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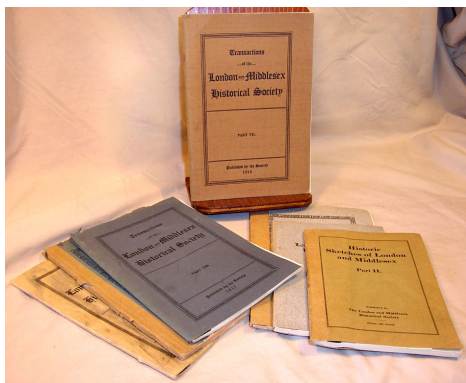
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# The Proudfoot Papers per: L&M.H.S. (as extracted from the London & Middlesex Historical Society Transactions)

original by Miss Harriet Priddis / Fred. Landon

## CA0276-P1



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## ABOUT THIS CD.

The Rev. William Proudfoot was sent, as a missionary, to Canada by a branch of the Presbyterian church in Scotland in 1832. From the time of his appointment he kept a journal, or daily diary, of his activities, his impressions, and of the events in his daily life.

This included both professional and secular matters and also seems to have filled the role of account book, as well as his personal reminder. It was from this journal, or more correctly from the collection of many individual volumes of this journal, plus a collection of draft and received letters as well as other family mementos, that Miss Harriet Priddis extracted and recorded this fascinating insight into the life of one of the earliest settlers in the London, Middlesex area of Ontario. I should hasten to add though, that the geographical area covered by this account extends well beyond that area as it starts in Scotland and includes records of many of Rev. Proudfoot's excursions along the St. Lawrence waterway and into several other parts of what we now call Ontario (then Upper Canada or Canada West.)

Harriet Priddis was given access to the papers by the Proudfoot family and it seemed to have been her plan to extract and copy passages which contained significant historical and genealogical information, publishing them as a series of papers to be presented to the London and Middlesex Historical Society, an organization in which she was a leading light. Unfortunately she died before the third collection was ready and it was only through the intervention of Fred. Landon that the third collection was finally presented. In his introduction to the third episode Mr Landon writes about further episodes but we have not been able to find any evidence of any further publications of Proudfoot extracts by this organization.

The chronology of the three episodes present here is a little complicated and appears to cover the same period twice, although there is no repetition of material. Parts one and three are actually contiguous and cover the period from 25 June 1832 when Rev William Proudfoot was tasked with his mission until 16 March 1833 when he was settling into his permanent "living." Part 2 covers a period from 28 January 1833 through 14 September 1834 but seems to be limited to a few entries describing various major trips the Rev. undertook, plus it is concluded with some extracts from the account book of Mary Proudfoot during her setting up of a day and boarding school in the village of London under the sponsorship of her father.

As one might expect there is a good deal of theological discussion in the journal but the extracts seem to have been primarily chosen with a view to illustrating the people and places which the Rev. Proudfoot encountered in his day to day work. This work called for him to travel a good deal, and by virtue of the period of the record there are some interesting insights into the difficulties, and indeed the benefits, of travel during the winter season. Another benefit to the genealogist of this choice of extracts is that the names of a great number of early settlers are recorded, and not only those who were active in the Presbyterian church as he frequently came into contact with members of other churches and indeed with notably "secular" individuals. Of particular note is the listing of the families who are sponsoring the formation of his ministry in London.

One practical note for those conducting searches in the text of these papers is that the spelling, indeed the very vocabulary is frequently - well let's say - unorthodox. When formulating search terms be prepared to accommodate this peculiarity as our OCR (optical character reading) faithfully reproduces what is on the printed page.

# *The Proudfoot Papers*

Collected by Miss Harriet Priddis.

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## EXPLANATORY

In 1832, that branch of Presbyterianism in Scotland called "The United Associate Synod of the Secessions Church," decided to send missionaries to Canada. The three ministers who volunteered for the work, and were accepted, were the Rev. Wm. Proudfoot, the Rev. William Robertson, and the Rev. Thomas Christie. Of these, Mr. Proudfoot was pre-eminently the leader. From the day that he left, almost immediately after his appointment, he commenced keeping a daily journal, which not only gave an accurate account of his proceedings, but included interesting and valuable comments on men and things—both secular and ecclesiastical. The journal and correspondence herewith printed for the first time, covers only three or four months, up to the time of his first visit to London. The remainder of the journal, or such parts as are available, may be published later.

