

# **The McDowall Saga**

by  
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Occasional Paper of the Historical Society of the Reformed Church in America  
No. 6

# **The McDowall Saga**

A Story of Three Generations

**John McDowell**  
Scottish Pioneer

**The Rev. Robert J. McDowall**  
Pioneer Missionary of the  
Reformed Church in America

**The Rev. John R. McDowall**  
Pioneer Evangelist

by  
**Donald R. Baird**

# Dedication

Dedicated to the memory of  
David Guthrie Baird and Christina MacGregor  
my great-grandparents  
who immigrated to the United States  
from Scotland in the nineteenth century.

Donald R. Baird  
Summer 1997

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# Preface

Having served the Regional Synod of Albany and the Reformed Church in America since 1990, I was granted a sabbatical over a period between Memorial Day and Labor Day 1997. Never before had I been given the opportunity to do research simply for the joy of it. The paper which follows is not intended to be a scholarly work, although I have made every attempt to provide citations so that scholars who wish to follow any leads of interest will be pointed in the right direction. I was able to make corrections in the McDowell story and it is possible that I may have uncovered some new facts. Often discoveries became very exciting.

History is not usually written as analysis. History is normally the retelling of a story. The story-teller colors that story injecting his or her own agenda and emotion. Here, in Part II I hope not to re-tell a narrative better told by others; but instead deal with history as a predictor of events yet to come.

The focus of my sabbatical was originally centered on the remarkable story of the Rev. Robert James McDowell, pioneer missionary of the Reformed Church. In addition, I wanted to examine issues in the light of history which related to my work with the Regional Synod of Albany and the Reformed Church in America. This secondary goal was accomplished, at least to some extent, in the middle portion of this paper, Part II. (See also the discussion questions in the Appendix.)

My sabbatical focus grew in unexpected ways. Along my sabbatical journey, I encountered two other McDowalls: John McDowell (Robert's father) and John R. (Robert's son—see the note on the spelling of McDowell, p. x) The stories of these other McDowell men need to be told as well. All three were pioneers. All three were strong, stubborn men willing to march to the beat of different drummers. All three: very different and yet very much alike. Family dynamics, being what they are, influenced each for better or ill. Thus, the title of my paper: The McDowell Saga.

It was not my intention to write a long paper or book about the McDowalls during my sabbatical. What began as simple note-taking for a sabbatical report just grew and grew. However, publishing a paper in this form or as a book may happen

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in the future. I will continue to research the McDowell story. There are many questions left to be answered. The research may even become a focus for my future retirement.

One of my sabbatical objectives was to re-visit the places where the Rev. Robert James McDowall had ministered in his pioneering missionary work. Although I was unable to revisit every locale and community in which he preached, I was able to get a feel for the land he came to love. Most of the communities he served are probably no larger today than they were two hundred years ago—some are perhaps smaller. Most of the little hamlets today include a church building—usually a congregation of the United Church of Canada. Typically, there are several houses, a town hall, and a small store. Some of the communities are located in fairly prosperous farmlands. Most, however, are little more than wide places in the road. There was one surprise. I found, in two of these small communities, Christian Reformed Churches. Congregations of the Presbyterian Church in Canada were found only in the larger of the cities. The miracle and wonder is, given the small size of the communities, the Church exists at all. The places I visited are included in Appendix 2.

# Acknowledgments

I wish to thank first the people who made the time available for a sabbatical: the Personnel and Executive Committees of the Regional Synod, Donald P. Troost, Synod Executive and Bruce Laverman, Director of Evangelism and Church Development Services, Reformed Church in America. I also wish to express special appreciation for the countless numbers of people who I met on my sabbatical journey and who provided me with encouragement and assistance. I will name but a few: Russ Gasero, Archivist, Reformed Church in America, Laura Linder, Archivist, First Reformed Church, Schenectady, New York, Ruth Wright, United Empire Loyalists, Bath, Ontario, Canada, Kim Arnold, Archivist of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, archivists of Queens University, Kingston, Ontario, State of New York Library Archives, Albany, New York and Union College, Schenectady, New York; Katherine Q. Briaddy, Historian, Town of Ballston, Irena Wooton of the Brookside Historical Center, Ballston Spa, New York, Midge Drew who researched the records of Old Saratoga Reformed Church, Schuylerville, New York, the Rev. Sharon Thoms Scholten, for lending some rare books from his collection, Ronald McDowell of Shaftsbury, Michigan (direct descendant of the first John McDowell) who provided insights as a member of the McDowell clan, Victoria Garlanda, volunteer librarian in the Saratoga Room, Saratoga Springs Public Library, and her friend Alice Zetterstrom. Special thanks is extended to Dr. John S. Moir, Emeritus Professor, University of Toronto, whose extensive writings about Robert McDowall helped to generate within me an excitement for my sabbatical project. Dr. Moir also provided very helpful critical comments which helped to strengthen the paper and to make it more accurate. Appreciation is also extended to New Brunswick Theological Seminary for making an apartment available for my use on two different occasions and to the Consistory and staff of First Reformed Church, Schenectady, for granting me the use of air-conditioned office space; Albany Synod support staff, who provided clerical assistance, and the Rev. Allan Janssen, author of *Gathered at Albany*. The second chapter, "The Canadian Experiment," is the place where I first encountered Robert McDowall. And finally, for graciously providing a home away from home while on my first sojourn in Canada, Sam and Shirley Vander Schaaf, Brockville, Ontario, my deepest appreciation.

## A Note on Spelling McDowall

McDowell is a Gaelic name. When translated into English it appears in a variety of ways including McDowell, McDowall, M'Dowell, McDoel, McDole, McDoul and McDowal. In this paper, I have used the spelling McDowell for the first generation and McDowall for the second and third.

Space does not permit an explanation of the Scottish Clan system. This one note is important, however. Clan septs were groups related to a clan. Sometimes a sept included those related by blood and who formed a separate branch of the clan. Sometimes septs were formed when individuals or groups from one clan sought protection of another. McDowell is a sept of the Clan Macdougall.



# Part I

## John McDowell

### Scottish Pioneer

The story begins in that northern-most country of the British Isles—Scotland—the land of heather, haggis, bagpipes, tartans and clans. The story continues within the McDowell clan and a man named John who was born between 1725 and 1730 and raised in that wonderful land. There is not much we know about his life in Dumfriesshire, Scotland. According to McDowell family tradition, he served as an officer in the British army. For unknown reasons, he determined to emigrate to North America after he had married Euphamey Smith (or Graham) about 1750. They settled near what is known today as Saratoga Springs, New York, not long before the birth of their first two children: Elizabeth and Robert. Eventually, the McDowells would have a total of eight children.<sup>1</sup>

In 1768, the same year Robert was born, two Scottish families—the McCreas and the Joneses—”came from New Jersey and settled in the woods on the wild western bank of the Hudson, near and below Fort Edward.”<sup>2</sup> The incident that brought support for the Patriots in 1777, was the murder of Jane McCrea. The story has been told often and is based on her love affair with a Loyalist soldier, David Jones.<sup>3</sup>

The murder, occurring just before the Battle of Saratoga, inflamed the rebels.

Prior to July 27, 1777, Burgoyne’s army had enjoyed a continuous victory march as American fort after fort fell easily into their hands. The American soldiers were disorganized and dispirited while civilians found it advisable to seek Burgoyne’s protection. The barbarous murder of Jane McCrea, however, convinced civilian and soldier alike that Burgoyne could not control

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<sup>1</sup> Genealogical History of the John McDowell Family, provided by Ronald McDowell, a direct descendent. The family tree shows eight children born in Saratoga County, New York, in this order: Elizabeth, Robert, Mary, Margaret, John, Thomas, Alexander and James.

<sup>2</sup> Nathaniel B. Sylvester, *History of Saratoga County, New York* (Interlaken, NY: Heart of the Lakes Publishing, , 1979) pp. 53-54. Hereinafter noted as “Sylvester.”

<sup>3</sup> Katherine Q. Briaddy, *Shadows, The Life and Times of Eliphalet Ball, The Founder of the Town of Ballston*, 1991, p. 69. Hereinafter noted as “Briaddy.”

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his Indian allies and that they could not be guaranteed protection. A wave of indignation spread across the countryside. Many who had previously been neutral or lukewarm toward the American cause now hastened to join the Militia which converged from all sides to defeat St. Leger at Oriskany, Baum at Bennington, and finally, Burgoyne himself at Saratoga. It is the irony of fate that Jeannie McCrea's love for a soldier of the British king led her to her involuntary martyrdom and ignited passions and destroyed the British plan to subjugate the rebelling colonies.<sup>4</sup>

As in all revolutions or civil wars, brother was set against brother, sister against sister, neighbor against neighbor, tribe against tribe. Many Scots were Patriots; others were Loyalists. One of these Loyalists was John McDowell, a neighbor of the McCreas and the Joneses.

Having served as an officer in the British army, John sided with the Loyalists when the Revolution began. Family tradition suggests that his political sentiments caused him to be held early in the conflict by the rebels for a ten month period which climaxed when he was tarred and feathered. This act resulted in his going to Lower Canada (Quebec Province) and joining General Burgoyne's army in Montreal in 1776. In Burgoyne's march south, John participated in the Battle of Ticonderoga. It was ironic, therefore, that John was very near his home and family when General Burgoyne surrendered his army to General Gates following the Battle of Saratoga (near Schuylerville) in October 1777. He was one of 5,791 prisoners taken that day.

A contemporary author who lives today in nearby Ballston Lake, describes the scene:

As the sun was lowering in the autumnal sky, the haggard British Army was led down the road from Saratoga to Albany. Numbering about 3,500, with 1,600 of that being Hessians, the pride of King George shuffled along. Previous to this day, there was rain, fog and cold. The soldiers were dirty, demoralized and forced to withstand utter humiliation before the eyes of the rebels.

Victorious Americans lined the road to Albany for miles on each side. They had been marched out of camp to witness the spectacle. The Stars and Stripes was carried at the head of their column, and "Yankee Doodle" was fife and drummed over and over again, raising their spirits even higher. The Americans, some with uniforms, others in farmer's garb, stood tall as the soiled, damp, dirty and defeated army of Gentleman Johnny Burgoyne passed by, certainly a memorable event!<sup>5</sup>

John McDowell was held as a prisoner of war for the next two years in an Albany jail. All his property, except one cow and about one hundred acres of land, was confiscated. Following his term in prison, he was confined on this land except when

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<sup>4</sup> Violet B. Dunn, Editor. *Saratoga County Heritage*, Saratoga County, 1974, p. 460. Hereinafter noted as "Dunn."

<sup>5</sup> Briaddy, pp. 77-78

he was forced to appear in Albany before the Committee of Safety (a.k.a. Committee of Correspondence.) “In this condition, he assisted Scouts from Canada ‘all that lay in his power.’” John followed his conscience and suffered as a result. There is a family tradition that the Battle of Saratoga was fought on McDowell lands. <sup>6</sup>

There are several historical sources supporting portions of this story. The *Minutes of the Commissioners for Detecting and Defeating Conspiracies in the State of New York* have this notation: “McDugall (McDowell), John, of Saratoga, tory suspect, confined in Albany jail, 1789.” <sup>7</sup> The minutes of April 18, 1778 contained a list of twenty-three men, including John McDowell, “having some time been Confined by the Committee of the County of Albany for being Persons disaffected to the Cause of America and whose going at large may be dangerous to the State.” <sup>8</sup> The committee met again on May 26, 1778 and the names of nine men were listed including “John McDugall of Saratoga. . . confined in this Goal against whom we have no particular Charges—Ordered that Letters be wrote to the Chairmen of the different Committees from whence those Persons are come, to send to us such Charges as they may have against them.” <sup>9</sup>

In addition, the National Genealogical Society’s *American Loyalist Claims* notes, “McDougal, John, Albany Co., N. Y. Was imprisoned ten weeks at Albany before joining 82nd Regt. . . Leased farm of 14 acres in Saratoga Patent. . . On January 7, 1788, Alexander Munro of White Creek, Albany, Co., (said) that he was near neighbor to (John McDowell) in 1777 and knew him to own a yoke of oxen (and) was present when they were publicly sold after Burgoyne’s defeat.” <sup>10</sup>

We know that John settled in the Saratoga area, but where did the McDowell family live? According to Ronald McDowell, (direct descendant of John’s son, Thomas), Thomas’s children attended School #7 in the Town of Northumberland and that the McDowell house was located south of the school. An undated map (c.1856) of Northumberland Township, locates School No. 7 on what is now called Homestead Road. The land to the immediate south of the school house was owned by Thomas McDowell. Ronald McDowell believes it was the land which had belonged to John.

According to information provided by J. W. McDowell of Quebec, the 1790 first census of the United States had this entry:

Saratoga Town - John McDoel  
(in his household)

2 white males (16 years+)

<sup>6</sup> McDowell family tradition and quotation is derived from conversations and materials provided by Ronald McDowell and private correspondence of John W. McDowall of Hudson Heights, Quebec, dated August 30, 1982

<sup>7</sup> Victor Hugo Paltsits, Editor. *Minutes of the Commissioners for Detecting and Defeating Conspiracies in the State of New York, Albany County Sessions, 1778-1781*, Vol I: 1778-1779 (Albany, NY: State of New York, 1909), p. 139. Hereinafter noted as “Conspiracies”

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 127-128

<sup>10</sup> Peter Wilson Coldham, *American Loyalist Claims*, Vol. I, (Washington, DC: National Genealogical Society, 1980), p. 310

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5 white males (under 16)  
2 white females  
no slaves

The 1800 census included this data:

Town of Northumberland <sup>11</sup> - John McDoel  
(in his household)

4 white males (16 - 26 years)  
1 female (10 - 16)  
1 female (under ten)  
1 female (over 45)

(was not McDowell himself counted?)

An irony of history is that there were two John McDowells who immigrated from Scotland to the Albany area about the same time. Sometimes it is almost impossible to determine from archival records to which John reference is made. Every attempt has been made, however, not to cloud the McDowall Saga, being recorded here,

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<sup>11</sup> Dunn, p. 458. The Township of Northumberland was created from Saratoga on March 15, 1798 and at that time included the future towns of Wilton, Moreau, and part of Corinth and Hadley.

with erroneous information. Here is one reference to the other John: minutes of commissioners for conspiracies of meeting in Albany on Sept. 14, 1779 state "John McDole of this City (was charged) for aiding and assisting Samuel McFarlan who was apprehended as a Spy from the Enemy in Making his Escape from the Gaol & has after his Escape harbored & secreted him in his House." John McDole appeared and denied the charge and was released on bail of £300.<sup>12</sup>

Following his release from jail and his confinement, John continued his life as a farmer. He did not elect to follow thousands of other Loyalists to Canada but may have continued to be harassed by his neighbors for being a Tory. He watched as the lands and properties of his former Tory compatriots who had fled to Canada were acquired by the rebels from the State of New York under the Act of Confiscation.

The town of Saratoga was organized by an act of the Legislature, March 7, 1788, as one of the towns of Albany county. It had a district organization from 1772, but early records appear to have been lost. There is a record of the town meeting of 1790, held at the house of Archibald McNeil on April 6, 1790. Records of that meeting show the names of those elected to a variety of offices. Listed under "other names appearing among estray notices and cattlemark records" is the name of John McDowell.<sup>13</sup> It is obvious that towns like Saratoga continued to monitor known Tories following the Revolution. McDowell must have suffered persecution for his political beliefs for years.

Considering the large numbers of McDowells listed on the baptism and marriage entries of the Church Records of the Old Saratoga Reformed Church, Schuylerville, it is logical that the McDowell family home was located near-by. Less than two years before his death, John McDowell was received into the membership of Old Saratoga Reformed Church, Schuylerville, New York, by confession of faith on December 29, 1799.<sup>14</sup> Why did John wait so long to take this step? Was it fear of the approaching millennium or a fear of death?

John died in the spring of 1801. Where he and his wife Euphamey are buried remains a mystery. Research suggests at least two possibilities: Hillside Cemetery, Burnt Hills, or the Leslie Farm Cemetery near Saratoga Lake.

John R. McDowall, their grandson, while a student at Union College wrote in 1826:

A little before the term closed, being in feeble health, I visited Ballston. The waters I thought conducive to my health. On my journey I passed the place where my father was born—where *his* parents died—and where his parents sleep...On the Sabbath I returned to the very spot owned by my ancestors, and lectured in the forenoon to a small assembly, in the place of a Baptist elder, and in the after part of the day to a very crowded house...At the close

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<sup>12</sup> Conspiracies, p. 413

<sup>13</sup> Sylvester, p. 266

<sup>14</sup> From the Church Records of Old Saratoga Reformed Church, Schuylerville, New York, Midge Drew, Church Historian.

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of the day I returned to the Lake, but was disappointed in getting up a meeting for prayer.”<sup>15</sup>

If John R. were to travel from Schenectady to Ballston Spa today, he would probably go east from Schenectady on New York Route 146 and then north on Blue Barns Road to the hamlet of Burnt Hills, four miles north of where the Rexford bridge crosses the Mohawk River. He would notice the Burnt Hills Baptist Church on his left which was founded in 1783. Adjoining the church is Hillside Cemetery where the first burial occurred in 1782. Existing records list only those buried with headstones, so there is no indication that John and Euphamey McDowell are buried there. Yet, the existence of the church, the location of the cemetery and the evidence of John R. McDowall’s journal would indicate that John and Euphamey are buried in Burnt Hills. If John R. had continued his journey to Ballston Spa, more than likely he would have traveled through the hamlet of Ballston Lake and passed that body of water, thus the reference in his journal to “the Lake.”



