[Private Instructions and Hints Regarding the Building of the House] John MacDonald

Date: 1784/04/29

Contributors
Contributor Role
Author
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John MacDonald

Publication Format
Manuscript

Type
Construction

Ingredients
wood
stones
mortar
lime
plaster palace stone
glue
calf skin
sheep skin
fish
nails
paint
glass

Places
Tracadie
St. John's Island
Prince Edward Island
London
Winter River
Pictou
Malpeq
Malpeque
Nova Scotia

Canso

Source: Macdonald Family (St. Peter's) Papers
Institution: Prince Edward Island Public Archives | **Reference:** Acc2664

Description

This item is catalogued as Acc. 2664, no. 154. A letter from London by John MacDonald, dated 29 April 1784, to his sister Nelly describes this book: "I send with this a little stitched book with a white paper cover marked No. 1 untitled Private Instructions & Hints regarding the building of the House, & procuring Materials, which are not to be shewn to any one" (PAROPEI Acc. 2664, no. 9, p. 2). He wants to the house to be built at Tracadie on the plan of Mr. Callbeck's house (p. 1).

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Transcription

Private Instructions & Hints

regarding the building of the

House, & procuring the

Materials, which are not

to be shown to any one

or

General Observations &

Hints

Number 1--

1st Page

General Observations & Hints

In building the House much will

depend on taking Judicious Methods to carry on

the work of providing Materials & using them.

If you understand Mr. Callbeck has agreed to restore Lot 35 to General Maitland then you may safely take upon you to cut on that Lot whatever timber for the Frame, Logs, Joists and Couples for the roof &c: may be necessary, and I should hope you may find them somewhere about Winter River or where we used to make Boards on the little river that falls into the head of the Bay -- But if Mr Callbeck has determined to refuse restoring the Lot, I am sure I will not desire that or any other favor to be asked of him in my name, on the contrary I shall break off every connection & Intercourse with him --

But in that case you may try what you can make of Mr. Lawson: perhaps he will permit you to take off his Lot on the side of the River what may be sufficient -- If this will not do I know not how you will manage it unless you may think proper to take it off Lot 21, for I know Mr. Clarke will have no objection to let me have what I want -- in this case to float it round in good weather -- You will need some advice now & then, nor do I know to whom on the Island I would recommend you to apply for any: Perhaps Mr Lawson or Mr Burns or any other yourself knows, may give

you some useful hints --

I know not who your principal carpenter may be -- I hear Richardson is dead, and I am ignorant who else, that is capable, is on the Island, but you will endeavour to get a good one -- I should imagine one good Carpenter should be engaged from first to last for the work by the day or by the Month, making the best bargain you can, but so as not to put it in his power to impose on you by bad work or by losing time, for you should reserve a Right to yourself to discharge him from any farther work or wages when you think proper -- Another point you should guard against is not to permit ^him to run you into any Expences without your Consent --

Some principal one being engaged in this Manner, I think you had better employ all other hands from time to time only as you want them --

When your Carpenter shall have marked the proper trees to be cut, I should think some of the french would be good hands for assisting him to cut, square, float & bring them to the spot, & also for helping him to make the frame, lay the Joists ^&Logs & bind the roof couples -- one or two of them would be enough at a time, for a number of them create confusion and

Idleness only -- your own bullocks & any common
hired man may draw the timber to the water
side, & up from the shore to the spot --

At the same time that you hire
the Carpenter you will need to think of the best
way to get boards, claps boards, or feather edged boards

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and shingles -- I should think you would need
from six to ten thousand feet of boards of different
length & thickness -- from ten to twelve thousand
shingles, & I cannot guess how much clap boards
or feather edged boards & Lathing -- Pictou
is the only place I can think of where you
might get their materials -- and

I suppose you will have to
send some one there to order them according to
the sort, length & thickness, which the Carpenter
will give you after consulting with him, &
to hire a vessel for bringing them to you at once
when they are ready, but not till then, for I
fancy You will not get them just as you call
for them, but only sometime after Commissioning
them -- so great Cheats are they that they will
endeavour to throw some sad stuff on your hands,
but you should give directions that none be
received but according to Agreement --