The difficulties noted by Mr. Proudfoot on his first visit to London were cleared up shortly after; and in April of 1833 he moved to the village, and assumed the ministry over two congregations—one in the village, and the other some eleven miles north in London Township. The church in London bore in the early days, before the final union of the different Presbyterian bodies, the name of the U. P. Church; and is now known as the First Presbyterian. The building occupied for many years was the frame structure, situated on the south side of York street, a short distance west of Richmond. Mr. Proudfoot retained the ministry of this church until his death on the 10th of February, 1851, at the age of 63. He was succeeded by his son John.

The following paragraph from Dr. Greig's "History of the Presbyterian Church in Canada" is sufficiently descriptive. The portrait accompanying represents him in advanced life.

"William Proudfoot was educated in the University of Edinburgh, and studied theology under Dr. Lawson of Selkirk. He was licensed by the Presbytery of Edinburgh in 1812 and on the 1st of August, 1813, was ordained to the charge of Pitrodie, in Perthshire, where he remained for seventeen years, and where, in addition to his pastoral duties, he conducted with success a classical and mathematical academy. After arriving

in Canada Mr. Proudfoot travelled to Upper Canada, and made an extensive tour through different parts of the Province. He then accepted the charge of a congregation in London which he retained till his death. He died on the 10th of January, 1851, in the sixty-third year of his age, and the thirty-eighth of his ministry. During his residence in Canada he was not only a zealous missionary and faithful pastor, but discharged with success other multifarious duties which were laid upon him. He was Clerk of Presbytery, Clerk of Synod and Official Correspondent with the Church in Scotland, and took a leading part in the Union negotiations between the United Secession and the Presbyterian Synods of Canada. When a theological college was established in 1844 in connection with the United Secession Synod, he was appointed professor, and taught classics and philosophy as well as theology, while at the same time he retained the pastoral charge of the congregation in London. In addition to all these labors he took an active and influential part in the public affairs of the Province, and particularly in the movements respecting King's College and the Clergy Reserves. He was a man of dignified appearance and independent character, and an accomplished scholar, a profound theologian and an eloquent and impressive preacher, wise in counsel and energetic in action."

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#### JOURNAL OF REV. W. PROUDFOOT.

Events which happened from the time I left Pitrodie, 1832, June 25th.

Rouped\* all that part of my furniture which I did not mean to take to America. The proceeds of the sale were £94. I was enabled to leave Pitrodie without owing any man anything but "Love." I took property with me in books and clothes amounting to more than £350, besides £60 in cash. Of this I insured £200 in the Sea Insurance Office, Edinburgh, that should there happen any accident which might prevent our reaching America there might be something saved our dear daughters left behind us. In the afternoon of the 25th, Mary and Eliza left Pitrodie, Mary to go to Musselburgh, Eliza to Edinburgh, for their education. It being intended by both them and us that they shall come out next season or the season following to us in America, if it be the will of God. Parting with them was a painful event, but I left them under the care of the All Gracious and ever present God, and under the superintendence of friends, who will, I am confident, perform the friends' part.

\* Sold by auction.

plication each for a minister to itself; and that a great deal of patience and perseverance are necessary, both to gather and preserve a congregation. Was informed that the Methodists are straining every nerve to make converts to their cause, and that they are being successful. Mr. McGregor told me on Friday that at Gouveneur, U. S., there was a revival of religion last year; that 100 converts were made; and that the Methodists never rested till, by hook or crook, they got most of them to their connection. Mr. Stuart detailed to me a good deal of the history of the steps which have led to the union of the Presbyterians of the General Synod and the Presbyterians of the United Synod. The former are in connection with the Kirk of Scotland, the latter with the several Presbyterian bodies in Britain and America (U. S.). The union is *primae facie*, rather dishonorable to the dissenters. The Kirk party offers to admit them into the synod on the following terms:—That the dissenters shall produce written proof of their ordination; that they shall subscribe to the confession of faith (Westminster); and that they shall not set up any claim to the royal bounty, nor interfere with whatever applications the Kirk party may make for themselves. These terms are humiliating enough. It appears that the measure has been recommended by Mr. George Murray when in office; that Sir John Colbern has assented to it; and that the people generally throughout the province are desirous of it; so that the secession party are shut up. Mr. Stuart thinks that in spite of the apparent ungraciousness of the terms the union will work well, and so it will, if the one party lay aside its hauteur and the other, or both rather, resolve to do all to the glory of God. I was very desirous to understand the position in which I should be placed by this union. Mr. Stuart could not well tell, but repeated again and again, that for his part he was perfectly contented that a Presbytery or Presbyteries be formed in immediate connection with the United Associate Synod; that all he wished most is the faithful and pure preaching of the gospel; that he would correspond with me in the event of my being settled; that I might be taken into their union if I had a mind; and as proof of the sincerity of these declarations he gave me some letters to men of influence in York and other places. Mr. Stuart spoke of the Kirk clergy as men who desired to ride, and ride on the dissenters, but he thought that neither the government nor the country would bear them out in any such measures, and therefore he concluded that though the terms of the union were ungracious, yet the union will work well. His opinion appears to me so far as I know the case, a sound one. He further told

