

CAPTAIN DAN

While my Great Great Grandfather Brown's family members were racing through the high seas on clipper ships to the Orient and back, my Great Great Grandfather MacDonald (Captain Dan) was sailing on this side of the Atlantic. And just like the Browns, the MacDonalds were a family with many ship captains. Captain Dan and his brother Alexander were both captains, and the 1871 Census of Nova Scotia indicates there was another sea captain, John MacDonald, registered living at his house. He was probably a nephew or much younger brother, since he was 14 years younger than Captain Dan.

Captain Dan's family had already lived in Nova Scotia for fifty years before he came into this world. He was born in Cape George, Nova Scotia in 1824. Of 100% Scottish ancestry, he proudly wore his kilt in his formal portrait taken while ashore in New York City in 1860. Although he was christened Donald McDonald, he was always known as Captain Dan. He was a vital member of his community, considered a "mover and shaker," and was registered as a "Master Mariner and Ship Owner." He had a wife, seven children who survived infancy (three who did not), and two servants. His house, small by today's standards, stands to this day.

THE GLENALLADALE

Captain Dan owned the Glenalladale, built in 1864. She was a barque, a deep water cargo-carrier typical of the mid-19th century. She might have been named after the ship that carried his grandparents from Scotland, or she might have been named after the region in Scotland where his ancestors lived. She had three masts, and had a gross tonnage of 313, meaning she could carry 31,300 cubic feet of goods. Captain Dan's daughter Margaret painted a picture of the ship, so we know what it looked like. Captain Dan used his ship for regular trips to Newfoundland, but also sailed to New York City, and even to Australia. Captain Dan was also the registered owner of the schooner the William B. when it was built in 1872.

The MacDonald side of the family loved adventure as much as the Brown side. One time Captain Dan brought a son with him when he sailed to Australia. That son loved Australia so much he returned to Australia and stayed there. Another son went north to Alaska during the Gold Rush.