

“A Beloved Mother”

Isabella (Walker) McCulloch was the beloved wife of Rev. & Dr. Thomas McCulloch and mother of the nine McCulloch children she bore to well-known Pictou educator and reformer. Unfortunately, not many records of all nine children have survived throughout history. The only children whose names and lives were recorded, even though small or miniscule, were the elder sons, (the first three that were born in Scotland), Michael, William and David and three other sons born in Pictou, Robert, Thomas Jr. and James Walker McCulloch. Robert McCulloch died of an unfortunate accident of scalding as an infant. He would have been under two years of age at the time he passed. Records neglect to give any more information other than that. As was usual in the 17th and 18th centuries, names of women, including some wives (if not “important”) and daughters were often excluded in official records besides the obvious birth records that rarely survived the trial of time. What is recorded is that alongside the six sons, there were three Miss McCulloch’s. In order by birth, all three would have been older than James Walker, as he was recorded to be the last and youngest son of Thomas and Isabella. The only daughter that has been recorded is one Elizabeth McCulloch who had unfortunately died of consumption in her youth. The only other “records,” if family tales and rumors can be considered trustworthy records, say that one of the two other unnamed daughters might have been called Helen McCulloch, however there is not enough evidence to back up that claim.

What is a well-known fact is that Isabella was a beloved wife and mother of the McCulloch family. Her son, William McCulloch had fortunately written a biography of his father titled “The Life of Thomas McCulloch, D.D.” in 1920, which continues to be the most appreciated source of information and genealogy of the McCulloch family.

Within it, William did not hold back tender words when describing his beloved mother Isabella, saying...

Of our mother it may be enough to say that she was all that could be desired in a parent. Her character as a Christian did not manifest the bustling discipleship of today, but rather was the kind that regarded divinely appointed duties, and not self-made ones, as possessing the first claim. Gentle, cheerful, and hopeful, she tried to cultivate in her family the same spirit; she bore with patience the toils and privations of a minister’s home in Nova Scotia, ever looking to see if there was not some bright side to the darkest cloud, and hoping for better times. – As was her life so was its close. At evening time it was light... Standing by her side, believing that her warfare was over, I gently laid my hands upon her forehead and touched her eyes. Once more those eyes unclosed, and gazing for a moment upon those around with a look of intense longing, she quietly passed away. (Halifax, Oct. 9th, 1847) Excerpt taken from: McCulloch, William. *The Life of Thomas McCulloch D.D.* Halifax: Dalhousie, 1920. (Citation: Chapter II, pg. 14.)