four o'clock when, barring accidents, must pass with the mail. Mr. Swartz went this morning over to the second concession to announce that if the people there wish it I will preach to them to-morrow. His boys brought home four large turkeys which they had caught in a trap; turkeys are often caught that way weighing from sixteen to twenty pounds and are worth a dollar. Mr. Swartz told me that the standard weight of wheat is sixty pounds to the bushel, oats thirty-five pounds. He is going to sow rye the first fresh day, and says that if there come a good fall of snow, it will come up under it. Had a good deal of conversation about the U. S. of America, about beavers, and many other things. Frost became intense in the evening; but the wind fell away and the chinky log house became tolerable.

November 21.—Went over to the school house on the second concession and preached to a pretty full house from 1 John 4-16. Mr. Fraser did not tell me that the people there had sent a petition to the Presbytery praying that Mr. McLatchie may be sent to labor among them for some time. I gave him an account of my views with regard to London, and how these views had been disappointed. He must have felt rather uncomfortable. Mr. Cairns has done all the mischief. Mr. Swartz's boys trapped three large wild turkeys to-day. Mr. Grieve came over and spent the evening with me.

November 22.—The mail waggon—open—came past Mr. Swartz's this morning at five o'clock. I dressed myself and went in it. Breakfasted in Putnam's; the roads horrible; got a covered waggon, at Putnam's. Day very cold; after it became dark two Scotchmen who were passengers whiled away the time by singing Scotch songs. Called at Butler's about 9 P. M. in the hope of getting tea, but the servants were all gone to bed; he could give us nothing but gin and crackers, which of course were not taken. Arrived at Brantford at half past two A. M.; every bed in the tavern was full; there was no wood chopped; we were compelled to go out and chop wood, and make a fire in the bar room, and sit there weary and hungry and sleepless till the folks got up. Did all we could to raise the servants to get us some tea, but not one would move—the worst usage I ever met with in all my journeyings. Took twenty-one hours to go fifty miles.

November 23.—Hamilton. Breakfast at Brantford and dined with Mr. Wilkes. He is about the only man with thought I have met with in Canada; in religion he is an Independent—in politics, bordering on Radicalism. He has a number of

and that He would direct and preserve you and keep you in all ways. The wisest course is to live remembering that you are to die and that after death comes the judgment. On that day it will be found that they have been wisest who have labored to do the will of God in sincerity and truth. I must leave a little corner for the bairns and conclude by expressing my hope that God by His infinite mercy will keep you both and us to meet together in health and comfort.

I am, my dear children,

Your most affectionate father,

Wm. Proudfoot.

Dear Sisters:

We all feel the deepest anxiety about your welfare, and are most anxious to see you both safe in Canada. We have not yet got a place of our own, but we expect to be settled in a house of our own in the Spring. Papa has not seen any place that in every respect pleases him, and he thinks it better not to make a hasty choice.

May God bless you, our dear sisters. We are yours affectionately,

Alex'r. Proudfoot

Hart Proudfoot

John Proudfoot

Jessie Proudfoot

William Proudfoot

Robert Proudfoot

Dear Anna Mary.

"Huron" is pronounced Heuron, the "U" sounded as in June.

Address to me to the care of Rev'd. James Harris, York, Upper Canada.

My dearest Mary and Elizabeth:

I see everyone has forgot to mention Mamma. I am wearying much to see you both. Papa is very much liked, and might have been settled long before this time but it is not easy to get a place every way suitable. I hope in the Spring we will be in a place of our own. I trust Aunt Betsey will keep her promise and come out with you. Give my kind love to my Uncle Paterson when you see him, and tell him I felt very vexed I did not see him and my dear Amelia Famer before I left Scotland. I will write to all my friends when I get to a place where the air is clean, but I can tell you this is not the case in York; it is rather a low lying place. Give my kind love to Aunt Betsey, and tell her I have gathered very little information for her, as we have been very busy ever since we came



**THE PROUDFOOT PAPERS — PART II.**

Diary of Rev. J. Proudfoot — Continued.