Hillside Cemetery, Burnt Hills, New York

The problem, however, is that no evidence leads one to think that John McDowell ever lived or owned property in Burnt Hills. Indeed, Burnt Hills is far removed from the township of Northumberland where there are indications the McDowell family lived.

There is a possibility that John R. may have been mistaken in his journal. His destination may have been Saratoga Springs which was also well known for its

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<sup>15</sup> *Memoir and Select Remains of the late Rev. John R. M'Dowall, the Martyr of the Seventh Commandment, in the Nineteenth Century*, (New York: Leavitt, Lord & Co., 1838), p. 67. Hereinafter noted as “Memoir.”

sulfur "waters." There is a small cemetery located at the corner of Inlander and Sarazen Streets in "Interlaken," a residential development overlooking Saratoga Lake. The cemetery is on what used to be called the Frank Leslie farm. Again, there is no headstone to indicate that either John or Euphamey are in fact buried there. But there is a headstone of John McDowell, John's son, which reads: "John McDowall, son of John & Euphamey McDowell and husband of Elizabeth died Feb 25, 1844, 69 yr 2 mo 11 days." <sup>16</sup> There are some who believe that this cemetery is the final resting place of John and Euphamey.

Problems with this conjecture are several. The Frank Leslie cemetery is located too far geographically from where we believe John (the elder) to have lived in the Town of Northumberland. Also, this is the final resting place of John (the younger's) in-laws and probably does not include his parents. In fact, the cemetery may not have existed when John (the elder) died. The earliest gravestone in this cemetery is dated 1813 (Comfort Greene wife of Increase died Aug. 15, 64 years.) According to Durkee, there are five Greenes buried here out of a total of thirteen persons. John (the younger's) wife was Elizabeth Greene. The final resting place of John and Euphamey remain a mystery.

The will of John M<sup>c</sup> Dowall Sec<sup>t</sup>. 115.

In the name of God amen I John M<sup>c</sup> Dowall of the County of Saratoga State of New York farmer being weak in body but sound and disposing mind and memory and being desirous to settle my worldly affairs whilst I have strength and capacity so to do do make and publish this my last will Testament hereby revoking and making void all former wills by me at any time heretofore made and first and principally I commit my soul unto the hands of the Creator who gave it and my body to the Earth to be interred at the discretion of my Executors herein after named And as to such worldly Estate whome with it hath pleased God to intrust me I dispose of the same as followeth that is to say I will and direct that all my debts be

Portion of John McDowall's will

<sup>16</sup> In 1875, C. E. Durkee recorded all the epitaphs in Saratoga County, New York, cemeteries. This reference is from Durkee, Vol 1, pp. 241-43, where Durkee listed those buried in the Frank Leslie Farm cemetery.

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An inventory of all and Singular the Goods chat-  
tels & credits which were of John Mc Dowall deceased  
taken by us at the request of the Executors of the  
Said John Mc Dowall deceased this thirtieth day of  
May 1801. viz.

One lot of land containing one hundred & twenty six acres & seventeen perches	£ 252:0:0
one lot of land containing Seventy seven acres and an half and six perches	77:10:0
One span of horses	25:0:0
Two beds and bedding	12:0:0
One bunk and bedding	3:0:0
Two tables	2:8:0
Candle Stand	0:8:0
Six Chain at 8/ a piece	2:8:0
One Loom	2:8:0
One Kettle	0:8:0
Twenty Barrels at 1/ a piece	1:0:0
one bag at 3/	0:3:0
Two Pickles at 1/6 a piece	0:3:0
Two Scythes and tackling at 8/ each	0:16:0
one add's at 2/	0:2:0
One pair Sleigh Shoes at 12/	0:12:0
One Desk	3:0:0
Sundry books	1:18:0
Two pots at 5/ each	0:10:0
One Bake-kettle	0:8:0
one pair handirons at 8/	0:8:0
Pewter 46/	0:16:0
Crockery 20/	1:0:0

Portion of inventory of John McDowall's estate



As noted earlier, John died during April, 1801. His will is on file in the Saratoga County Surrogate's Office, located in the county seat at Ballston Spa, New York.<sup>17</sup> The content of John's estate is also on file.<sup>18</sup>

It is highly likely that the McDowell family belonged to and attended worship at the Old Saratoga Reformed Church, Schuylerville, New York. Unfortunately this cannot be proven conclusively, since church records were lost during the Revolutionary War. Yet there are indications that the McDowell Family considered Old Saratoga as their church home. Church records include a significant number of McDowell family entries.<sup>19</sup>

Before we conclude John's story, we note another irony. It was on February 29, 1812, that John McDowell (the younger) enlisted as a Lieutenant in the 63rd Regiment of the United States Army.<sup>19a</sup> Here we have John (the son) joining the army as an officer following in his father's footsteps, but serving on the other side. No records discovered to date indicate how John may have become involved in any specific way in the War of 1812.

As we now move from the story of John McDowell to consider the saga of his eldest son, the Rev. Robert J. McDowall, we are provided with a segue as we note a connection Robert had with the Old Saratoga Church. Church records indicate that in May 1800, "Mary, wife of John Smyth excluded and restored by Rev. Robert

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<sup>17</sup> Will Book #1, pages 113-115, dated April 8, 1801 and probated May 18, 1801. It names his wife, Euphamey and eight children: Robert (his eldest son,) John, Thomas, Alexander, James. Mary, wife of John Smith (or Smyth); Elizabeth, wife of David Lindsey; and Martha, wife of Daniel Lindsey. Robert, John, and Alexander were appointed executors. (Letter of Testamentary found on page 116.) John's will requests that he be buried, but does not give any specific directions as to where.

<sup>18</sup> A handwritten inventory of his estate is filed in Box 002, #32. The estate included one lot of land containing one hundred and twenty six acres & seventeen perches (£252), one lot of land containing seventy-seven acres and an half and six perches (£77 10s), one span of horses (£25), two beds and bedding (sic) (£12), one bunk and bedding(sic) (£3), two tables (£2 8s), plus one candle stand, six chairs, one loom, one kittle, twenty barrels, two sickles, two scythes, one desk, two pots, sundry books, pepper mill, one pleasure sleigh, one ox sleigh, one horse sleigh, two ploughs and irons, twenty six sheep, one yoke of oxen, five cows, two three year old heffers (sic), four yearlings, 14 hogs, 7 pigs, one waggon (sic), and two calves. His entire estate was valued at £540 2s 6p.

<sup>19</sup> As cited before, John McDowell was received into membership by confession of faith on December 29, 1799. Martha joined the church November, 1803, and Elizabeth June, 1805. On July 19, 1819, John (son of John and Euphamey) became a member by baptism. Church records further indicate that Thomas married a Mrs. Margaret Williams on December 13, 1803. Other citations include: baptisms of two daughters of Elizabeth and David Lindsey: Anna on February 6, 1793 and Mary, on April 7, 1795. Also baptisms of the children of Martha and Daniel Lindsey: Nelly, on October 14, 1797; Nancy, on December 25, 1800; Robert, on September 26, 1804; and Euphemia, on December 28, 1806. John McDowell and his spouse, Elizabeth Green, had their daughter, Hulda, baptized on July 28, 1804, and their son, Alexander, was baptized on August 2, 1811. Daniel and Margaret (may be second wife or different spelling of Martha) had Daniel baptized on February 19, 1809, and Hannah Moriah baptized on May 29, 1811. Another child (no name listed) was baptized on September 25, 1813. (From the Church Records of Old Saratoga Reformed Church, Schuylerville, New York, Midge Drew, Church Historian.)

<sup>19a</sup> Sylvester, p. 92

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McDowall.”<sup>20</sup> As we will note later, it was in June of 1800, that the General Synod of the Reformed Dutch church received a lengthy report about Robert’s ministry. It is possible that he had returned home for a visit, since he may have known his father was not well. It is also possible that he wished to make himself available to General Synod’s mission committee since General Synod met in Albany. Is it not also possible, that while he was home, his sister Mary turned to him as a “brother confessor,” and admitted a grievous sin? If that is so, then, Robert may have led her to confess it and thus be “excluded” from the Lord’s Table, and then following her repentance to be “restored.”

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<sup>20</sup> *Church Records Old Dutch Reformed Church, Schuylerville 1790 -1857*, Saratoga Room, Saratoga Springs Public Library

## Part II

# Rev. Robert James McDowall Pioneer Missionary of the Reformed Church

Robert James McDowall was born on July 25, 1768,<sup>21</sup> near Saratoga, north of Albany, New York. He was eight years old when the American Revolution began. Little is known about Robert's childhood and youth. One author says, "He grew up to be an earnest, studious boy and his thoughts turned to the church."<sup>22</sup>

Some historians including Dr. John S. Moir, Professor of History, Scarborough College, University of Toronto, and the Historical and Museums Branch, Ministry of Culture and Recreation, Ontario Province, Canada, report McDowall was born in Ballston Spa, New York. The historical roadside marker which is placed at the Sandhurst, Ontario, Cemetery, reads, "Born at Ballston Spa...." This is in error. Ballston got its name from the Rev. Eliphalet Ball, a Presbyterian minister, who arrived in the area about 1770 (two years after McDowall was born) to promote the sale of property and eventually to serve a local church. The town was named after Ball. He had been "indentured by the commissioners of the Kayaderrosseras Patent" in 1770 for one year "in advancing the settlement."<sup>23</sup>

We can make some fairly good assumptions about Robert's childhood, based on what we have learned about his father. It is likely that Robert was born in the frontier cabin his mother and father erected when they first arrived in North America.

Frontier cabins were usually twenty feet long and twenty feet wide. They faced the south, the back shielding the home from the northern winds. These cabins usually had more than one door. A hasty exit was needed because of the threat of Indians and fire. Log cabins were built on stone foundations. A small cellar hole was one which would be used for fruit and root storage.

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<sup>21</sup> John S. Moir, *Robert McDowall, Pioneer Dutch Reformed Church Missionary in Upper Canada, Presbyterian History*, a Newsletter of the Committee on History, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, Vol. 23, No. 1, May, 1979, p.2. Hereinafter noted as "Moir."

<sup>22</sup> Stuart Woods, *Rev. Robert McDowall 1768 - 1841 Authentic record of events in his life*, Queens University Archives, Kingston, Ontario, Canada, p. 2. Hereinafter noted as "Woods."

<sup>23</sup> Briaddy, p.36. Ball originally was given 400 acres of land for his services. Eventually, he became the largest landowner in the area.

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The typical log cabin had beamed ceilings, wide plank floors, plastered walls and small casement windows. Nails were hand wrought. These and other iron necessities were obtained from a blacksmith.<sup>24</sup>

Robert was eight years old when his father left home to join Burgoyne's army. This must have been frightening for a young boy—not only to see his father leave to go off to war, but to participate in a conflict that set neighbor against neighbor. Robert was ten when his father, as a former prisoner of war, was released from jail. According to genealogical records, Euphamey, his mother, had given birth to four other children before the Revolution began. With his father gone, and with so many children to raise, his mother probably relied on Robert to provide a great deal of help. All of these experiences helped to shape the man.

One of the mysteries of Robert's life is how the son of a Scottish pioneer, who fought for the British in what Loyalists call "The First Civil War" would come under the influence of the Reformed Dutch Church. The record shows that in 1790, shortly before his twenty-second birthday, McDowall was licensed to preach by the Classis of Albany of the Reformed Dutch Church, appointed a missionary, and despatched to the Canadian Province of Upper Canada.<sup>25</sup>

This appointment, interestingly, was prior to any college level education. To meet the qualifications for licensure, he probably was tutored by a local Reformed dominie which was fairly common in those days. One possibility was the Rev. Samuel Smith, Pastor of Old Saratoga Church from 1789 to 1801. (We have established that the family probably considered this congregation as their church.) Another possible



View of Kingston, Ontario, from Old Fort Henry

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., pp. 39, 42

<sup>25</sup> Allan J. Janssen, *Gathered at Albany*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), p. 29. Hereinafter referred to as "Janssen."

tutor was the Rev. John Bassett, who pastored First Church, Albany, from 1787 to 1804. Smith had a short, undistinguished career; Bassett, on the other hand, got himself in a bit of a difficulty, was asked to leave First, Albany, and then founded the church in the Boght.<sup>26</sup>

In any case, Robert went out to minister to the Loyalists who had settled a fifty mile stretch along Lake Ontario from Kingston to Belleville. These settlers, numbering about 6,000, came from the Hudson and Mohawk River valleys and fled the country at the time of the American Revolution. His parish, in actuality, was much larger. It stretched from as far east as Osnabruck and Williamsburg (near Cornwall) as far west as York (Toronto,) a distance of 435 kilometers. Because his father John, was a well-known Loyalist, Robert quickly gained the confidence of the Tories now living in Canada. And it was his zeal for the gospel that caused that affection to deepen. It is also possible, since his father was a Tory, that he personally knew some of these settlers.

Before the appointment of McDowall, the General Synod of the Reformed Dutch Church had voiced concerns regarding the welfare of the Loyalists. This was remarkable considering the fact that these Loyalists were former neighbors, friends and church members who were opposed to separation from British rule, were active participants on the side of the British Empire in the war, and had engaged in bloody raids and acts of terrorism in upstate New York.

In 1786, General Synod began to consider reports regarding extension. As the church is prone to do, a committee was formed to examine the issue. Synod that year asked each member of the committee to return to synod the following year



Belleville, Ontario

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<sup>26</sup> Robert Alexander, Historian, First Church, Albany, New York

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with proposals for consideration. In fact, in 1787, two of the committee did just that. (No reports came from the others.) Since all their requested reports were available, synod in its wisdom, postponed for a year any consideration of church extension.

In October, 1788, an “Extension of the Church” committee reported

that in consequence of the progress of the settlement of this country, many of the members of the Reformed Church, and persons pertaining to it, have located themselves in various new settlements, without the pale of established congregations, whereby they are in danger of being led away by destructive errors, or, at least, drawn away from our fellowship; whereas, if gathered together and formed into ecclesiastical societies, they would greatly enlarge the body of our Church. The committee, consider(ed) the state of these dispersed persons.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, as far back as 1788, concerns were raised over the welfare of relocated members of the Reformed Church who had moved into the wilderness as the country grew. Ecclesiastical machinery was put in place to collect and receive moneys to support missionaries. In the General Synod “Missionaries” report in 1794 we read, “The committee to obtain missionaries for the purpose of extending the interest of our Dutch Church in the back country.”<sup>28</sup> The motive for church extension and the securing of missionaries appears to be “conservation” rather than “invitation.” No voice was raised in concern over those who today we call the “unchurched.” The concept of evangelization, defined as sharing the Good News with those who do not know Jesus Christ, seems to have been foreign to General Synod.<sup>29</sup>

Before we return to our story, it might be helpful to recall the historical context of this portion of the McDowall Saga. The new country, the United States of America, was in the process of writing its Constitution between 1787 and 1791. In July of 1788, New York was the eleventh of the original colonies to ratify the Constitution. In 1789, George Washington had begun to serve his first term as President. “In 1790 there were only six cities (Philadelphia, New York, Boston, Charleston, Baltimore and Salem) in the United States with a population of 8,000 or more. . . Wealth was not a conspicuous feature of the United States in 1790. . . Bad roads were one of the

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<sup>27</sup> *Minutes of the General Synod*, October, 1788, pp. 180-81. Hereinafter noted as *MGS*.

<sup>28</sup> *MGS*, June, 1794, pp. 263-64

<sup>29</sup> Is it possible that Calvinism may have been the strongest impediment for evangelism and very possibly be the root reason why the church today continues to support the notion of evangelism but is unwilling to do it? Simplistically, Calvinism is summarized using the acronym TULIP (Total depravity; Unconditional election; Limited atonement; Irresistible grace; Perseverance of the saints.) We will leave it to the theologians to answer the question, “Is the doctrine of limited atonement anti-evangelization?” For a more complete understanding of Calvinism, refer to: M. Eugene Osterhaven, *The Spirit of the Reformed Tradition*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971); I. John Hesselink, *On Being Reformed*, (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Books, 1983); H. Henry Meeter, *The Basic Ideas of Calvin*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1990); John T. McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1954).

penalties that Americans paid for their dispersed settlement. . . Even in the larger towns streets were seldom paved and never cleaned; offal was deposited in the street or thrown off docks. There were outbreaks of typhoid and yellow fever.”<sup>30</sup> In 1803, the territory of Louisiana was purchased from France, and a year later, Lewis and Clark set out to explore the northwest. During this saga, the British Empire and the new country of the United States of America, clashed once again in the War of 1812. Communication and the travel were greatly enhanced with the construction of the first Erie Canal (built between 1817 and 1825) and the opening of railroads.

In the General Synod “Church Extension” report of October, 1789, which listed as its members, John Livingston, Jacob Hardenbergh, and Solomon Froligh, we read:

the Ministerial Brethren of Albany and Schenectady are urgently solicited to endeavor to incline one or more members of their Rev. Classis to visit and preach at the new settlements the present autumn, or at least the coming winter.<sup>31</sup>

We can assume that among the “new settlements” referred to are the Tory/Loyalist settlements in Ontario Province—then called “Upper Canada.” Please note the mention of Solomon Froligh. Later in this paper, questions will be raised regarding his involvement in the non-decision to end the Canadian experiment.

