking about going to America. Such an adventurer he was, but all of her family knew of the dangers across the sea. Years before, one of the Montgomery boys had died at Miramichi, on the shores of Newfoundland. His name was on the tombstone in the old family plot, down in the Boreland Cemetery, as a constant reminder of the dangers of crossing the wild Atlantic Ocean.

Alexander also read of the other "new lands" where people could make a better life -- of the possibilities in Canada, South Africa and Australia. The world called for young men such as himself to travel the oceans.

A Letter From Janet

A letter arrived from Janet in July of 1885. Her brother, John, had been practicing his penmanship by copying articles from the Glasgow Herald newspaper. The teacher at the Claggen school wanted John's handwriting to become as clear and beautiful as Janet's or Euphemia's.

John was disgusted with the article he had to copy. He slowly inscribed each word:

THE GLASGOW HERALD

July 25, 1885

The recent private performances at the Munich Court Theatre, which were witnessed by nobody except the King of Bavaria, cost 30,000 pounds, and it has been decided that steps must be taken at once to find an end to the King's extravagances, which are bearing heavily on the Country at a time when its finances are by no means in a flourishing condition. The German Emperor and Prince Bismarck will support the Royal Family in any measures which they may decide to adopt. The King has wasted the immense fortune with which he began his reign, and he is said to be in debt to the Public Treasury to the extent of 500,000 pounds.

John added his own thoughts to the article at the end of his assignment: "I wish he was in Alltaehanaich. We could show him how to live on less. John Montgomery"*

* Footnote to children: These papers were found in the attic at Alltaehanich in 1985 -- 100 years later.

The Call For Stonemasons in America

In the Autumn of 1885, the posters went up all over Northern Scotland. An Aberdeen, Scotland, labor recruiter working with a Texas contractor put out the handbills: 75-100 stonecutters were needed in America to work on the Texas state capitol building. All travel expenses would be paid.

Alexander couldn't believe his eyes. A chance to go to America and all expenses would be paid for the travel. He immediately contacted Peter McDonald and the two young men excitedly discussed the possibility. Could they get the job? What would they take with them? How would they travel across the ocean? Where would they land in America? Would they see Indians? There were hundreds of questions to be answered.

The labor recruiter had a few of the answers and it soon became clear that the Texas capitol building must be quite a project.

For nearly a decade the former territory of the United States and before that an independent nation, Texas had been trying to complete a grand capitol building. It would be nearly as large as the United States Capitol in Washington, D.C.

First there had been disputes over location and land ownership. Then the Texas Legislature had argued over how to finance the huge building. Legislators had demanded the entire building be built with stone and lumber "only from Texas." When the Texas limestone arrived on the construction site, arguments broke out over the "discoloration" of the limestone and how the building would look in the years to come.

Finally, a compromise was reached between the contractor and the Governor of Texas, the Honorable John Ireland. It was agreed that Texas granite would be used for the exterior walls of the building. The state would locate the granite and also provide up to 1000 prisoners to help cut the granite, smooth the blocks and help haul them to the capitol site. The "convict labor" proposal made organized labor unions furious. After numerous further disputes, the men of the International Association of Granite Cutters voted 500 to 1 to boycott the job. The contractor sent to Scotland for men. Alexander and Peter knew nothing of these disputes.

The Trip To America Begins

Alexander and Peter were more excited than they had ever been in their entire lives. Eighty-six stonemasons had been hired and would ship out of Paisley on the River Clyde in mid-July, 1886. What an adventure! They got the job.

Alexander carefully packed his stonecarving tools, numerous articles of clothing and his precious bagpipes. Over the years his pipes had meant a lot to him, and he and Peter would occasionally play duets at local gatherings.

The two would travel together toward Glasgow and the Clyde River. Alexander insisted that they take the longer route down the west coast rather than going through Fort William. He hoped to see Janet at Alltaehanaich before he left Scotland.

Saying goodbye to his family and friends was difficult, but he knew that bidding farewell to Janet would be very hard. Speculation runs deep when you are young and in love. Perhaps, just perhaps, if he did well, someday Janet would follow him to America. He left the Highlands forever during the last days of June, 1886.

Alexander and Peter caught wagon rides and walked south toward Morvern. Alexander and Janet had been writing back and forth to one another and she knew he might be hired for the Texas job. Both were nervous about seeing one another again and Alexander decided to surprise Janet with his visit on the way to Paisley.

Disappointed, but filled with anticipation for America

When Alexander and Peter arrived at Alltaehanaich, they were very disappointed. Janet had been reassigned to a school across the Morvern Penninsula. It was a two-day walk and Peter was very nervous about getting to the ship on time.

The two young men left Lochaline going toward Oban, Glasgow and Paisley that same night. Alexander was filled with excitement about the trip to America, but saddened that he had missed Janet. As they walked past Larachbeg, on the road to Lochaline and the ferry, both boys knew that they might never see Scotland again.

Janet hurries to see the ship off for America

Mrs. Montgomery hastened to send word to Janet. Two of the boys were sent overland to Janet's newly assigned school to tell her of Alexander's departure. Traveling over the heather and brush-covered hills was difficult, but they located Janet the next morning. She was told to meet her mother at Lochaline. They would try to reach the River Clyde before Alexander's ship departed.

"What would she wear? What would she say? What would she give him to remember her by?" These questions rushed through Janet's head as she bid goodbye to the school children.

Janet hoped and prayed to see Alexander before he left Scotland.

The End of Part One

Next Year: Janet's Rush to the River Clyde

Alexander's Departure

The Ship to America

Texas

Kansas

Seattle

Crystal Springs