January 28, Monday, 1833, Brantford. Rode down this day with Mr. John Wilkes in the sleigh about 10 miles along the Grand River to attend a general council of the Six Nation Indians, who have been convened for the purpose of deliberating upon some proposals which government had made to them about selling their lands. The Superintendent, Major Wingate, was present. The Indians and he spoke through an interpreter (Jacob Martin, a native). The council room is a squared log house between 50 and 60 feet long—floored. All around the sides and the end are low benches. On these sat the chief and his friends. At each end of the room was an enormous fire. On a cross form at one end sat the major. I sat on a short bench near him. The appearance of the Indians was very striking. Some of them had faces that were as mild and intelligent as those of civilized Europeans; but the majority had in their look that fierce savageness which is seen in the drawings of savages in books of travel. Some of them had painted their faces with ochre to make them look horrible. Two of them wore silver ornaments which hung from the cartilage of the nose and some of them had the outer rim of the ears slit for more than two inches, from which hung dangling a bunch of silver ornaments. Their dress was very varied and very fantastical. Some had a deerskin dress; some wore the European dress, trousers and surtout; some wore a hat; and many had a shawl or handkerchief tied around their heads like a turban, leaving a tuft of hair to assist their enemies in taking the scalp. The common Indian dress is first a shirt, sometimes frilled at the breast; then a pair of trousers half high up and held by strings around the waist, then a surtout, generally made out of a blanket, its skirts behind fall down to the calf of the leg; it meets in front down to the knee. Over all this is a blanket, when the day is cold, the whole fastened by a sash, some of silk, some of worsted. All wear moccasins. One man, called "Steel Trap," had feathers and porcupine quills stuck in his cap or turban, to make him look a great warrior. In the sash was stuck a knife before, and at one side a pouch of marten or weasel skin. Many of them smoked all the time of the council—all kept on their hats. There were some Methodist Indians present, who were better dressed. The council was opened by a very fine looking Indian called "Echo," who got his name for being a speaker. His speech opened to this effect: The Indians of the Six Nations had met by appointment—they had opened the council house—they had provided plenty of fire wood which would burn clearly and well, and be peaceable (not crackle). They were thankful to the Great Spirit, who had spared so many in health and brought them together in comfort, and also that the Chief was brought in health to preside. The Major, after returning the compliment,

in Southwold where we had breakfast, and got home to my own fireside at 8 p.m.

September 14, 1834. Preached today, the audience smaller in consequence of this being the first day in Mr. Cronyn's new chapel.

**EXTRACTS FROM THE ACCOUNT BOOK OF MISS MARY  
PROUDFOOT, LONDON, C. W.**

BY MISS H. PRIDDIS.

On the completion of their education in Scotland, Mary and Anna joined the family in their Farm Home, London Township; and Mary, under the supervision of her father, opened a private boarding and day school in the village, on Bathurst Street. From the record of the account book she began work on the 18 August, 1835.

The first name entered is that of Miss E. Lee, well known to Londoners of a later generation as Mrs. J. B. Strathy, and at 95 years of age is still living in Toronto with her daughter, Miss Louisa Strathy. (1915.) The items are—"to copy of Goldsmith's Geography 4/9; and to pencil and drawing book 3/." For nine quarters' tuition in English, French, Music and Drawing, the charge was £6.15, received £3.15; then cordwood with the entry below £7 5s. Evidently the wood came to £3.10, 2/3 more than was due.

Miss Jane Wright, the second pupil came for one quarter in 1835, and again for a quarter in 1836. In addition to the Geography and Drawing material is 1/6 for copy of Murray's Grammar. "Phrase book and French Grammar" no price given. Signed, "paid in full."

The next entry must have been a bonanza, a whole school in itself. The Misses Sarah, Amelia, Eliza, Mary and Charlotte and Master John Harris. The books here amounted to £1.3.3. Primer. Telemaque 6/9. A shorter Catechism 4d, a rather noticeable item in the account of several staunch episcopal families. Six paint brushes 6d. Also on this memorable August day the Misses Anna, Maria, Theresa and Cynthia Askin. Their names remain with us in Cynthia, Theresa and Askin Streets, London South.

Goldsmith seems to be always the Geography used, Scot the Arithmetic, Nugent the Dictionary, and Murray the Grammar. They remained at school till November 18, 1836, which was five quarters and paid in full.

The next entry is the names of Mary Clark and Louisa Law-  
rason. They remained five quarters; part payment in goods; five bushels of flour, two pairs of blankets, 1 lb of coffee. Unfortunately the money value of these articles not entered.

## THE PROUDFOOT PAPERS

THE first published portion of the Proudfoot Papers was copied from a manuscript which closed with the rather exciting paragraph; "December 5th, Home. Went into York and called for some acquaintances with whom I had some chat and from whom I heard a scandal."