When there is a need, the church is often creative in its planning and strategizing. It appears that many men responded to the appeals for help and did serve as “missionaries in the west” or “in Upper Canada.” Today, we would call them “short-term missionaries.”

The following is an example. According to the *Historical Directory of the Reformed Church in America*,

The Rev. John L. Broeffle, served the Canajoharie (Sand Hill) church from 1784-88. He also supplied a German Presbyterian Church in Williamsburg, Canada from 1785-1815.<sup>32</sup>

Dr. John S. Moir also notes the arrival of the Rev. John Ludwig Broeffle in Upper Canada in 1795. Moir adds that Broeffle eventually settled in Osnabruck and ministered to a German-speaking congregation.<sup>33</sup> Broeffle probably served both the Osnabruck and Williamsburgh churches for the area was settled by German-speaking Palatines from the Mohawk and Schoharie River valleys of New York State.

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<sup>30</sup> Samuel Eliot Morison and Henry Steele Commager, *Growth of the American Republic*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1930), pp. 297-99. Hereinafter noted as “Morison.” This two volume work provides an excellent review of the history of the United States.

<sup>31</sup> *MGS*, October, 1789, p. 199

<sup>32</sup> Russell L. Gasero, *Historical Directory of the Reformed Church in America 1628-1992*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, Co., 1992), p.28

<sup>33</sup> John S. Moir, *Robert McDowall and the Dutch Reformed Church Mission to Canada, 1790-1819*, p. 4. Hereinafter noted as “Moir, John S.”

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With transportation via horseback and canoe, Broeffle certainly didn't commute over a ten year period between Williamsburgh or Osnabruck and Canajoharie. (In 1997, it would take six hours to drive this distance in an automobile.) Obviously, he and the Canajoharie church worked out an agreement which allowed him extensive time to be away from his pulpit. Obviously, Broeffle heeded the call of synod and actually preceded McDowall into Canada.

Following the American Revolution, two major groups of Loyalists fled to Canada.

The first, coming in 1783 by ship from the seaboard colonies to the present-



Osnabruck Centre, Ontario. Osnaburgh was an area in which the Rev. John Ludwig Broeffle ministered and settled.

day Maritime provinces of Canada, was largely composed of well-to-do professional and merchant-class people, 30,000 in number. The second group, less than 6,000 strong, who settled in present-day Ontario, came overland in small groups during the hostilities and had been formed into Loyalists regiments and ranger corps that spent the later years of the war in bloody raids into upper New York. These Loyalists were active participants in the war in a way that the Maritime Loyalists generally were not, and unlike the first group they were most often pioneers who had lost only backwoods farms, rather than shipping fleets, well-stocked warehouses or professional practices.

When the war ended the Loyalist veterans had no possibility of returning to their former homes. Their new home in exile was the colony of Quebec, almost exclusively Roman Catholic and French-speaking, and lacking three essential rights of Englishmen for which both aides in the recent revolution had fought—representative institutions, English common law and freehold





Williamsburg, Ontario. Williamsburg was an area settled by Mohawk Valley, New York, Loyalists.

land tenure. The Loyalists felt both deprived and alienated in such a society and complained that they had fought and sacrificed for the benefits of the British constitution which were now denied them.

The British government responded by dividing the colony of Quebec into two parts—Lower Canada (present day Quebec) including Montreal and eastward to be French, and Upper Canada (now Ontario) west of Montreal through the upper St. Lawrence Valley and the Great Lakes basin, to be a new English colony in the remnant of the British Empire in North America. There, along the shore of the St. Lawrence and also in solid pockets along the north shore of Lake Ontario west of present-day Kingston, the Loyalists were settled in 1784 in blocks, usually by regiments.<sup>34</sup>

In 1798, he (McDowall) came to the Bay of Quinte area in the Midland District, where many of the U.E.L. (United Empire Loyalists) had settled. This was a Royal estate and free grants of land were given to the Loyalists. Royal names, and names of important personages were given to the counties, township and villages in the area. For example, Adolphustown, Ernestown, Fredericksburgh, were the names of the seventh, fifth and second sons of George III. Besides there were Sophiasburg, Ameliasburg, Elizabethtown after

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid. p. 3

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the daughters.<sup>35</sup>

A review of the Minutes of General Synod, indicate that appeals for extending the church came almost yearly:

In 1792, synod heard a request from congregations on the Susquehannah.<sup>36</sup>

In October, 1792, Andrew Gray was appointed a missionary in Hanover and other places along the Susquehannah.<sup>37</sup>

In October, 1793, Mr. Gray reports “that he had resuscitated the congregation in Hanover, and organized a new congregation on the Susquehannah.”<sup>38</sup>

In June, 1794, we read that “Brother Cornelison engages to visit the different settlements in the upper reaches of the Delaware River, as far as the place where the road strikes off to the great bend on the Susquehannah River.” Also, “Brother Ostrander engages to proceed from Catskill to Jericho at the Unadilla, from thence to Schenenas, thence on to (to) Cherry Valley and then



Typical stone house of the Osnabruck and Williamsburg region.

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<sup>35</sup> Woods, p. 2

<sup>36</sup> MGS, May, 1792, p. 231

<sup>37</sup> MGS, October, 1792, p. 240

<sup>38</sup> MGS, October, 1793, p. 248

to Onondaga.”<sup>39</sup>

Finally, in June 1800, the Synod received a major report from the Committee on Missions.<sup>40</sup>

1. That the frontiers of this State in general present a large field for missionary labors; but that the most promising prospects, in this respect, open from Canada. Singular and unexpected success has attended the labors of a missionary, some time since sent out by the Classis of Albany. A committee of that Classis made a report of their January Session, 1799, that the Rev. Mr. McDowall, their missionary to Canada in 1798, had visited a great number of settlements in that country, and had formed into congregations the people of six large districts, who, together with another district, which he did not organize into a congregation, consisted of about 420 or 430 families. He found the people very hungry for the bread of life, and very attentive under the preaching of the Word. He had several invitations to settle, and has since accepted a call from the congregations at Adolphus-town, Earnest-town, and Fredericksburgh, in Upper Canada, among whom he is gone to reside. From all the information which this missionary has communicated, and from other sources of intelligence, it is obvious that the Lord, in his good providence, has opened in that quarter a wide door for the entrance of the Gospel. Letters have been frequently sent to the Classis of Albany, and to individuals in that body, requesting and earnestly praying that our churches would send out faithful servants of the Lord to help them. A letter now in the hands of the committee, dated January 17th, 1800, addressed to this Rev. Synod, makes a very affecting representation of the situation of the people from whom it was sent. It is from the congregation at Elizabeth-town, in Upper Canada.<sup>41</sup> The writers urge the necessity of immediate assistance. They state that the danger of division among them is very imminent, unless some person be sent to their relief. They assert that future efforts will be fruitless, unless their congregations be in a short time supplied, and they beg of this Rev. Body to have compassion on them, and to use every means to answer their wants. They say, if a person were sent from this body who should be accept-

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<sup>39</sup> MGS, June, 1794, p. 264

<sup>40</sup> MGS, June, 1800, pp. 307-9

<sup>41</sup> *The Recorder and Times*, Brockville, Ontario, on March 26, 1965, in an article “Presbyterians Now In 150th Year,” reported on the 149th Anniversary celebration of the First Presbyterian Church, Brockville, then called Elizabethtown, “The first efforts to send Presbyterian ministers to Upper Canada were made by the Dutch Reformed Church in the United States in 1798. Attempts of Presbyterian settlers to have a minister come here were started in 1794 but it was not until 1797 that Rev. James Goodwillie of the Reformed Church in the U.S.A. made a brief visit in the winter to Elizabethtown, as Brockville was then known. A Dutch Reformed congregation was organized as records show the names of Alex Morris, Robert Mclean, Joseph McNish, John McCready, James Miller and Peter Purvis as being the officers of the consistory of Elizabethtown.”

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able to them, they would make an immediate call upon him, and believe that they would be able to raise a large salary, especially as the neighboring congregations are vacant.

(There follows a report concerning the churches in Kentucky.)

3. Your committee further report, that since the beginning of 1798, the Classis of Albany have sent out to different parts six missionaries, including Mr. McDowall, who is settled in Canada, and have paid them . . .

4. That the Classis of Albany, still remain considerably in arrears to several of their missionaries, and, in the opinion of this committee, will require a long time, and find it difficult, even then, to discharge their duties.

5. Your committee further recommend, that, considering the nearness of the Classis of Albany to the missionary region in the North and West, that they be directed to assume to superintendence (under the direction, however, of the General Synod) of the *missionary business* (italics added) in those quarters, and annually report their progress to the Particular Synods, who, we trust, will be also directed to assist them with pecuniary aid.

(There is a brief paragraph regarding Rev. Mr. Kirby of Staten Island who has volunteered to go to Canada. and another regarding the lack of persons for Kentucky.)

This extensive report from the meeting of General Synod in 1800 is recorded in detail, because we need to analyze the reaction of the synod. Synod responds in typical synodical fashion. It deals with minutiae. Synod, on motion, approved the report. It refers the matter of the mission to Kentucky to the Particular Synod of New York; it directs the Revs. Cornelison and Kuypers to meet with Kirby concerning a mission to Canada; it orders collections be made “for the support of missionaries” and directs the Rev. John Duryee be paid for his missionary endeavors in the New Jersey area.<sup>42</sup> Synod does not show any signs of being electrified by the exciting prospects in Canada. Synod doesn’t even applaud this work. It appears to be business as usual. Synod didn’t even officially take note of the appeal for a pastor from Elizabethtown. It is obvious, that the excitement of the report regarding the potential of the work in Canada is totally lacking in the response of the synod of 1800.

And why haven’t we heard about the Licensed Candidate all these years? We noted earlier that McDowall went to Canada in the summer of 1790 visiting Loyalist settlements on the north shore of the St. Lawrence and Lake Ontario, and formed

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<sup>42</sup> MGS, June, 1800, p. 310

several congregations.

Soon after his return from his summer mission, he received and accepted a call from those congregations which he had organized, Ernestown, Fredericksburg and Adolphustown." McDowall, did not, however, return to Upper Canada until eight years later.<sup>43</sup>

Constructing a true history of McDowall's life is almost impossible. Many of his records were lost in 1876, thirty-five years after his death, when the McDowall home near Sandhurst, Ontario, burned.<sup>44</sup>

We know he attended Williams College, Williamstown, Massachusetts, in 1793 and 1794<sup>45</sup> but where he completed his education is unclear. Some historians say "at Union Theological Seminary, Schenectady." A school of that name did not exist. There was a Union Academy in Schenectady which was "chartered by the Regents on January 9, 1793."<sup>46</sup> It was the immediate predecessor of Union College but more of a college preparatory school. McDowall is not listed in the Union College archives as a former student. Although there had been plans made earlier by the pastor of First Reformed, Schenectady, the Rev. Dirck Romeyn, to organize a seminary in Schenectady, nothing materialized. Union College was not chartered until 1795. How did McDowall complete his education? He was tutored by Dr. Romeyn. According to McDowall's obituary printed in the *British Colonist*, Toronto, on September 8, 1841, (he) "completed his studies under the late Rev. Mr. Romeyn."<sup>47</sup>

Subsequently, McDowall was ordained by the Classis of Albany in 1797. He arrived in Upper Canada in 1798 as the official representative of the Classis of Albany. He crossed the St. Lawrence River from Morristown, New York, to Brockville (then called Elizabethtown) in early spring of that year. (Since the Morristown to Brockville Ferry had not yet come into being, he probably was rowed across by the owner of a boat looking to earn a few dollars.) He spent time preaching in the Brockville area, but he declined a request to remain, and proceeded westward along the lake shore to Sandhurst, where on July 6, 1798, he "opened his first church."<sup>48</sup>

Although there is no journal or diary known to exist kept by McDowall describing his journey to Canada, there is the experience of John Beattie who did keep a detailed journal of his daily life. He was among those called to serve as a short-term missionary to Canada. His experiences would not have been unlike McDowall's. In the Spring of 1810, Beattie left his home on Long Island and was gone five months. It took a week to make the trip to Albany up the Hudson River on a sloop.

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<sup>43</sup> Moir, Vol. 23, No. 1, May, 1979, p. 2

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, p. 1

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. p. 3

<sup>46</sup> Samuel B., Fortenbaugh Jr., *In Order to Form a More Perfect Union*, Union College Press, 1978, p. 41

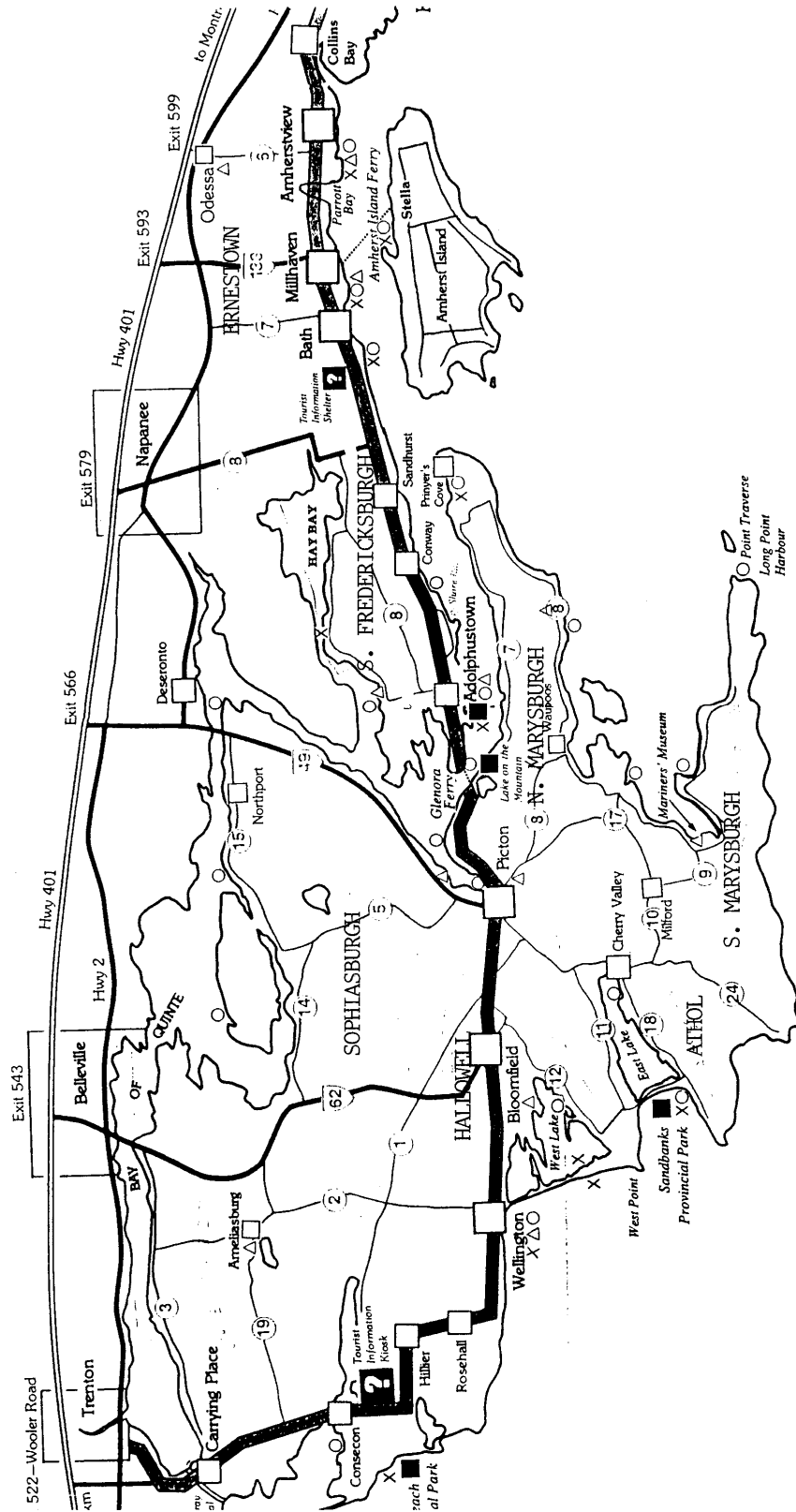
<sup>47</sup> William D. Reid, *Death Notices of Ontario*, Hunterdon House, Lambertville, New Jersey, 1980, p. 279

<sup>48</sup> John S. Moir, p. 14

# The McDowall Saga: A Story of Three Generations

"McDOWALL'S PARISH"  
 BAY OF QUINTE  
 ONTARIO, CANADA

Contemporary Map



(Beattie) gives a vivid description of the bad roads between Albany and Lake Ontario and of the equally bad lodgings “the worst roads that it is possible for the human mind to form any conception of,” “horrid bridges,” but the mosquitoes “were the occasion of more misery to me than all the rest of my difficulties combined.” And then his lodgings, “an old weather-worn log house covered with bark—a dismal inn to the weary traveler.” His bed was the floor, but he could not sleep. “I was under the necessity of maintaining an arduous contest with an innumerable multitude of little nocturnal beasts which inhabited the place.” The next day he “rode twenty miles to breakfast under a mosquito escort,” and at length he came in sight of his missionary field. But the roads were still worse in Canada. His horse lost a shoe, and became very lame. “The morals of the people are said to be very much corrupted, and there is little or no religion in the place.”<sup>49</sup>

The Brockville Recorder and Times, March 26, 1966, in an article about the Presbyterian Church reported:

In 1798 Rev. Robert MacDowell (sic) went to Ernestown in the Bay of Quinte area through a request sent to the Dutch Reformed Church in America. His parish stretched from Brockville to York. A Presbyterian Society organized by him in Kingston became the nucleus of St. Andrew’s Church. Historians consider him the founder of the Presbyterian Church in this province.

