

The McDonald Family

You will find very few characters in fur trading history to rival the exuberance, importance or colorful impact of Angus McDonald, fur trader at Hudson's Bay Fort Colvile. In 1861 Charles Wilson, the Secretary of the British Columbia Boundary Commission, wrote about the McDonald family leaving from the fort on a hunting expedition. Wilson took note of Angus Macdonald's "French half-breed" wife Catherine Baptiste, who led the party, "perched on a curious saddle used by women here...the baby swinging in its Indian cradle from the pommel." Behind her was Macdonald's eldest daughter, "Miss Christine who is about 17*, with her gaily beaded leggings and moccasins and gaudy shawl flying in the wind." Bringing up the rear was Macdonald, positioned on a buffalo-skin runner, "surrounded by a crowd of Indians and half-breeds, to which added some 40 or 50 pack horses and spare animals rushing wildly about."

Angus MacDonal (Angus's used this spelling at times, although most articles use "McDonald") was in charge of HBC Fort Colvile from 1856 to 1871 and was there often before those dates. He had 12 children by his Métis wife Catherine. He was the last trader at the fort for all practical purposes and no history of HBC Fort Colvile would be valuable without exploring the many facets of this remarkable man and his very impressive family.

Angus did many things well. He brought from Scotland his bagpipes and some books. He had a classic education in literature and wrote both extensive accounts poems about his adventures. He rose from humble beginnings in the Hudson's Bay Company to become a Chief Trader at HBC Forts Colvile and Connah. He married a Métis woman, Catherine, who was 1/2 Nez Perce, 1/4 Mohawk, and 1/4 white, the daughter of Baptiste "Coquin" Bonaparte and Margaret De Naie. She was the cousin of Chief Eagle-of-the Light and kin to Chief Looking Glass. Angus preferred to live in a teepee with Catherine. Not only did he learn the native languages, he learned to hunt elk, buffalo, moose and other large game with them. Riding a variety of horses, he was an excellent marksman both while hunting and fighting occasional skirmishes.

In McDonald's immediate family, daughter Christine draws the most attention. A very good account written by Jack and Claire Nisbet is on HistoryLink (<https://www.historylink.org/File/9802>). Largely based on an interview with William S. Lewis in 1917 when Christine was 70 years old, this account also references letters that Christine exchanged with former Indian Agent W.P. Winans in 1903 that clarify her adherence to principles of lady-like demeanor taught to her by her father, Angus. But it also details her horsemanship, bravery and responsibility while preserving a leather satchel of her father's papers even after being swept into a river when a raft fell apart; taking over the reins on a wagon full of supplies when the hired driver's hands froze; or carrying a valise of gold dust on a diplomatic trip with her father to Astoria. Her tales include accounts of Isaac Stevens, Governor of Washington, guest of the McDonalds and eventually a sworn enemy of the Hudson's Bay Company; Captain McClellan, surveyor for the transcontinental Pacific Railway, Yakima Chief Kamiaken, who Angus advised not to go to war with the United States; Doc Perkins: who married, Sophia, the daughter

of Able-One (Silverado 11/2021), L.W. Meyers, who founded what is now Kettle Falls and who restored grain milling at Meyers Falls, Spokane Gary and many more notable historic figures. Christina Lake and Christina Creek just north of Laurier in British Columbia are named after her.