Following this came ten volumes (III. to XII.) of the original diary, small paper-covered manuscripts each containing from twenty-four to fifty pages, extending from December, 1832, to June 14, 1833. They are written in fine copperplate handwriting with few corrections and no blots. The scandal mentioned above, proved to be very mild. The entry of December 5th gives the details, the chief of which was that there was considerable dissension in the Scotch Kirk regarding their minister, Mr. Rentoul. The only fault which is stated against him, is, that he reads his sermons—all admit that he is a pious man, and that his walk is becoming the gospel. The fact seems to be that he is not popular and that there is about him a stiffness which prevents that easy familiarity with which Canadians, and particularly Canadian Independents, wish to treat their ministers. At the head of the opposition are Mr. Letham and Mr. Freeland, who are Independents, and who have actually bought a chapel for the purpose of forming in it an Independent Church. This want of good agreement is the source of joy to not a few in the town. Mr. Stewart, the Baptist, delights in telling of it, though it can affect him I suppose in no way.

Was considerably disappointed to-day in Mr. Stewart. I have been now several times in his house, but never heard anything that could indicate his possessing a literary turn. He is always working as a labourer, covered with mud or lime. His manners are the manners of a man of work, and forwardness and conceit supply in him the place of ease. He piques himself upon being one of those converted by the instrumentality of Mr. Stewart, Moulin, Perthshire, and taking his stand upon that vantage ground he looks down upon almost all others, not of his own denomination, as hardly Christians, if they be Christians at all. Were I to be much about York I should not choose to cultivate his acquaintance. I write not this because of any slight on his part, for he has behaved to me as well as he could, and certainly has acted kindly, but I have so often met men of his character and seen so many unhappinesses arising from intimacy with them that I could not willingly come into intimacy with him.

In speaking of the people of Lobo, Mr. Stewart complained that they were so full of prejudices that they would not come to hear the Gospel. I understand that they are so resolute Presbyterians that they would not flock after a Baptist. Had they been Baptists, and had a Presbyterian complained that

	Chil-			Chil-	
	Adults	dren		Adults	dren
Geo. McMecham..	2	5	Jas. McMechan....	2	4
Wm. McMechan....	2	3	Geo. Mitchell.....	2	5
Mich. Weir.....	2	7	Arch'd Bryce.....	2	1
Doug. Sinclair.....	2	2	Peter Brown.....	2	4
Jas. Mitchell.....	2	2	Jas. Fraser.....	2	7
Mal. McNaughton	2	6	Don. Donaldson....	2	3
Wm. Donaldson....	2	1	John Donaldson....	2	2
Jas. Stewart.....	2	4	Wm. Shute.....	2	2
Thos. McFarlane..	2	2	Dr. Donaldson.....	2	3
Jas. McFarlane....	2	3	John Campbell.....	2	2
Mich. McFarlane..	2	6	— Stewart.....	2	1
— McMillan.....	2	0	Mr. McFarlane.....	1	0
Hector McLean....	2	2	Alex'r Smith.....	2	2
Robt. Clark.....	1	0	Jno. Carmichael... 2	9	

In all, 54 adults and 88 children—28 families.

The account which I inserted on Saturday 16th, on the authority of Don. Donaldson is not correct. Slept at Mr. Bryce's. There are just two beds, I occupied the one, Mr. and Mrs. Bryce the other. Their son and the schoolmaster lay before the fire. The people here need nothing more than a blanket to wrap around themselves in and sleep by the fire, without feeling that they are any way put about.

The timber along the Proof Line is all hardwood. The land appears excellent. There are some excellent farms and if they be well managed, they must yield excellent returns.

Weather—Frosty, but moderate. The snow has not diminished since yesterday. Got out to Mr. Bryce's very much fatigued.

**February 22nd, Friday**—At Squire McKenzie's. Left Mr. Bryce's this morning after breakfast. Struck off the Proof Line at the Episcopal Church on the 7th Concession and walked west to the next side line, and down that till I came to Mr. McKenzie's. I had thus an opportunity of seeing a good deal of what may be called the interior of the Township. There are many excellent farms on this road, fully better than are to be seen on the Proof Line. The timber is still all hardwood, of the same kinds as I stated before.

Arrived at Mr. McKenzie's about dinner time. The ceremony of marriage had been performed about two hours before I arrived. All was bustle, all was hilarity, and I was made as welcome as Scotchmen could make me. The wedding was solemnized in true Scotch style. There was plenty of whiskey, and plenty of dancing. I was amazed at the hearty way in which the lads and lassies carried on the diversion. When a lad asked a lass to dance with him, he took her round the waist and gave her a squeeze or pressed her to his bosom,