Only occasionally did a minister of God find his way among the settlers here in the District of Johnstown. The only religious services engaged in for several years were those of a Masonic Lodge. The settlers of Elizabethtown earnestly desired to establish a church. They appealed to the Church of Scotland and to the Dutch Reformed Church of the United States of America without result, because ministers were scarce. Mr. MacDowell refused the call of Elizabethtown and Younge, preferring to stay in the area which he was organizing. Acting on the suggestion of a Dutch Reformed minister in New York City, the settlers asked The London Missionary Society for help.

What about his ministry? According to Moir,

(By 1800,) McDowall was functioning as a pastor, but as yet he had no civil authority to perform marriages. The marriage law of Upper Canada passed in 1793 restricted the performance of weddings to clergy of the Church of England. Justices of the Peace were permitted to solemnize nuptials according to the Anglican rite. This denominational monopoly angered Presbyterians and Baptists who requested that their clergy should have the same authority.

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<sup>49</sup> Edward T. Corwin, *A Manual of the Reformed Church in America 1628-1902*, Board of Education of the Reformed Church in America, 1902, p. 307. Hereinafter noted as “Corwin.”



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St. Lawrence River, Morrisville, New York.

Moir points out that McDowall actually performed eleven weddings prior to receiving official permission.

McDowall applied for permission to perform marriages and received authorization in 1801. His certificate was signed by the Loyalist, Ebenezer Washburn, (his father-in-law) and dated simply 13 July.<sup>50</sup> This creates an historical problem because McDowall recorded his first wedding on 11 May 1800, fourteen months before he was licensed.<sup>51</sup>

As a pastor, McDowall was extremely busy. Moir reports:

McDowall's baptismal register records 1,638 christenings in no less than 24 townships (and the volume has a number of pages missing!)

His marriage register (which) lacks pages for over fourteen years, includes 870 entries over a twenty-eight year period (an average of thirty-one weddings a year, or more than one every two weeks.)<sup>52</sup>

The Presbyterian Church in Canada, has in its archives several penned notes re-

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<sup>50</sup> The certificate is in the McDowell Papers, Queens University Archives, Kingston, Ontario. It reads: "I certify that the Reverand (sic) Robert McDowall (sic) made due application to the General Quarter Session for leave to marry and was by them authorized accordingly—in the year 1801."

<sup>51</sup> John S. Moir, p. 14

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.



I Certify that the Reverend Robert m<sup>c</sup> Dowall  
made due application to the General Quarter Sessions  
for leave to marry and was - by them authorized  
accordingly - in the year 1811  
July 13<sup>th</sup> - July Ebenezer Washburn

Copy of certificate giving Robert J. McDowall permission to marry.

questing McDowall read the bans prior to weddings. Here is but one example:

Fredericksburg

Sept. 7, 1834

Rev. R. Mcdowel (sic) Sir please to mention the intended bands of  
mattrimona (sic) between John Keller and Aloan Keller both of Kingston.  
By so doing you will much oblige your ser(vant)? (signed) John Keller

Again, according to Moir, his missionary travels were made on horseback or foot (he preferred the latter.) Sometimes he swam rivers. Around the Bay of Quinte he usually made his visits by canoe. His travels can only be described as prodigious. He was remembered for his habit of calling the faithful to impromptu services by blowing a moose horn. McDowall preached six to nine times per week and yet was not able to visit all his flock more than once every three to six weeks.<sup>53</sup>

Somehow McDowall found time to marry Hannah Washburn, the daughter of Ebenezer and Sarah De Forrest Washburn. Ebenezer was the Justice of the Peace at Kingston. Robert and Hannah were married at Picton in Prince Edward County on December 3, 1800, by the Rev. John G. Weigant.<sup>54</sup> According to McDowall Family records archived at Queens University, Kingston, Ontario, Robert and Hannah had eight children.<sup>55</sup> However, the memorial stone erected in the Sandhurst cemetery names six children: "John, Sarah Washburn, Ebenezar (sic), Eliza, James Alexander

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<sup>53</sup> Moir, Vol. 23, No. 2, October, 1979, pp. 1 and 2

<sup>54</sup> McDowell Family Record, Robert McDowell Collection, Queens University Archives, Kingston, Ontario. Hereinafter noted as "Family Record."

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. John, first son, born September 20, 1801; Sarah Washburn, first daughter, born September 14, 1804; Ebenezer, second son, born, January 3, 1807; James, third son, born August 3, 1810; Eliza, second daughter, born July 14, 1813; James Alexander, fourth son, born, June 9, 1815; Daniel Simon, fifth son, born, December 28, 1817; and Robert, sixth son, born April 8, 1821.

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United Church of Canada  
Demorestville, Ontario, formerly called Sophiasburgh.

& Robert.” Why the difference? For unknown reasons, James and Daniel are not listed on the memorial stone. James was one of two children who died in infancy.<sup>56</sup> But Daniel was almost twenty-five when he died. Was he the “black-sheep” of the family? Sarah later married a merchant by the name of Carpenter from the United States. After her death, her remains were brought to the burial plot in the Sandhurst cemetery.<sup>57</sup>

McDowall also found time to write. A typewritten copy of a book of his sermons *Discourses On The Sovereign And Universal Agency of God In Nature and Grace*, is in the archives of the Presbyterian Church in Canada in Toronto.<sup>58</sup>

And back to our story. McDowall continued to plead for help. General Synod of

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid. James died July 29, 1812 (he was not quite two years old.) Eliza died September 14, 1814 (just over one year old.) Daniel Simon “died 4th March 1842 at 20 minutes to 12 o’clock at night on Friday.” He was almost twenty-five when he died.

<sup>57</sup> Woods, pp. 3 and 4

<sup>58</sup> Robert J. M’Dowall, *Discourses On The Sovereign And Universal Agency of God In Nature and Grace*, (Albany, NY: Webster and Skinner, 1808).



Town Hall, Ameliasburg, Ontario.

1806 received the following report from him:

The subscriber begs leave to lay before you a statement of the state of religion in Upper Canada. In the year 1790, he was sent by the Reverend Classis of Albany on a mission to that country, and formed several congregations. He found the inhabitants very desirous of having the Gospel preached to them. Soon after his return from the mission, he received and accepted a call from three of those congregations which he had organized, Ernestown, Fredericksburgh and Adolphustown, and the northwest side of Lake Ontario. He found the enemy had come in like a flood, and had disseminated principles which were subversive of the fundamentals of both religion and morals. These anti-Christian principles being strenuously advocated, and the doctrines of salvation by grace being misrepresented, and then turned into ridicule, from almost the first settlement of the country, had a very bad effect upon the minds of many. Notwithstanding, he has reason to be thankful that the truths of the Gospel have gained the ascendancy over many; and some who were bitterly opposed to the doctrines of the cross have cordially embraced them, and in the judgment of charity have felt their salutary influence upon their souls.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> MGS, June, 1806, pp. 352-3

## The McDowall Saga: A Story of Three Generations



McDowell Family Memorial, Sandhurst, Ontario.

Who or what were the “enemy (who) had come in like a flood”? There are several possibilities. Certainly the Anglicans (Episcopalians) or (Church of England) might qualify for McDowall’s outrage. He took a personal dislike to the Rev. John Langhorn “an eccentric Welsh bachelor and priest of the Church of England, whose manners were so offensive that many parishioners deserted his congregations.”<sup>60</sup> Langhorn lived in Bath a short distance from Sandhurst. Once McDowall offered Langhorn a ride on his horse as Langhorn didn’t own one, but Langhorn was so overly fat he promptly fell off.

And, too, the Methodists were suspect. Whatever their denominational affiliation, whoever followed the theology of the Arminians were “the enemy.”

McDowall got into a theological controversy which is recorded only by his opponents. While preaching at the Adolphustown courthouse on unconditional election, McDowall offered to debate the doctrine with any disbeliever. Samuel Coate, a Methodist itinerant, reluctantly challenged McDowall. A debate was arranged to be held in the Ernestown Presbyterian Church, a building as large as a barn. The date of the meeting is given simply as 1800. A large gathering of Methodists, and Calvinists (meaning Presbyterian, Baptists and Dutch Reformed), assembled from the region to be edified or entertained. In fact the crowd was so large it could not be accommodated in the church, so McDowall mounted a wagon and preached “half of the day.” Then Coate began his address, but he had spoken for only two hours when McDowall and his supporters walked out. This was construed by the Arminians as an admission of defeat by the Calvinists.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Moir, John S. p. 4

<sup>61</sup> Moir, Vol. 23, No. 1, May, 1979, p. 4

<b>Family Record.</b>	
BIRTHS.	BIRTHS.
John McDowall - First son born Sept. 20 <sup>th</sup> 1801	the Rev. Robert McDowall born July 28 <sup>th</sup> 1768 at Saratoga New York County N.Y. State Hannah Washburn born in 1784
Sarah Washburn M <sup>rs</sup> . Dowall first Daughter born Sept. 14 <sup>th</sup> 1804	Born of the 11 <sup>th</sup> of Aug. 1875 - on Bleg + Ordnance St. Henrietta Washburn Elder - daughter of Neil + Hannah Polson
Ebenezer M <sup>rs</sup> . Dowall + third son born January 3 <sup>rd</sup> 1807	at the same place on the 10 <sup>th</sup> of April 1877 Jessie Currie second daughter of N. C. + H. W. Polson
James M <sup>rs</sup> Dowall Fourth son born 3 <sup>rd</sup> August 1810	
Eliza M <sup>rs</sup> Dowall - second Daughter born July 14 <sup>th</sup> 1813	
James Alexander M <sup>rs</sup> Dowall fifth son born July 9 <sup>th</sup> 1815	
Daniel Simon M <sup>rs</sup> Dowall Sixth son born Dec. 28, 1817	
Robert M <sup>rs</sup> Dowall seventh son born April 8 <sup>th</sup> 1821	
+ above. should be second instead of third. third instead of fourth + so on down: in the margin	

McDowall family records: births (source unknown).

Years later, following the death of his son, McDowall named the "enemies who had come in like a flood." He wrote, "I have suffered great persecution by nominal professors, who have gone from house to house to stir up hatred, strife, and opposition against me; and these persecutors were encouraged and aided by a professed minister of the Prince of Peace. What will not professors and ministers do, who are

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seeking popularity and are unwilling to be reclaimed from their evil.”<sup>62</sup>

Although the Anglican and Methodist clergy represented to McDowall a dangerous theology, there resided within Robert a spirit of ecumenism which was shared by others in the Reformed Dutch Church. In the Minutes of General Synod, June, 1800, pp. 281-286, there is a report “of the Proceedings of the Convention of Committees from the Reformed Dutch, Presbyterian, and Associate Reformed Churches” held in 1798. (Interestingly, one of the clergy attending was Solomon Froeligh who later became a leader in the True Protestant Dutch Reformed schism.)<sup>63</sup>

The General Synod of June, 1806 responded to McDowall’s appeals in a number of ways.<sup>64</sup> McDowall finally had gotten the attention of synod.

1. the following were named as missionaries to Canada: Christian Bork, Peter D. Froeligh, and Conrad Ten Eyck. They were “to set out on the first of August, on the terms upon which former missionaries have been set out, and that some advance of money be made to them (and) their pulpits be supplied during their absence.”

2. four ministers and four elders of Albany Synod were appointed as a standing committee on missions. The responsibilities of this committee were carefully outlined in the minutes.

The Report on Missions to the General Synod of 1809 included a detailed plan for how the pulpits of those who volunteered to go to Canada as short term missionaries were to be filled for the duration. Missionaries were ordered to consult with McDowall “respecting the most proper route they ought to take.”<sup>65</sup>

In a history of the First Reformed Church, Schenectady, New York, there is this note:

In 1809, while Rev. Jacob Sickles was at Kinderhook he spent three months at a mission station in Upper Canada. Upon his favorable report General Synod a few years later resolved to take the most speedy and effective measures to organize a Classis in the Province of Upper Canada.<sup>66</sup>

General Synod did not meet between June 1809 and June 1812. One wonders how much missionary work was being accomplished during this time and how this period of inactivity might have impacted McDowall. Indeed, when synod met in June, 1812, (the same month war broke out between the United States and Great Britain),<sup>67</sup> the report of the Missions Committee was fairly long. The report included

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<sup>62</sup> Memoir, p. 4

<sup>63</sup> MGS, June, 1800, p. 281

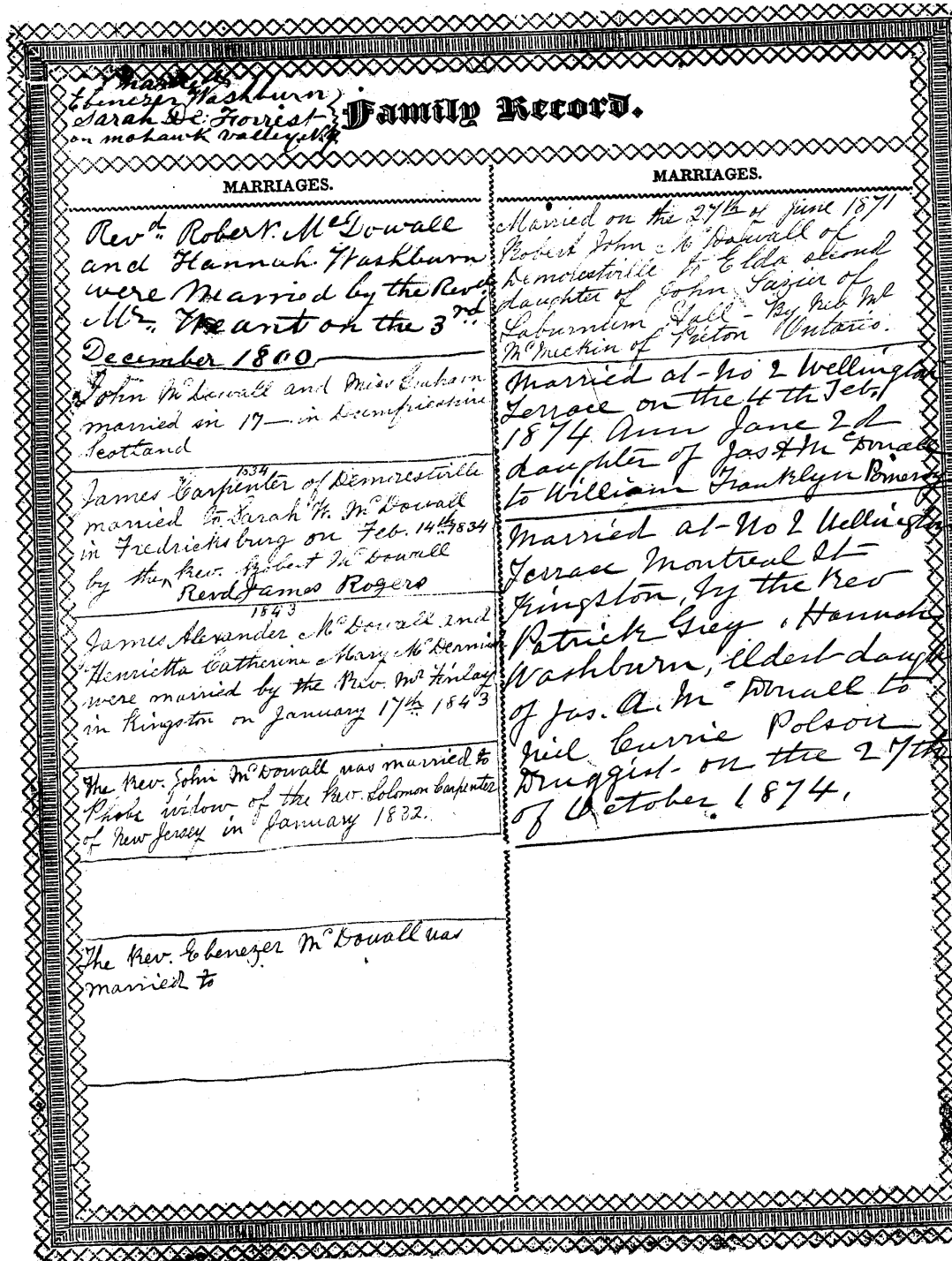
<sup>64</sup> MGS, June, 1806, pp 353-5

<sup>65</sup> MGS, June, 1809, pp. 384-6

<sup>66</sup> John J. Birch, *The Pioneering Church of the Mohawk Valley*, 1955, Schenectady, NY, p. 99

<sup>67</sup> On June 18, 1812, Congress declared war on Great Britain. General Synod, meeting in June of 1812, directed a pastoral letter to be sent to all congregations of the Reformed Dutch Church. The letter may be found in the Minutes of General Synod, June, 1812, pp. 439-440. It called for a day of “fasting, humiliation, and prayer” to be held the last Thursday of July, 1812. Here is a good example of the Church being the Church in a time of war.

