

This 'Genealogy Gem' was written by Tim MacKenzie. Tim is from Pictou and a member of the McCulloch House Museum & Genealogy Centre. When he is not enjoying time with his grandchildren, restoring his heritage home, or working at Michelin Tire, he is researching Pictou County's history, especially its rich genealogy. Tim is also Nova Scotia's Commissioner for Clan MacKenzie and has been known to don the Ancient McKenzie kilt.

A long-forgotten story of George Sutherland from Six Mile Brook, Pictou, and the Civil War.

George was born at Six Mile Brook in 1833 to William and Christina Sutherland who had moved there two years earlier from the East River. George attended a one room schoolhouse with the other children in his family and surrounding area. As he grew, he helped with chores on the farm and would sometimes work for James Barry, a Miller and neighbour. James kept a diary and would mention George now and then. Barry would note when George was there cutting shingles, for example. In 1855, George's father became ill, and according to Barry's diary, he kept on working and making his way until a week before his death in August 1857.

This was a turning point for George and his brothers. The farm was in debt and they were struggling to make ends meet. After four years, he decided to join the Union Army and left the farm in the care of his two brothers and mother, who were all still living there according to the 1861 census. George headed off to join in February 1862 and was paid \$13 a month. He enlisted on February 4th and was mustered in on April 2nd as a private in the 30th infantry "C" Company. He listed his residence as Lowell, Massachusetts. It would not be long before he saw fighting as this unit was involved in five battles in six months including the battle of Fredericksburg in which 183 of their men were killed or wounded.

Meanwhile, back home, folks were going about their business and were updated weekly of the battles in full detail from the local paper. It was not only George fighting in the war, but many young men from around the county had joined, including John and Roderick McKenzie, who lived just up the road from George.

As the war kept raging on, George no doubt became a seasoned soldier over the next two years, and as such he would be entitled to leave. At some point he found the love of his life, a lady by the name of Miss Mary Jane Mclean from Prince Edward Island. It is unclear how or where they met, but they fell in love and were married on March 28th, 1864 in Lowell, Massachusetts and made their home on Appleton Street. Everything was looking good for the young couple. The end of the war was in sight, but when the honeymoon was over it would be back to the fight, which this time was in the Shenandoah Valley.

Back home in the town of Pictou they were getting ready for one of the biggest shows the town had ever seen. The Slaymakers & Nichols Olympic Circus was to be held on the Patterson Field which is where the present-day Hector Arena is located. According to James Barry's diary, "*We seen the show entirely and a great show it was, nearly 4000 seeing the show at once inside the tent and 10,000 outside that could not get in. They had also pictures of the war and portraits, or rather photographs of the generals of both sides*" - August 29th 1864.

As this was taking place, George and his fellow troops were preparing for one of the biggest engagements of the war known as "The Third Battle of Winchester." It would start on September 19th, 1864 and involve a total of 54,000 men.

On Sunday, the 18th General Early (Confederate) moves a division of troops from Bunker Hill to Martinsburg, to which General Sheridan (Union) finds out and moves his divisions around through the night and tells his men to be ready on a moments notice. Then the word is given at 3:00 am for one division to move and at 5:00 a 2nd moves into position. There was no doubt that they caught Gen. Early completely by surprise. – *The Pictou News*

This was just the beginning of a three-day battle in which 8,630 men would lose their lives. An advancement started at 12:00 with four different lines moving forward. The two corps advanced in splendid style with drum beating and colors flying presenting such an imposing spectacle in which has seldom been witnessed in the present war. The most experienced staff officers declared they had never before witnessed so truly grand a spectacle. – *The Pictou News*

What would be going through the mind of George as he waited for the order to advance? Growing up in rural Pictou County, working on the farm, hanging out with friends along the brook, moving to America, two years a soldier and just five months married, and now at 31 years of age on a field far from Six Mile Brook with men, who are by now your brothers, waiting for that word.

It was given and the fighting had started at about 600 yards apart our artillery opened a furious cannonade throwing shells and shot into the opposite woods where the enemy could be seen moving up reinforcements. While moving forward to within 200 yards the enemy lines the Rebels opened a furious cannonade with grape canisters from two batteries which they had kept secret, they ploughed through our advancing lines, mowing down a large number of our men. – *The Pictou News*

It was September 19th and the last for George, who was among those killed on that first day. His new bride, Mary Jane, was with child. A son, who was born on January 11th, 1865, and named George. Mary Jane Sutherland remained in Lowell for a few years running their home on Appleton Street as a boarding house. After time she moved back to P.E.I. She passed in 1909 never marrying again and was buried next to her George in Lowell, Massachusetts.

Word made its way back to Six Mile Brook on October 9th and Barry writes about it in his diary. A small death notice is printed in the *Pictou News*, the same paper that had precise detail of all the battles throughout the war, on October 25th, 1864. The last words on George were, "Killed in the battle of Berryville. In Shenandoah Valley, Virginia, on the 19th of September, George Sutherland of Six Mile Brook, West River, County of Pictou aged 31 Years."