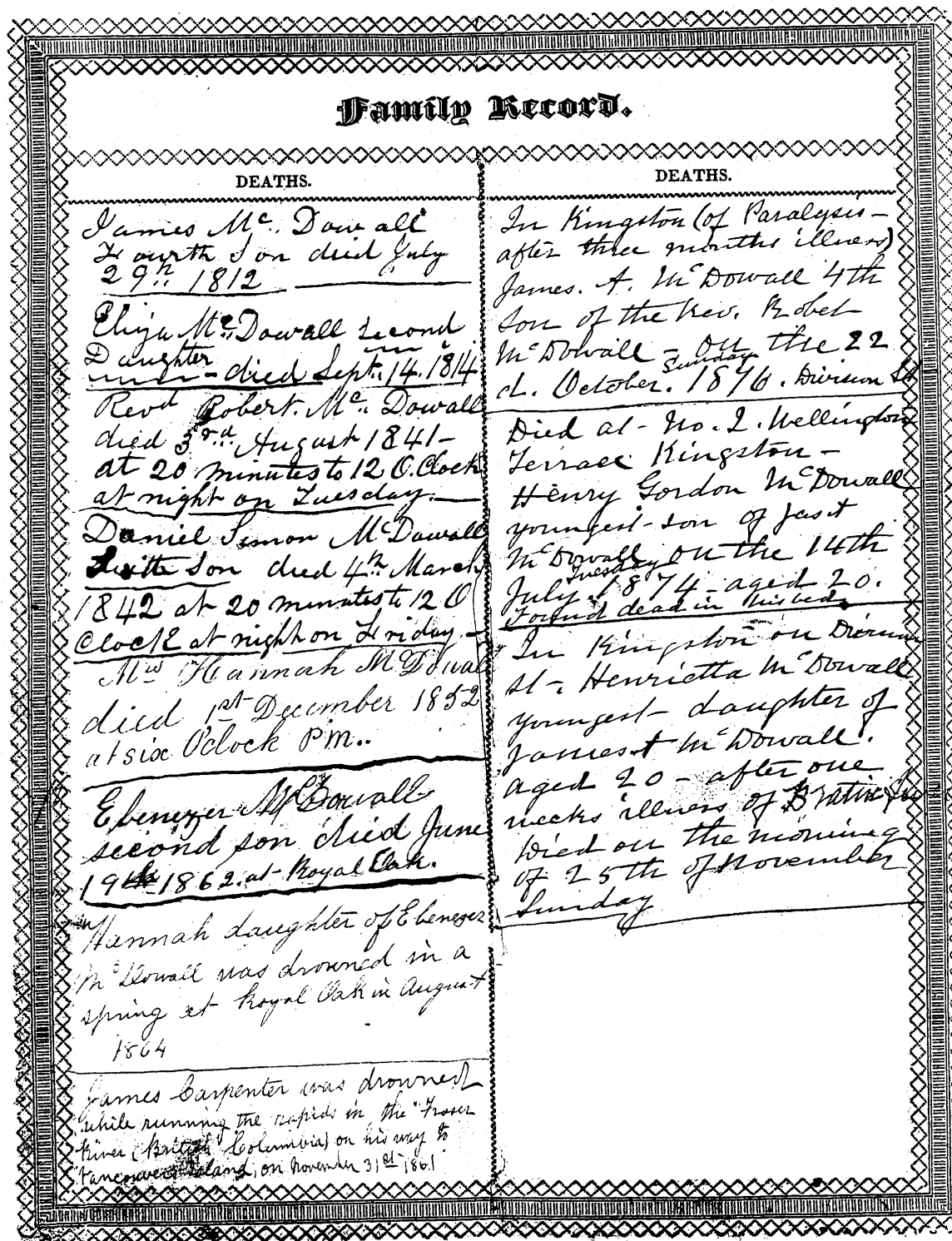




McDowall family records: Marriages (source unknown).

the news that since synod had met last, four missionaries had been employed to work in Upper Canada. The committee reported

It appears to be the opinion of our missionaries that Upper Canada opens a wide field for useful labors. Whether it would be expedient to send mission-



McDowall family records: Deaths (source unknown)



aries to Canada under existing circumstances, must be left discretionary with the Standing Committee of Missions, to whom this business is intrusted. Should it be considered as expedient, it appears to be necessary that our missionaries should be employed for a longer term than heretofore. Great benefit would result from the settlement of a few faithful ministers in the congregations already organized, who might be usefully employed as part of the time as missionaries, for which service they might be paid from our missionary fund.<sup>68</sup>

On the other hand, the report of the review committee was very brief. It dealt with only one issue. Synod noted that the committee employed someone “not belonging to our communion as a missionary.” It further stated that in the future, the committee was to be “restricted in their choice of missionaries to the ministers and candidates of the Reformed Dutch Church.”<sup>69</sup>

The Mission Committee report in 1813 was not included in the minutes and their report to General Synod, in June, 1814, was very brief.<sup>70</sup> Did the War of 1812 make a negative impact on the missionary work of the church? That would appear to be true given the lack of activity over the last three years.

At its June meeting in 1815, General Synod voted that the Standing Committee on Missions “be hereafter at liberty to employ missionaries in any parts of this, and the neighboring states, as well as in the province of Upper Canada.”<sup>71</sup> Was General Synod, in this action, relaxing its harsh restrictive of 1812?

The General Synod review committee on missions takes a strong stand in their report to General Synod, June, 1816.

Your committee are decidedly of opinion, that the only missionary ground to which the attention of this Synod ought at present to be directed, is the province of Upper Canada. To that province missionaries have more than once been sent by you. These missionaries have organized churches which look up to you for help, and which, if not neglected, might soon become respectable, and be an important addition to the Reformed Dutch Church.<sup>72</sup>

Does this sound, as some have claimed, that the Reformed Dutch Church lost interest in the Canadian work after the War of 1812? The irony here is that the review committee on missions in 1816 was chaired by Solomon Froeligh.

The tone of the report of the Standing Committee on Missions to the General Synod of 1817, however, is not so optimistic. The report was presented by the Rev. Dr. John M. Bradford, chair, who was also the Stated Clerk of the denomination and obviously a person of prestige and power.<sup>73</sup> Bradford reported that a mis-

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<sup>68</sup> MGS, June, 1812, p. 425

<sup>69</sup> MGS, June, 1812, p. 419

<sup>70</sup> MGS, June, 1814, p. 47

<sup>71</sup> MGS, June 1815, p. 51

<sup>72</sup> MGS, June, 1816, p. 35

<sup>73</sup> Corwin reports very little about Bradford except he was a noted preacher. He was licensed by the Presbytery of Philadelphia in 1803 and served First Church, Albany, from 1805 to 1820.

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sionary trip which had been planned for Canada had to be abandoned because of unexpected obstacles. On a positive note, he reported that the Rev. John Schermerhorn and Rev. Jacob Van Vechten were planning to make a missionary trip to Canada the following year. Most discouraging, perhaps, is this portion of his report:

From various accounts received on the subject of the Canadian churches, your committee learn that their situation is truly deplorable. The only minister settled among them, the Rev. Robert McDowall, writes that since the late war, no favorable appearances as to the conversion of sinners have been discovered, and that the members of those churches conduct themselves in general as it becometh the gospel of Christ. He states that there is a prospect of the settlement of the Rev. Robert Sheriff, a minister of the Associate Reformed Church, in the towns of Hallowell and Sophiasburgh, and that he is willing to become a member of our body; an event greatly to be desired, and which if it could be accomplished, would be of the first importance to our churches in that part of Canada. (McDowall adds here a word about Abner Wright who desires to be licensed as a minister.) The Canadian churches, in case of the settlement of the Rev. Mr. Sheriff, and of the ordination of Mr. Wright, will be able to form themselves into a separate Classis; a circumstance which would give a new tone and aspect to their concerns.<sup>74</sup>

We are hearing now of a point of view not heard before—an anti-mission, anti-church extension, anti-benevolence and pro-nationalist stance. (Some have thought this kind of thinking was a problem of the 20th century.)

The great question is, where do our missionary labours promise the most success? In a foreign country, separated from us by hundreds of miles, the expense of sending whither swallows up no small portion of our means, and where it is most difficult to obtain men properly qualified to go? or, in places which are contiguous, and under our immediate inspection and charge, among a people allied to us by all the ties which can bind the citizens of one country together? Can we pass through the midst of our own churches which are as destitute as those of Canada, or indeed of any land, and travel hundreds of miles in search of objects requiring our Christian charity? What do we think of those heads of families, who are too busily engaged in the advancement of the family religion of their neighbors, to attend to that of their own? Who are zealous in instructing the children of strangers, while their own are suffered to remain in the most lamentable state of ignorance and vice? Equally inconsistent do your committee deem the conduct of that church, which engages in foreign missions, while multi-

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<sup>74</sup> MGS, June, 1817, pp. 9-14

tudes who are born in her own bosom, are suffered to remain in a state indescribably more dangerous than that of heathenism.<sup>75</sup>

Following all this rhetoric, Bradford pours a little oil on the waters and advocates for the speedy formation of a classis in Upper Canada which he believes, for some reason, is the answer. He quickly returns, however, to his premise and advocates for missionary work, not in Canada, but in Pennsylvania, where “we may promise ourselves great and permanent and certain success. Are we deaf to the fact, that, after great and expensive exertions, many years since, in establishing churches in connection in Canada, and after great difficulties and expense in supporting them, many of their number have become almost extinct?”<sup>76</sup> It may be that the language of Bradford’s report holds the key as to why McDowall cast his lot with the Presbyterians and why General Synod turned the management of missions over to the Particular Synod of New York.

In the midst of all the reports over the sad conditions in many areas of the church, and the lack of missionary volunteers to do church extension, that Rev. John Duryea<sup>77</sup> had his hand slapped by the synod of 1818

Your committee have examined the documents, certifying that the Rev. John Duryea has organized two Churches within the bounds of the Classis of Montgomery, and on inquiry find that these documents are intended by Mr. Duryea to support an application which he now makes for pecuniary aid. Your Committee hope, that Synod will not countenance, in future, any application for monies as a compensation for Missionary labours undertaken without the knowledge and direction of the Committee of Missions; and it is only in consideration of the advanced age of the Rev. John Duryea, and with a view to enable him to settle his family in one of those churches lately organized by him, that the Committee of Missions pay to the Rev. John Duryea, whose labours in the western part of the State of New York have been useful, the sum of 100 dollars.<sup>78</sup>

It was during the same year of 1818, that McDowall wrote he was prepared to establish a “Classis of Canada.” In February, he wrote to the Classis of Albany stating that he and two others were prepared to organize a Classis of Upper Canada.<sup>79</sup> This turned out to be the last report received from him. At the same time, he is planning the formation of a “Presbytery of the Canadas.” Was McDowall playing church politics? Was he speaking out of both sides of his mouth? This does not square with what we know about the integrity of the man.

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<sup>75</sup> MGS, June, 1817, p. 12

<sup>76</sup> MGS, June, 1817, p. 13

<sup>77</sup> Although the name of John Duryea appears many times in the Minutes of General Synod during this period, he is not listed in *Corwin’s Manual* nor in W. N. P. Dailey’s *History of Montgomery Classis*. Corwin does list a John Duryee, but he served churches in New Jersey.

<sup>78</sup> MGS, June, 1818, pp. 37-38

<sup>79</sup> Janssen, p. 34

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A major report concerning the work in Canada, written by the Revs. John F. Schermerhorn<sup>80</sup> and Jacob Van Vechten, was presented to General Synod at the June 1818 meeting, but it was never printed in the minutes! Their report is an excellent summary of the condition of the Church in Upper Canada. Fortunately, it has been preserved in several issues of “The Evangelical Guardian and Review” printed in 1819.<sup>81</sup> One wonders why this excellent report was not included in the Minutes of General Synod. Was it because “it contains important information respecting the state of churches in other denominations?”

Van Vechten and Schermerhorn traveled thirteen hundred miles in their missionary journey from Cornwall to Kingston to York (Toronto) to Lake Simcoe (near Lake Huron) over a thirteen week period during which they preached three to five times every week—plus Sundays—or a total of more than eighty sermons. In addition, the statistical review they presented was remarkably complete.

But it is their conclusion that is most interesting. These words ring with prophetic truth. These may have been tough words for synod to swallow. (Is this the reason the report was not printed?)

If we wish to succeed, either in building up the Reformed Dutch Church in Canada, or in promoting the interest of Zion generally, we must in some measure alter our plan of Missions. It is not more important that Churches should be organized, than that pastors should be placed over them; for unless this is done, little or nothing is gained. Neither can it be expected that a Missionary, by spending a week or two in a place can become sufficiently acquainted with the character and conduct of individuals to proceed with sufficient caution, in so solemn and important a transaction as the formation of a Church. The present state of our Churches in Canada show the force of these remarks. Instead therefore of sending Missionaries on a cursory mission of a few weeks, to travel from one end of the province to the other, we ought to send men of proper qualifications, to labour within a certain circuit, where, in all human probability, a congregation and Church may be speedily organized; and in case an opportunity of a settlement offers, should be willing to settle among the people.

It is also a great mistake that men of inferior talents are good enough to be employed in the Missionary cause. Such men often rather retard than advance the progress of the gospel, and might rather be paid to stay at home than to go abroad. The truth is, that the proper labours of a Missionary are much more arduous than those of an ordinary pastor, and therefore require

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<sup>80</sup> For additional information regarding John F. Schermerhorn, see “Salvation and Indian Removal: The Career Biography of the Rev. John Freeman Schermerhorn, Indian Commissioner,” a dissertation by James W. Van Hoeven, filed in the RCA archives at New Brunswick, New Jersey. Schermerhorn served the Reformed Dutch Church as Secretary of Missions from 1828-1832 and later the United States government as Indian Commissioner.

<sup>81</sup> *The Evangelical Guardian and Review*, Vol. II, No. 10, February, 1818, p. 235

higher qualifications. It is comparatively easy to feed a congregation whose principles and habits are already formed; but to go into uncultivated regions, and root out ignorance and error, silence the assaults of enthusiastic Sectarians, and bring order out of confusion, and light out of darkness, requires abilities, prudence, zeal, and perseverance, which but few possess. And therefore there are but few able Missionaries.<sup>82</sup>

What was the cause which led McDowall to suddenly take leave of the denomination which had supported him and his work for a period of almost thirty years?

One author frankly states that the root cause was not only lack of available clergy, but that the field was too far away and the costs of the Canadian work were bleeding dry the treasury of General Synod.

The denomination took the deepest interest in this mission (work in Upper Canada) and the General Synod and its committee repeatedly sent trusty men to preach and administer the sacraments to the people; but as no pastors could be, or, as a fact, were furnished at their call, the Canada churches declined, and finally disappeared from the register. The only home result was to keep the treasury of the Synod exhausted, and to distract attention from nearer and more promising fields within the United States.<sup>83</sup>

In his book, *Gathered at Albany*, Allan Janssen agrees that it was the lack of manpower. After years of pleading for help, McDowall, exhausted in his labors, turned to the Presbyterians. This factor may be all too simple. True, a major problem was the lack of trained clergy willing to undertake the kind of heroic missionary work exemplified by McDowall. Yet what turned him towards the Presbyterians?

It would appear from their report that Van Vechten and Schermerhorn also agreed that the issue was manpower. But their plea was not just for warm bodies. They advocated for the best! It is possible that McDowall may have seen a copy of their report. It is more than likely that the two missionaries met with McDowall during their journey and shared their concerns. Certainly McDowall knew that finding the “best” leadership would not be determined simply by changing denominational affiliation.

Some historians seem to feel that McDowall left the Reformed Dutch Church for the Presbyterian Church in Canada because of nationalism. After all, the United States of America had rebelled in 1776 and won its freedom from the British Empire. Again, the War of 1812 caused the two neighboring nations to face each other's guns and troops. Dr. John S. Moir, in his address to the Third Adrian Leiby Memorial Seminar, held at New Brunswick Theological Seminary in 1978, said:

For those religious denominations that had close contacts with the United States—the Baptists, the Dutch Reformed Church and particularly the Meth-

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., Vol II, No. 11, March, 1818, pp. 479-480

<sup>83</sup> Charles Scott, *It's Missionary Work at Home*, Centennial Discourses of the Reformed (Dutch) Church, 1876, p. 511. Hereinafter referred to as “Scott”

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odists—the War of 1812 was the moment of truth when each was severed from its American connection. Not only did missionaries cease to enter the colony and some already there returning home to the United States, but the anti-American feeling caused by the wartime experiences at the hands of the American invaders forced each group to identify wholeheartedly with the British cause.<sup>84</sup>

However, church history teaches a different lesson. The War of 1812 did not dampen enthusiasm over the idea of forming a Classis of Canada within the Synod of Albany. The work in Canada continued well beyond the end of the war in 1814. The notion that the Reformed Dutch Church lost interest in the Canadian work after the War of 1812, is a Canadian point of view.

Secular history teaches a different lesson as well. The War of 1812 was unpopular politically in New York.

Six senators and a large majority of the congressmen from the New England states, and a majority in both houses from New York, New Jersey, and Maryland, voted against the declaration of war. In the presidential election of 1812, the Federalists (the anti-war party) supported De Witt Clinton, who had been placed in nomination by an anti-war faction of the New York Republicans, and carried every state north of the Potomac except two. But Madison was re-elected.<sup>85</sup>

Yet, it must be said that

the postwar attitude in Britain toward America was defiant, even truculent. English governing classes no longer regarded ‘the States’ as a joke, but a menace to British institutions. That uneasy feeling was largely responsible for sneering strictures upon American life, character, and letters with which English literature abounded during the generation following 1815; an attitude which prevented the common ties of blood and language from having their natural effect.<sup>86</sup>

That attitude is alive and well in Canada to this day. It must be noted that commentators from the United States and Canada when studying the same issue will often arrive at very different opinions. Part of the reason is that the United States is considered by many contemporary Canadians to be the “present enemy.” They see their values being corroded by American society especially through the medium of television. The spirit of anti-Americanism is deep. For example, on Canada Day (July 1,) during a tour of Old Fort Henry, a national historic site outside of Kingston, Ontario, the guide kept referring to what would have happened when the Ameri-

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<sup>84</sup> Moir, Vol. 23, No. 2, October, 1979, p. 4

<sup>85</sup> Samuel Eliot Morison and Henry Steele Commager, *Growth of the American Republic*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1930), pp. 402, 408-409

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid*, p. 445

cans tried to invade. (The fort, by the way, was never attacked by the Americans or anyone else.) Another example, on that same day, a very lovely and gracious member of the United Empire Society, referred to the American Revolution as the “First Civil War.” So, it is possible that the anti-American, post-War of 1812 attitudes towards the United States caused McDowall to look to the Presbyterians.

Were there other factors at work which led to the separation of McDowall and the Reformed Dutch Church?

One factor may have been tribal. To be a Presbyterian in Canada meant one needed to be a Scot or Irish (northern.) “To be a Presbyterian in Ontario was to claim a Scots-Irish connection for the most part, and an Edinburgh ‘brr’ was ever a decided asset.”<sup>87</sup> Although there were significant numbers of Loyalists of Dutch descent when McDowall first went to Upper Canada, it soon became clear that the future of the Reformed/Presbyterian church in Canada would be in the hands of the Scots-Irish.

In his 1978 address given at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, Dr. Moir stated:

Because the Presbyterian churches of Great Britain still showed little interest in the religious welfare of their brethren overseas, a plan was set afoot in 1817 to draw all Presbyterian clergy in the Canadas into a Canadian presbytery that would encompass five different traditions—the Church of Scotland, the succession churches (Associate and Relief) from Scotland, the American Associate Presbyterian churches and the Dutch Reformed. In human terms such a presbytery would bring together three national backgrounds Scotch, Welsh and American, and soon Irish would be added as well. Early in 1818, the last year that missionaries came from the Classis of Albany, the “Presbytery of the Canadas” was formed and McDowall joined it. McDowall had crossed his own Rubicon as a result of the decision to end the Dutch Reformed mission in upper Canada, and to future generations he was known as a founder of the Presbyterian Church in Canada.<sup>88</sup>

Moir does not include Dutch in this list presumably because those from the United States of Dutch heritage were more American than Dutch [the Tory Dutch came from a much earlier immigration: 1624 through 1664 which basically stopped with the surrender of New Amsterdam by the Dutch to England. The colony was re-named New York.]

As suggested earlier, McDowall had a true ecumenical spirit. His appeal to the Reformed Dutch Church and to the Presbyterians was his attempt to unify the Calvinists in Canada against “the enemy [who] had come in like a flood.” And that unity included, in his mind, both Dutch, Scot, Welsh and later Irish. Therefore, it was not so much that McDowall who crossed the Rubicon, it was the Reformed

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<sup>87</sup> John Alexander Johnston, *Early Presbyterianism in Ontario*, Presbyterian History, a Newsletter of the Committee on History, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, Vol. 29, No. 1, May 1985, p. 6

<sup>88</sup> Moir, Vol. 23, No. 2, October, 1979, pp. 3 and 4

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Dutch Church which positioned itself in a seemingly harmless action that made such an ecumenical Classis/Presbytery impossible for McDowall.

Among the most plausible factors in the breakdown was a simple action taken by General Synod with far-ranging effects. The work of the Mission Committee was transferred from Albany to the Synod of New York in 1819. As suggested earlier, the anti-Canadian mission feelings expressed by John M. Bradford, may have been a factor. Interestingly, Bradford served as President of General Synod in 1819.

A lengthy history of the Missionary Society of the Reformed Dutch Church in North America was printed in the first issue of the *Magazine of the Reformed Dutch Church*. It concludes: "In 1818 and 1819, the only Missionaries employed by them (referring here to the Standing Committee on Missions) were the Rev. Messrs. Cornelius Borgardus, and [?] Allen. The location of the committee, was now transferred, by order of the General Synod, from Albany to New York." <sup>89</sup>

The question is why? Was it church politics? Did the fathers and brothers determine that the Particular Synod of New York could raise more money than Albany? Was it a matter of power or control? McDowall may have felt that his support base, which was already very thin, was about to disappear and his supply lines lengthened to the point of impossibility.

Or were "dark" forces at work in the Reformed Dutch Church? The "dark" forces were those that eventually led to schism. The minutes of the General Synod of 1820 recount the beginning of the "True Protestant Dutch Reformed Church." <sup>90</sup> Recorded here is the case of Rev. Conrad Ten Eyck, pastor at Owasco, New York, Classis of Montgomery, regarding a theological dispute called Hopkinsianism (or unlimited atonement.)

The Rev. James Van Hoeven provides us with an excellent summary of the controversy.

The specific charge was that Ten Eyck had declared that he "did not believe that Christ had atoned for any man . . . but for sin." (Minutes of Montgomery Classis, May 26, 1819.) This issue was not merely hair-splitting for hyper-orthodox Calvinists. The implication of the charge was that Ten Eyck rejected the Calvinist's doctrine of election. If Christ died for sin generally, and not only for "his chosen," then anyone could be saved if he merely confessed his sin and accepted the work of Christ. This, in effect, made one's salvation dependent upon his own initiative, which was essentially the "Hopkinsian" position, and not upon God's prior act of grace in election, which was fundamentally the orthodox Calvinist position. <sup>91</sup>

The Ten Eyck dispute was the beginning of a long and divisive struggle within the church that continued for years. Some congregations left the Reformed Dutch

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<sup>89</sup> *Magazine of the Reformed Dutch Church*, Vol. I, No. 1, April 1826, pp. 34-38

<sup>90</sup> *MGS*, June, 1820, pp. 18-20

<sup>91</sup> James W. Van Hoeven, *Salvation and Indian Removal: The Career Biography of the Rev. John Freeman Schermerhorn, Indian Commissioner*, dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1971, pp. 65-66



Church. Years later, several united with the Christian Reformed Church. Others, interestingly, drifted into the Presbyterian Church. Many disappeared completely.

Dr. Charles Scott of Holland, Michigan, in a sermon preached in 1876 and printed in *Centennial Discourses of the Reformed (Dutch) Church in America*, added this comment and data in an appendix. "The secession of 1822 is almost forgotten after the lapse of half a century, but at the time it profoundly agitated the denomination, and among other evil results led to the following separations:<sup>92</sup>

In New York

Congregations seceding or destroyed	11
Congregations seriously divided	3
Congregations weakened	6-20
Ministers seceding (under suspension)	6
(other statistics were reported for churches in New Jersey)	

What does the schism of 1822 have to do with the story of Robert McDowall? Part of the answer is that the rumblings of schism must have been felt years before the actual break. A theological controversy builds up steam long before it bursts forth. Did McDowall have a sense that this fracture was coming? We have no way of knowing, but it could have led to his decision to cast his lot with the Presbyterians.

General Synod faced an incredible number of difficult issues during 1819-1820. Among them were the formation of a seminary at New Brunswick, New Jersey, and the rising head of schism. The voice of Solomon Froeligh, who had been the cause of trouble for years is heard loud and clear.<sup>93</sup> Froeligh became a major leader in the schism. Some say he was angry because he wanted the job at the seminary in New Brunswick and became bitter when it went instead to John Livingston.<sup>94</sup>

The Rev. Edward T. Corwin comments in his manual, "by the testimony of some of his students, that he (Solomon Froeligh) had contemplated secession, in imitation of the Scotch (sic) for many years."<sup>95</sup> If Froeligh had "contemplated succession" for years, certainly that knowledge must have been a spiritual cancer eating away at his soul. The question which cannot be answered is, how did his feelings regarding the Reformed Dutch Church impact his General Synod responsibilities? For example, he served as chair of the Missions Committee in June, 1816, and this report was very supportive to the Canadian work. Yet, did he sow the seeds of secession wherever he went?

It was the synod of 1816 that received a report from McDowall<sup>96</sup> in which he requests the committee send "one of the best commentaries on the bible." The com-

<sup>92</sup> Scott, p. 529

<sup>93</sup> For the story of the controversy at Hackensack, New Jersey, read Jacob Brinkerhoff's "History of the True Reformed Dutch Church," pp. 9-30.

<sup>94</sup> Jacob Brinkerhoff, *The History of the True Reformed Dutch Church in the United States of America*, E. B. Tripp, New York, 1873, p. 30

<sup>95</sup> Corwin, p. 480

<sup>96</sup> MGS, June, 1816, pp. 35-6

## The McDowall Saga: A Story of Three Generations

mittee recommended sending Scott's commentary. We do not know if Scott happened to be the author of the best biblical commentary of the time, or if Froeligh (the Dutchman) is trying to "tweak" the Scotsman McDowall by sending Scott's Commentary! What happened to this simple request and committee recommendation? It is a study in bureaucratic off-putting. The synod of June, 1817, was told that the committee did not send Mr. McDowall a copy of Scott's Commentary because they heard he had purchased a copy himself when last home.<sup>97</sup> Later in the meeting, it was reported by the Missions Committee "A donation made to the Rev. Mr. M'Dowell of Scott's family bible (sic), which has not been furnished, because it was ascertained that he had already put himself in possession of that valuable work." The committee recommended that synod forward to McDowall either money or other books.<sup>98</sup> The minutes of General Synod, June, 1818, report that thirty dollars, thirty-seven and a half cents were sent to McDowall for books.<sup>99</sup> In summary, it took two years to respond to McDowall's request. To say the least, this must have been discouraging to McDowall.

Another factor might be simply McDowall was burning out. Zealot is a word which applies to McDowall's personality and ministry. As a commentator wrote: "He would blow his horn as he entered a settlement, which was the signal for the people to gather for worship and hear The Gospel of Redeeming love from the fiery tongue of this great missionary."<sup>100</sup> By 1819, he had been doing an incredible amount of traveling and preaching for twenty years. Was he getting tired?

Twenty years later, McDowall summarized his ministry in Canada in a letter written January 18, 1839. In it, he lamented:

My observation of several townships where the inhabitants have long enjoyed the labour of any of our ministers, has impressed on my mind the belief that had there been at that early period a sufficient supply of ministers of our Church, we should have greatly outnumbered any other denomination and very probably our country would have escaped the present troubles,<sup>101</sup> lived in comparative peace, and the government kept from a great expense. Not a few Europeans who in their fatherland went to the house of God and took sweet counsel with the great congregation. They

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<sup>97</sup> *MGS*, June, 1817, p. 13

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56

<sup>99</sup> *MGS*, June, 1818, p. 10

<sup>100</sup> Woods, p. 2

<sup>101</sup> McDowell's reference to escaping "the present troubles," refers to the uprising of 1837. During that period of unrest, a skirmish called "The Battle of the Windmill" occurred. Approximately two hundred Americans, sympathetic to political reform in Canada, took refuge at a windmill next to the St. Lawrence River during an attempted attack on Canada. The site is located east of Brockville and west of Johnstown. Since this event happened in McDowell's larger parish and towards the end of his ministry, it is no wonder he was concerned.

sometimes continue mourning like the captive Jews, "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?"<sup>102</sup>

The Presbyterian Year Book of 1875 has an article "Presbyterianism in British North America." It begins, "Just five years after the formation of the Presbytery at Montreal, the Rev. Robert McDowall entered Western Canada by way of Niagara from Albany; but his story we can give in his own words, in a paper given by him at its request to the Presbytery of Kingston in 1839." The paper is the same as the one written on January 18, 1839 except in some minor details.

McDowall, interestingly, in his letter—now as a Presbyterian—sounds the same battle-cry he used with General Synod—we need help and financial resources. Obviously, whether Reformed or Presbyterian, getting and keeping good help was difficult.

The first protestant settlers of Upper Canada were American loyalists who joined the royal armies during the revolutionary war. Many of them had lived in their own country destitute of gospel ministrations, and while in the royal service they enjoyed few or no gospel privileges. Soon after the conclusion of that war, they settled in a vast unbroken wilderness, where they lived several years in great hardships, and without any provision for the gospel. They were of English, Scotch, German, Dutch, and other origins and professed to be of the German Reformed, Dutch Reformed, Scotch Church, Presbyterian, Baptist and other denominations.

Some Presbyterians, in the counties of Lincoln and St. Catharines in the Middle District, sent a petition to the Church of Scotland for a minister, to which they received no answer. Then they turned their attention to their United States for a supply of preaching, and in compliance with urgent solicitations sent from settlements in both Lower and Upper Canada, to the Classis of the Reformed Dutch Church in the city of Albany and State of New York, I was sent by that Classis on a mission in the year 1798. To both provinces, I received a call from a considerable number of persons in the townships of Timmstown, Fagelburgh, and Pultenestown, and settled among them. In these townships together with Richmond and Camden, I spent most of my time. I also travelled occasionally eastwardly 98 miles down the river St. Lawrence

Portion of report written by Robert J. McDowall summarizing his missionary work in Upper Canada.

<sup>102</sup> Robert McDowall, "Statement of the Rev. Robert McDowall Concerning Early History of Presbyterian Work in Upper Canada, Addressed to the Rev. Henry Gordon, dated 18th January, 1839" Archives of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, Toronto, Canada. (Copy by the Rev. Fred Rennie, Associate Archivist, Feb. 4, 1973.)

## The McDowall Saga: A Story of Three Generations



Battle of the Windmill National Historical Site, east of Prescott, Ontario.

In his later years, McDowall seemed to grow fatigued with ecclesiastical infighting. He “spent more time farming and less traveling. For two decades he was active in the Midland District Agricultural Society, and in 1835 won the Society’s prize for the best farm in the District.”<sup>103</sup>

It is not surprising that a boy raised on a farm in New York should return to farming in his later years. The McDowall farm is presently owned by Mrs. Ruth M. Wright who provided significant help in the preparation of this paper. Mrs. Wright has in her possession several deeds showing the sale of the property to Robert McDowall. One deed, witnessed by his father-in-law, Ebenezer Washburn, shows the purchase of a portion of the farm for £100.

Shortly after his seventy-third birthday, the Rev. Robert McDowall died on August 3, 1841 “at 20 minutes to 12 o’clock at night on Tuesday”<sup>104</sup> and is buried in the cemetery in Sandhurst, Ontario, where a memorial has been erected in his honor. A more significant memorial is the fact that his endeavors as a committed Christian, his unflagging zeal for the Gospel, his incredible energy spent on behalf of the Church of Jesus Christ continues to live in the Presbyterian Church in Canada to this day.

A plaque to the memory of McDowall was placed in Convocation Hall, Queens University, Kingston, during the fall of 1941. It was similar to one which was origi-

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<sup>103</sup> Moir, Vol. 24, No. 1, May 1980, page 2

<sup>104</sup> “Family Record”



Farm previously owned by the Rev. Robert J. McDowell, Bath, Ontario.



McDowell Memorial Cemetary, Sandhurst, Ontario.

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nally placed in the McDowall Memorial Church in Sandhurst in 1887, and which was brought to St. Andrew's Church, Kingston, after the fire (September 13, 1921) which destroyed most of the church in Sandhurst.<sup>105</sup>

The plaque reads:

In Memoriam  
REV. ROBERT McDOWALL  
ordained by  
The Dutch Reformed Church at Albany  
Came to Upper Canada, 1798  
to minister to the U. E. Loyalists  
as Pioneer Missionary  
His labors were of pre-eminent  
importance in establishing the Church in this Province.  
He was elected the first Moderator of the  
Synod of Canada in 1820.  
He was a founder of Queens University.  
He organized this congregation in 1800, and remained  
its faithful pastor until his death.  
His remains are interred in this church yard.<sup>106</sup>

A measure of the man is given in this testimony found in Corwin's Manual:

His principal field of labor was at Fredericksburgh, but he itinerated constantly, and his labors were abundantly blessed. He sowed the seeds of true religion over a wide region, and kept alive many small congregations which might otherwise become extinct. In his prime he was a powerful man, and well fitted, both physically and mentally, to be a pioneer. He loved the old orthodox faith.<sup>107</sup>

Hannah Washburn McDowall, the wife of the Rev. Robert J. McDowall, was also a pioneer, enduring great hardships living on the frontier. She was the mother of eight children, two of whom died in childhood. During her husband's long absences her role was to provide a stable home. Hannah lived as a widow for eleven years and died December 1, 1852 at six o'clock p.m.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> *The Kingston Whig-Standard*, Thursday, October 16, 1941 "McDowall Plaque Recalls Leader"

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> Corwin, p. 594

<sup>108</sup> "Family Record"

## Part III

# John R. McDowall

## Pioneer Evangelist

John Robert McDowall, the first son of the Rev. Robert J. McDowall and his wife, Hannah Washburn, was born in South Fredericksburg Township, Upper Canada, on Sept. 20, 1801. He attended Union College, Schenectady, New York, graduating in the Class of 1828. After studying for one year at Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey, he was ordained as a Presbyterian evangelist on May 6, 1832, by the Third Presbytery, New York City. After serving as a missionary on The Bowery for four years from 1832 to 1836, he died in New York City on December 13, 1836.<sup>109</sup>

A book written in 1838, two years after his death, begins with a eulogy written by John R.'s father, the Rev. Robert McDowall. It begins:

John R. McDowall was born in Fredericksburgh, county of Lennox, Midland District, Upper Canada, the 20th of September, 1801. He came into the world a child of sorrow. His deep moaning during the first twenty-four hours of his life was considered an indication of his speedy dissolution; but He who destined him up from his low estate, and favored him, with the exception of occasional attacks of severe headache, with good health. His mind was lively and often deeply impressed with the awful realities of eternity. The worship of God was with him a delightful employment. I will state one example of this. He went of his own accord in the month of April, 1816, then in the 15th year of his age, with his father and a gentleman, a near neighbor, six miles on foot to meeting. When he returned home, the road being bad, he was much fatigued and pale. His mother inquired what ailed him; he replied that his thigh was sore by means of leaping over a small stream of water or going over a fence; "but father preached such a good sermon to-day, that I am well paid for my trouble."<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> *Biographical Catalogue of the Princeton Theological Seminary 1815-1932*, compiled by Edward Howell Roberts, Princeton, NJ: Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church, 1933), p. 53

<sup>110</sup> Memoir, p. 1

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His injury was indeed severe and according to his father, not only brought him close to death as a youth, but affected his health for life (in contradiction to the above statement.) During his illness John R. promised God that if he would survive he would devote himself to God's service. Soon after, he began his academic studies. He spent about a year and a half with an uncle (his mother's brother) in York (now Toronto) in the study of law. But he continued to return to his death-bed promise of serving God. He subsequently left York, returned home, and prepared to enter college.

The archives at Union College, Schenectady, New York, note that John R. McDowall transferred to Union from Amherst College where he had spent his freshman year. What made him decide to enter Union? It probably was due to his friendship with a fellow Canadian, William McPherson, who was a member of the Class of 1826. It is also possible that he was impressed with the Union College graduates who were among the Reformed Dutch Church clergy who had come to Canada as short-term missionaries to work with his father.

While a student at Union, John R. volunteered to serve in the Sunday school at First Reformed Church, Schenectady. In his diary entry on January 15, 1826, he wrote:

The Sunday school in the Dutch church was in a very low state. To raise its reputation, I have exerted myself. Complete success has attended my exertions. The school has more than doubled in scholars. Party vice I discarded. Wherefore I became an advocate for all the Sunday schools in the city.<sup>111</sup>

The pastor of First Reformed, Schenectady, New York, during this time, was the Rev. Jacob Van Vechten who had served as a short term missionary in Upper Canada with Rev. John F. Schermerhorn, and who wrote a detailed report for the Synod of 1818 regarding the condition of the Church in Upper Canada (see pages 34-36.)

During his time at Union College, John gave serious thought about entering the ministry of the Reformed Dutch Church. On January 15, 1827, he wrote to the Rev. John Ludlow, Pastor of First Church, Albany,

to ask this question: Will the classis of Albany license me to exhort sinners to repentance and saints to holiness. If, upon examination, they should be convinced of my qualifications to that task?<sup>112</sup>

In other words, he wanted to be licensed to preach, but interestingly, he did not ask "for license to expound Scripture." Unfortunately, it is not possible to determine the action of the classis. According to the Rev. Allan J. Janssen, Albany Classis Stated Clerk, classis minutes from 1822 to 1829 are missing. It would be fascinating to learn how McDowall could separate "preaching" from "expounding Scripture."

John R. appears, from his diary, to be even more a zealot than his father and there is no better word than "zealot" to describe the personality of John R. McDowall.

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., pp. 47-48

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p. 72



*To the Reverend the Classis of Albany.*

REV. SIRs,—By the advice of a clergyman I was persuaded to lay a simple statement of my circumstances before your body.

I am the son of a clergyman, who was ordained to the Gospel ministry, about thirty years ago, by the classis of Albany, and sent into Canada as a missionary, where he still resides. Though his history is here uncalled for, yet permit me to say that he can almost wholly adopt the language of one of the pillars of our holy religion: "What is my reward then? verily, that when I preach the Gospel I may make the Gospel of Christ without charge."

So soon as a young man whose mind is not tutored by an early education, is convinced of the force of early contracted habits upon his riper years, and that "knowledge is power," his mind cannot but be often filled with retrospective regret. This I have often felt since the time in which I indulged a trembling hope of reconciliation to God, through the blood of Christ; for I was born in a land where the light of science has not dawned with that brightness which she sheds upon these States, and the natural mind being more prone to evil than to good, I early contracted inattentive injurious habits, although the watchful eye of a kind father was ever awake to my best interests.

In infancy and youth I acquired but little knowledge; and although the cause of this ignorance may be attributed to contracted habits of indolence and inattention, yet where were my distinguished opportunities for cultivating science? The common schools were poor; my father was poor; and absent from his family, sometimes for one, and more frequently for two months at a time. Two hundred and forty miles bounded the circuit of his labors. In different places, collecting the followers of the Lamb together, he organized churches, and afterwards occasionally fed them with the bread of life. But, his wants increasing

Page 73 from *Memoir and Select Remains of the late Rev. John R. M'Dowell*,  
the Martyr of the Seventh Commandment in the Nineteenth Century.

Like grandfather (John,) like father (Robert James,) like son (John Robert)? One wonders how John R.'s personality reflected the zeal of the other two McDowalls of this saga.

A letter about John R. McDowall written February 9, 1837 (after he died) by an unknown minister from East Greenwich, New York, to the Rev. Joshua Leavitt, editor, of the *New York Evangelist*, gives us a glimpse of his zealotness:

In the early part of the summer of 1826; and as there had commenced among us in Schenectady an interesting work of grace, I asked Mr. McDowall's consent to spend the eight week's vacation in my family, and devote his time to visiting, etc. During this vacation his labors were almost incessant. He usu-

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ally started out after breakfast with a bundle of Tracts under his arm, and did not return til noon; and then frequently so exhausted that he found it necessary to throw himself on a bed.

After an hour or two's rest, he sallied forth again and returned at evening. As many as four evenings a week he attended little meetings for prayer and praise and pointed conversation. He used to say that his Tracts were very useful means of introducing religious conversation, and gave him ready access to the family on whom he called. His visits were generally among the poor.

His anxiety respecting where to study theology was terminated by going to Princeton, in 1828, under the patronage of the Presbyterian Society. In May, 1828, he went to Providence<sup>113</sup> as an agent of the American Tract Society.<sup>114</sup>

In any event, after a year at Princeton Seminary he was licensed by the Third Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church.

(McDowall) had come to New York in this month of September, 1830, to do what he could for its enlightenment and purification. It was an errand of benevolence, and his first object was to labor as a domestic missionary among the poor, particularly in bringing their children under the influence of Sabbath-school instruction. While engaged in this way, in the neighborhood of the Five Points, where he was instrumental in establishing a Sunday School, he was brought under the painful observation of some of the hideous developments of the sin of impurity. He soon decided that this opened a field in which, under God, be the one for his future labors.<sup>115</sup>

It was while he was ministering to the poor that John Robert McDowall discovered his call. He believed God was calling him to eradicate prostitution from New York City and to close its brothels. This cause, and this calling, became his mission.

There existed at this time an association called the "Female Asylum Society" which supported the "Asylum for Females Who Have Deviated from the Paths of Virtue." It was soon merged with the "New York Magdalen Society." Arthur Tappan, a well-known philanthropist, served as its president. Tappan had become interested in McDowall and invited him to serve as the chaplain of this new society.

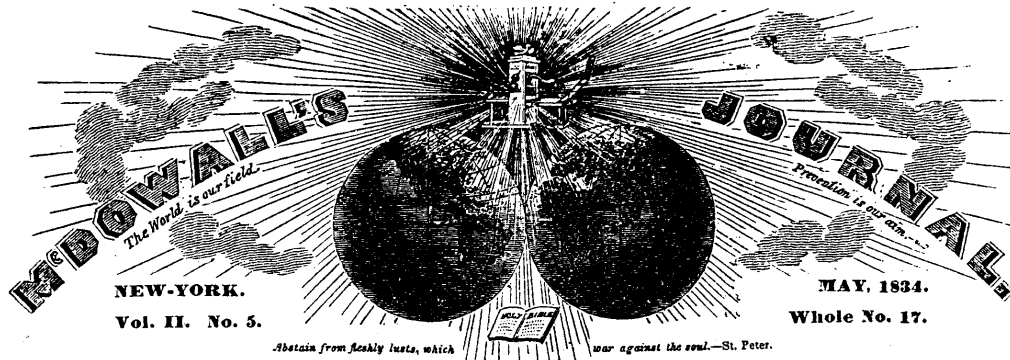
With unbridled zeal, McDowall surveyed his mission field and began to collect facts regarding prostitution and brothels in New York City. He published his findings in a newspaper called *M'Dowall's Journal*. He used this tabloid to zealously press his case. He sought financial support from many and donations poured in,

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<sup>113</sup> Probably Providence, New York, which is located north of Schenectady.

<sup>114</sup> McDowall Papers, Queen's University Archives, Kingston, Ontario. Hereinafter noted as "McDowall Papers."

<sup>115</sup> Lewis Tappan, *The Life of Arthur Tappan*, Hurd and Haughton, Cambridge, Riverside Press, New York 1870, p. 110



R. McDOWALL, Editor,  
No. 150 Nassau street, N. Y.

A Monthly periodical  
Price \$1 in advance.

**PURITY AND TRUTH.**

**Magdalen Report.**

Several friends and supporters of the Journal have requested me to send them a copy of this document. As the numerous editions through which it rapidly passed soon after its publication are sold, or given away, their wishes could not be satisfied. To place this Report in their hands, and to aver that, in my opinion, its statistics of crimes are below the reality, and not "grossly exaggerated," it is now stereotyped in the Journal, and excides from its pages the usual variety of matter.

**REPORT.**

Among the numerous benevolent institutions of the present day, and perhaps among our most useful charities, may be reckoned the system of Sabbath School instruction. Besides its obvious effects in promoting the moral and religious instruction of the rising generation, and especially among the poor, the ignorant, and the depraved; it has been the pioneer of many other important objects of Christian enterprise, and is one of the most efficient auxiliaries of them all. The Sabbath School teacher gains easy access to the wretched and unhappy every where, and often finds out a way, or opens a door for the Bible, the Tract, and the Missionary, into spheres of usefulness which otherwise might have escaped observation.

While the "British and Foreign Bible Society" is justly and justly called "the blooming daughter of Sabbath Schools," we feel a pride and pleasure in acknowledging that the "New York Magdalen Society," owes its origin to a chain of facts developed by the labours of Sabbath School

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**Chaplain.**

Rev. JOHN K. McDOWALL.

In justice to the officers and physicians of the New-York Magdalen Society, it is right to add, that, in addition to the gratuitously rendering of their services in the cause they advocated, they were subjected to heavy and repeated pecuniary demands. The Society was not sustained by the public, and its officers directed their attention to other objects of benevolence.—[Ed.]

Teachers in this city, and especially in the Female Penitentiary at Bellevue.

About two years since, through the labours of a few pious females of different Christian denominations, a Sabbath School was permanently established in the Female Penitentiary at Bellevue, they having secured the occasional assistance of their husbands and other brethren. This Penitentiary is for the most part filled with abandoned white females, who have been arrested by the Police for drunken rioting and other disturbances of the public peace, or have been sent hither as vagrants. Here all ages and descriptions of prostitutes are herded together, from the old and superannuated daughters of infamy and pollution, familiar with crime, and habituated to filthiness and degradation; to those novitiates in the arts and guilt of the brothel, who have fallen victims to seduction but recently, and have been overtaken thus early in the road to ruin by the arm of civil law. Here they are crowded into four or five night-rooms in numbers varying from two to four hundred, and the term of their commitment limited to sixty days. Many of them, it is true, were worn out by drunkenness and dissipation, and languished in the Hospital of the most loathsome diseases. But a large proportion of these wretched females still had youth and health on their side, and many of them had but recently forsaken the paths of virtue; and had respectable and pious parents who mourned over their daughters with anguish indescribable; although ignorant of their fate, except that they had fallen into the fangs of the seducer, and had abandoned home and friends for a life of infamy and crime.

The short period of their imprisonment only gave these ladies access to them for the few Sabbaths included in the sixty days, and the next they would hear of these subjects of their prayers and tears, was that they had returned "like the dog to his vomit, or the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire," and soon their crimes would bring them back to the school, for very many of them were out but a few days, and spent half their time in this Penitentiary. Indeed some of these unhappy women have been committed seventeen times, and served out sixty days at each commitment.

From the indiscriminate manner in which they were thronged together in the night rooms, and the absence of any moral or religious instruction through the week, it was soon found that the labours of the Sabbath School were for the most part unproductive. Sometimes the impressions made on the hearts and consciences of these daughters of guilt and sorrow, by the pious efforts

of the teachers, would seem to afford a hope of future amendment, but their term of imprisonment soon expiring, they were turned out into the city without a home, without friends, without character, and what is worse, exposed to a thousand snares and temptations tending to lead them to their old haunts of guilt and pollution. Hence, when these pious ladies who had toiled for their good would seek after them, they would find them again mingling with the women of the town, in their sinks of degradation, either on the "Five Points," "Coerlar's Hook," or some other of the abodes of moral death, with which our city abounds. But when overtaken here by these angels of mercy, whose love of kindness had found a tender chord even in a harlot's heart; they would express their willingness, nay, ardent desire, to forsake their ways, but no door was open for their reception, no way appeared for their escape.

Soon it became evident that very many cases of prostitution were the result of sheer necessity, poverty rather than will consenting, and the observations of those who visited these houses of ill-fame clearly satisfied them that all such might be rescued, and many others more guilty, but not less interesting cases, would be saved from their life of pollution, if a place of refuge could be provided for them.

This was the origin of the New-York Magdalen Society, and its object declared to be to afford a refuge and provide an "Asylum for females who have deviated from the paths of virtue, and are desirous of being restored to a respectable station in society, by religious instruction and the formation of moral and industrious habits." It was instituted January 1, 1830, and the first inmates were those from the Sabbath School in the Penitentiary, who gave signs of repentance, and consented to forsake the evil of their ways. They were brought directly from the prison to the Asylum on their discharge.

In this early period of our history, a few pious individuals undertook to hold religious meetings and organize a Sabbath School at the "Five Points." They visited many of the brothels, conversed closely and feelingly with the women, presented them with Bibles and Tracts, and laboured to teach those to read who could not, prayed with them, and informed them that a way was now opened through the mercy of God, for their rescue out of the misery into which their crimes had plunged them. The persons so engaged were chiefly those who were teachers in the Sunday School at the Penitentiary, and here they found a number of those who had formerly been their scholars. Occasionally

not only from people in New York City, but from different parts of the country. Magdalen Societies were formed in many places. The country seemed to genuinely respond to his call for action.

In June, 1831, the Magdalen Society published a report based on the statistics of

## The McDowall Saga: A Story of Three Generations

vice gathered by McDowall. He claimed, for example, that ten thousand female prostitutes—some twelve, thirteen and fourteen years old—lived in the city. He claimed he had the names and addresses of hundreds of brothels. Instead of being cheered as a heroic leader promoting chastity, he found that he had unleashed the rage of the establishment and the press. “How dare he defame our fair city,” was their cry. The Magdalen Report and his journal were condemned, not because they exposed vice, but because they were too graphic! The problem was his zeal. He graphically stated his case so bluntly, using stories from real life, that his journal was considered to be obscene. In fact, a grand jury, with a Presbyterian layman as its foreman, called his journal a nuisance. Physical threats were made and McDowall’s house was considered to be a possible target of mob violence.

It was during this period that John R. married. According to family records, “the Rev. John McDowall was married to Phoebe, widow of the Rev. Solomon Carpenter of New Jersey in January 1832.”<sup>116</sup> Other than this fact, we don’t know much about his personal life. We don’t know how Phoebe managed to survive after John R. died just four years later.

A paragraph from a book by Helen Beal Woodward, gives us a glimpse into the turmoil he caused:

In the New York to which Isabella (Sojourner Truth) came in the early 1830’s, everybody was talking about the Magdalen Report. A young Presbyterian clergyman made a conscientious firsthand survey of the city’s brothels, and he estimated that there were ten thousand prostitutes in New York alone. His Report brought screams from the New York press in defense of civic pride and local chastity, and, though college campuses rallied to McDowall’s support, and local Magdalen Societies were formed, with Standing Committees on Lewdness, McDowall’s principal sponsor, the wealthy abolitionist and temperance man, Arthur Tappan, was scared by the hullabaloo into admitting that possibly the Reverend McDowall’s language was a bit blunt and his vice exposure a little too graphic. Tappan’s Asylum for Females Who Have Deviated from the Paths of Virtue closed down. McDowall himself died young, presumably from overwork, but his Report had not been quite in vain. American reformers kept a warm place in their hearts for fallen women.<sup>117</sup>

From the perspective of the twentieth century, it is difficult to understand how *M’Dowall’s Journal*<sup>118</sup> and the Magdalen Report created such outrage from the establishment and the press—not only in New York City—but across the country. This is one example from an upstate New York newspaper.

A number of this journal (*M’Dowall’s Journal*) together with the Constitution

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<sup>116</sup> Family Record

<sup>117</sup> Helen Beal Woodward, *The Bold Women*, (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1953), p. 255

<sup>118</sup> The spelling of M’Dowall was the customary spelling of McDowall in fashion at the time. Later editions used “McDowall’s Journal.”

of the American Society for Promoting the Observance of the Seventh Commandment, have been received at this office. The objects of this journal and this society may be good—but we are free to say, that much of the matter contained in the journal is extremely obscene, and such as we should decline giving to any female of delicacy. In our opinion, a very improper course is taken to promote the reform desired by McDowall & Company. The Grand Jury of Otsego County recently took this matter in hand, and very expertly censured the character and tendency of the journal. An expression, very necessary, from the consideration that the journal is sent through the country, with the prospect of doing more injury than good, and offending the delicacy of those who care not to read the imaginary or real depravity of their fellow beings in a particular department of vice.<sup>119</sup>

John R. belonged to the Third Presbytery of New York. Over a period of forty days during the summer of 1834, the presbytery met in executive session to consider the matter. Objections had been raised, not only in the press, but within the presbytery. This is McDowall's commentary:

I refused to answer Mr. Lockwood's notions and objections to the Journal, on the ground that, if I was a heretic, it was their duty to depose me from the ministry, and to excommunicate me from the Church; or, if I was promulgating licentious doctrines, the book of our discipline made it Presbytery's duty to condemn those doctrines, as licentious, and to silence me, as a minister of the gospel, until I repented of my sins, renounced corrupt principles and believed the truth. All I asked, was, for a fair trial, and to be furnished, as equity required, with the *written* charges of my accusers.<sup>120</sup>

Some of the charges brought against McDowall by the presbytery concerned misappropriation of funds. In the last issue of the Journal, he goes to great lengths to try to prove his innocence. Basically, the presbytery did not give McDowall the opportunity to defend himself. Instead, in a series of resolutions, it sought to pour oil on troubled waters. The following is an example:

Resolved, That while the Presbytery entertain the kindest feelings toward Mr. McDowall, commend his zeal and devotedness to the cause of Moral Reform, and the honesty and benevolence of his interventions in the publication of his Journal, they believe its moral influence on the public mind to be at least of a questionable character; and that, instead of a periodical exclusively devoted to an exposure of the evils of licentiousness and designed for general circulation, they would prefer, that in connection with the occasional distribution of well written Tracts, more attention should be given to the subject by the common religious Journals of the day.<sup>121</sup>

The Presbytery clearly believed they had a "loose cannon" on their hands and

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<sup>119</sup> *Schoharie Republican*, February 18, 1834

<sup>120</sup> *McDowall's Journal*, Vol. II, No. 12, December, 1834, p. 94. Hereinafter noted as "Journal."

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

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although they did not formally censor McDowall, their actions, along with the cries of protest from the secular press, clearly doomed his publication, *McDowall's Journal*.

The *Christian Intelligencer* was a highly respected weekly newspaper of the time published by an association of members of the Reformed Dutch Church. Over the years of its publication, it served as a chronicle of events in the United States and around the world. Yet, a review of the issues published between 1832 and 1837 reveal only one reference to the Rev. John R. McDowall, *M'Dowell's Journal*, The Magdalen Society, or Arthur Tappan. This single reference was a brief summary of the action of the presbytery cited above.<sup>122</sup> The *Intelligencer* didn't even report McDowall's death in 1836.

Copies of *M'Dowell's Journal* are archived in the New York State Library, Albany, New York. The last of the series is dated December, 1834. In it McDowall bitterly states,

Perhaps it will be said, that I am too severe. I cherish no bitter and hostile feeling toward Mr. Morse; but I feel for a cause, which the Observer has done more to blast than all the papers in the land. The Observer's influence has been like the poisonous breath of the Zahara (sic.) on the benevolence that sustained my operations. It sent a chill through the whole length of the land. It palsied the efforts of thousands to promote the cause.<sup>123</sup>

Although McDowall retired as the editor of the *Journal*, he nevertheless, continued to promote his cause. He traveled, preached, and spoke to just about any group who would listen. During this time, he continued to keep a diary. In it, John R. made this interesting note dated October 5, 1835, "At the hotel where I put up there is a reading-room, the walls of which have pictures on them of various kinds." The editor of his memoirs adds a footnote,

These pictures are so abominably obscene, that though they are minutely described in M. M'Dowall's *Journal*, yet a delineation of them here must be omitted. Is it so, that in the country where literature has so much advanced as to establish a reading-room, that the eye of the traveler must be met with shocking indecencies!!<sup>124</sup>

The question is why McDowall felt it important to describe the pictures he found in the reading room so graphically and in such detail? And not only that, he goes on to point out "such is the reading-room of the principal stage-house in Canandaigua."<sup>125</sup> As we have observed, McDowall was severely criticized at the time by the press and the establishment because they believed his journal was por-

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<sup>122</sup> *Christian Intelligencer*, Vol. 5, No. 1., p. 3

<sup>123</sup> *Journal*, p. 94

<sup>124</sup> *Memoir*, p. 298

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

nographic. It may be that he was, in fact, subconsciously sexually aroused, not only by pictures such as these, but by the content of his crusade—prostitution and brothels. McDowall would not have been the first or last clergy-person to denounce sexual sins while at the same time be titillated by them.

One of the places his story was formally heard, was in the Reformed Dutch Church. On October 7, 1835, he reports visiting the Classis of Cayuga meeting in Ithaca, New York. McDowall was given permission to address the classis. He reports that “a committee was appointed to draft resolutions on Moral Reform. I spoke about one hour in the morning, and perhaps half an hour on the resolutions.”<sup>126</sup> Basically he defends his position regarding the publication of “details.”

The classis passed the following resolutions:

In view of facts tending to show the extent of licentiousness in its various forms throughout our own land, but particularly in our cities; and believing that too little attention has been given to this painful but delicate subject by the community and by the church;

Therefore, resolved, that as a classis, we regard the efforts which have been made by benevolent individuals and Moral Reform Societies to throw light on the hitherto unexplored path of the debauchee, though in some respects unwise, and as such to be regretted, yet, on the whole, as fitted to operate in a salutary way on public opinion; and on this account deserving the prayers and cooperation of all good men.

Resolved, that it be recommended and earnestly urged, and hereby is recommended and urged on the ministers and christians in our communion, to put forth all prayerful efforts which shall be deemed prudent to storm the current of pollution which threatens to deluge our favored land.<sup>127</sup>

McDowall’s zeal included keeping detailed notes of the minutiae of daily living. We’ve already noted this trait when he described the pictures on the walls of his drawing room. These little notes also provide a wonderful glimpse into life in upstate New York during the 1830s. For example, we learn something of how people traveled at the time. Certainly, the means of transportation available to John R. had changed dramatically since his father went to Canada. Here are a few of his notations:

(October 8, 1835) Left for Oswego, New York, twenty-nine miles south on the Oswego rail-road.

(October 9, 1835) Left for Cayuga Bridge, forty-two miles north. Took the packet for Montezuma—took a line-boat for Westport. At Westport took the packet for Whitesborough.

(October 12, 1835) Left in a little wagon for Utica, and at Utica took the

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid., pp. 298-99

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., pp. 299-300

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stage for Schenectady—took a line-boat for Troy.<sup>128</sup>

He penned this cryptic note soon after. “Albany, New York. Wednesday—Last night at synod; requested to address the synod. Committee of overtures took it into consideration and reported today, that synod had expressed an opinion on Moral Reform, and that it was not advisable to take up the subject at this time, and that my request was not granted. This was a decent way to get over the matter.”<sup>129</sup>

Obviously, he had become an embarrassment to many of his former supporters.

In just over a year later, the Rev. John R. McDowall “died in poverty, December 13, 1836” at the age of thirty-five—only twelve years after he graduated from college. The ravages of the struggle had become too much. His funeral service was held at the Broadway Tabernacle during which a sermon was preached by the Rev. Joshua Leavitt, editor, of the *New York Evangelist*. Through the kindness of a friend, he was buried in the Fanshaw Family Vault in Trinity Church Cemetery, New York City.<sup>130</sup>

John R. McDowall, pioneer evangelist, who had come to the city in a blaze of righteous indignation, had burned out. His epitaph is best described in the subtitle of his memoirs, published two years after his death:

### The Martyr Of The Seventh Commandment In The Nineteenth Century

As we began this account of John R. with a statement written by his father, so this portion of the McDowall Saga is concluded:

As all who live godly in Jesus Christ shall suffer persecution, I do not wonder that my son died a martyr. For though I never wrote a word on moral reform for any paper, I have on account of it suffered great persecution by nominal professors, who have gone from house to house to stir up hatred, strife, and opposition against me; and these persecutors were encouraged and aided by a professed minister of the Prince of Peace. What will not professors and ministers do, who are seeking popularity and are unwilling to be reclaimed from their evil.<sup>131</sup>

In his eulogy for his son, the Rev. Robert J. McDowall, pioneer missionary, names the “enemies who had come in like a flood” in his own field of mission.

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., pp. 300-301

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., pp. 301-302

<sup>130</sup> McDowall Papers

<sup>131</sup> Memoir, p. 4



# Conclusion

Thus ends the McDowall Saga. Here is the story of three generations of strong-willed, stubborn, driven, and zealous pioneers willing to face incredible opposition in their struggle and fight to do what they believed God had called them to do and to be. All three, very different, and, at the same time, very much alike.

- John McDowell, the immigrant from Scotland who remained loyal to the British crown in the face of incredible persecution.
- The Rev. Robert James McDowall, the pioneer missionary who impacted the church in ways far beyond his dreams and who continues to inspire the Church to this day.
- The Rev. John R. McDowall, the pioneer evangelist who was willing to confront, like Paul, the principalities and powers in his missionary field. As Paul wrote, “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” (*Ephesians 6: 11-12*)

The McDowalls have enriched two nations—Canada and the United States of America; and two Churches—the Reformed Church in America and the Presbyterian Church in Canada. It has been a privilege to walk with them on their journeys.

The story of the two McDowall clergymen, the Rev. Robert J. McDowall and the Rev. John R. McDowall, help to raise some important questions for the church today. To name four:

1. General Synod minutes during the time of the Canadian experiment, included lists of clergy assigned to pulpits of ministers who volunteered to serve as missionaries. Could this provide a model for doing new church development/church extension in the 21st century? If the Synod of Albany is intentional about becoming a mission synod and exists to enable its congregations to become mission churches, then, a model for the future would include the expectation that clergy serve as church extension

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missionaries. Their service would be fully supported by the congregations they serve and the classes to which they belong. Not only would church pastors be expected to serve in this way, i.e. six months at one time; or one month over a period for six years, or some other configuration, but that synod staff would also participate. The local congregation or synod would provide salary and benefits; the classis would agree to provide pastoral coverage and supply the pulpit.

2. Doing church extension in Canada between 1790 and 1820 was, in many ways, as difficult and frustrating as it is today. The story of the struggle is very reflective of new church development today. This observation raises a number of questions. Can a denomination governed by the presbyterian system do effective church extension? Can a synod, classis or a congregation develop new churches by committee? Our system of government, while effective in many ways, becomes cumbersome when it tries to extend or enlarge the church. Perhaps that is why the Methodists with their episcopalian form of government did a much more effective job in church extension as this country grew. True, there were other factors such as their willingness to use clergy who were inadequately trained. (Yet, we note, that McDowall had not yet been educated when he was sent out by Albany Classis in 1790.) Moreover, the Methodists had the advantage of a bishop or district superintendent who could say, "Establish a church here" and it would happen; or disband the work there, and that would happen. This raises a fundamental question. For the sake of the gospel, for the sake of evangelization, is the Reformed Church in America willing to give up some of its precious presbyterian form of government heritage? As Christ became a servant for our sake, how much heritage is the church willing to give up for him?
3. What does the history of the 1822 succession mean to the Reformed Church in America today? The voices of those caught up in the 1822 controversy reflect some of what is being said today in the life of the church regarding theological discourse. The reference here is to the current debate centering around Universalism. The debate, unfortunately, is often mean-spirited. In fact, it threatens to cause schism and division in all parts of the RCA. One voice supporting the succession of 1822 said, "We intend to have a PURE church, free from corruption and false doctrine." These haunting words from the past are being echoed by others today. By looking at the mistakes of the past, can we better address how to approach theological issues today?
4. The image of John R. McDowall as a pioneer evangelist has become stereotyped in the twentieth century. Many church people, including clergypersons, shy away from sharing the good news because they do not want to appear like "John R. the Zealot." Yet, as we traveled with John R., we couldn't help but admire the energy he poured into his cause. So the ques-

tion is, where will the church find committed people who care enough to share the gospel without the over-zealousness of John R. McDowall? In many places the world has become as hostile to the church, as the press and the establishment (and yes, even the church) were to John R. McDowall. How can the church live and grow in this new and very different world.

# Appendix

**Contemporary name:**

**McDowall era:**

**Osnabruck Centre**

**Osnaburgh**

Very small hamlet located west of Cornwall. This is the community where Broeffle commuted to from Canajoharie, New York, before finally settling in the area. Only place visited where I did not see any church buildings.

**Williamsburg**

**Williamsburgh**

Located west of Osnabruck Centre. Perhaps the most prosperous of all the smaller communities visited. This is also a place where Broeffle was said to have conducted his ministry. There is evidence the area was settled by Palatines from the Mohawk and Schoharie Valleys of New York State. Many old stone houses are very similar to those found today in New York State. Also, Williamsburgh is the location of a Christian Reformed Church.

**Dundela**

**Matilda**

Located west of Williamsburg. It is the location of another Christian Reformed Church.

**Brockville**

**Elizabethtown**

Brockville is a mid-size city, active and prosperous. It is located on the St. Lawrence River about twenty five miles east of the Thousand Islands. It is the location of a strong Presbyterian Church. McDowall was called to serve the church here, but he chose instead to settle near Bath, in the Bay of Quinte area.

**Kingston**

**Kingston**

Kingston is a large, multi-cultural city located west of the Thousand Islands. It is the location of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church and Queens University.

**Bath**

The village of Bath is situated west of Kingston along Loyalist Parkway. It is the location of several churches including an Anglican church, once pastored by the Rev. John Langhorn, a rival of McDowalls.

**Ernestown**

**Sandhurst**

Here is where McDowall organized his first church and the place where he and some of this family are buried. A memorial has been erected in the cemetery in his honor. This is the area where McDowall lived and ministered and in his later years, farmed. Sandhurst is located on Loyalist Parkway, west of Bath.

**Fredericksburg**

**Adolphustown**

Adolphustown is on Loyalist Parkway west of Sandhurst. It is the eastern terminal of a ferry which is a fifteen minute ride across the Bay of Quinte to Glenora.

**Adolphustown**

**Glenora**

Glenora is the location of the Van Alstyne Mill which may have been founded by Loyalists from the Kinderhook, New York, area.

**Marysburgh**

**Picton**

Picton is a large prosperous village, located on Loyalist Parkway west of Glenora. It is the place where McDowall was married.

**Picton**

**Hallowell**

Hallowell Township includes the village of Picton.

**Hallowell**

**Ameliasburg**

Ameliasburg is the location of a museum and several church buildings. The Methodist building is now part of museum. As usual, there is a United Church of Canada congregation. Ameliasburg is located west of Hallowell Township and is a short ride from the Loyalist Parkway.

**Ameliasburgh**

**Belleville**

Belleville is a large city located west of Kingston. McDowall's ministry included the communities and hamlets located from Kingston west to Belleville, called "Myer's Creek" at least until the War of 1812.

**Belleville**

**Demorestville**

Today, this is a very small hamlet housing a town hall, a church and about six dwellings. It is located north of Picton.

**Sophiasburgh**

**Toronto**

Toronto is a very large city and is the home of the Presbyterian Church in Canada offices and archives.

**York**

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### Discussion Questions

1. Should the Reformed Church in America reclaim “church extension?”
2. As the Synod of Albany develops its mission synod model, should that model include the expectation that clergy serve as church extension missionaries?
3. Is a denomination governed by the presbyterian form of government capable of doing effective church extension?
4. Should the Synod of Albany mount an aggressive campaign in and outside of the RCA so the best women and men may be called to serve its congregations as missionaries in mission outposts?
5. How can the Reformed Church in America capture John R. McDowall’s commitment to share the good news of Jesus Christ without his overbearing zealotness?
6. Is the doctrine of limited atonement anti-evangelization?
7. Are there parallels in the schism of 1822 and the threats of schism now being heard in the church?

# Author

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In 1990, he accepted an invitation to serve the Regional Synod of Albany as Minister for Witness and the Reformed Church in America as Minister for Congregational Evangelism.