It will be some time after agreeing

for them before the Boards &c: will be ready to be sent for, and therefore You would need to sett about them at the same time that you send to cut the Frame logs & roof &c:---

At the same time also you would need to get the cellar dug, which three or four hands will do in a few days -- Then there will be the stones to get, thereafter the Mason, & one to work mortar for him will be sufficient -- see that the Mason binds the wall well with proper stones & that he packs it well with smaller stones, & only uses the mortar, where it may be proper without filling the spaces between the stone with mortar alone --

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If you proceed to build the chimney, which after all I fancy will be the most advisable, care should be taken to use good stones only for it -- The stones at the back of the chimney should be placed with their ends to the fire -- The stones at the cheeks & on the out side to the lobby should be as well fitted as can easily be --

When you shall have got the cellar dug, the stones collected, & the timber of the frame, Logs, & couples, brought to the spot, as well as the Boards, clapboards,

shingles & Laths, the greatest part of your
troubles will be over, & the Most uncertain
part of the Expence too --

After this period you
will only have the Mason & his Man,
building the Cellar & Chimneys & making Mortar,
& your principal Carpenter, & one or two
other rough Carpenters of the french, or some
such to make the frame, lay the joists and
flooring, to put up the roof -- to shingle,
to put on the clap boards &c: and it will be
lucky indeed if you can cover it fully before
December --

Once you get it made wind &
water tight, you May be going on with finishing
it on the Inn side as easily as you can, only
if possible keep it a going --

5th page

From the Idea I have I should think
geting Boards, shingles, & clap boards, so quickly
as you could wish, will be the most difficult
parts of the materials, besides the Expence &
distance from Pictou -- But there is no help
for it --

After all, from six to ten thousand
feet of Boards is not a very great Quantity.
If you find a difficulty of getting them from

Pictou, what if you would get a parcel of
the french to saw them for you at the Winter
River, if there is wood there & that Mr Callbeck
restores Lot 35 -- If the wood is good & if the
french would undertake it, four good sawyers
would not be long sawing ten thousand feet,
-- There would be this Advantage in it that
the Boards might be sawed of the exact length
& thickness that the Carpenter would order,
so that there would be less waste & refuse
stuff than by geting them from Pictou, And
as they would be near at hand it might be
very little dearer upon the whole than those
from Pictou would be with freight & refuse stuff.

If you cannot get them in
this manner perhaps the french at Malpec
would engage to deliver you the Boards at a
certain price the thousand feet at Tracady:
They have wood there, & also Schooners for carrying
them to your place, and perhaps they would also

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undertake for the shingles, clap Boards & Laths,
or that you might get them made at the
Winter River -- or it would be an ease
if you had only shingles to get from Pictou --
or in case you could not get the french at

Malpec to do it, perhaps you could get them
or some others to make the Boards shingles
clap Boards & Laths on Mr Clarks Lot 21
where there are plenty of the best timber
& he would not begrudge me any thing
for we have been hand in glove this while

Whatever time you get the
Boards, it would be right to lay them in a
covered airy place, at least as much so as
possible, to dry & season until you have
occasion to use them -- But particularly
the Boards & Posts for the doors, windows
& the chair high boxing of the Rooms ought
as soon as possible to be got & laid in a
drying place ---

I should like that, as soon
as your other hurry would permit, some twenty
or thirty thick logs, from Eight to twelve feet
long of the best black Birch, & half that
number of the best large white poplar, and the
like of beech & maple were cut, & by degrees
brought to a seasoning place, for we will
by & bye find use for them for chairs & other
uses; & it will be fine to have seasoned to our hands

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Lime should be burt from
Oyster shells -- It makes very good whitening

& Plaister for the roof of the Rooms --

[words crossed out] But plaister palace stone will

be the best of any: There is none of it on

the Island, but there is plenty in Nova =

=Scotia, particularly at the gut of Canso

tho it will not be worth your while to

send there for the same, unless you get it

very accidentally --

Some glue may be wanted:

I forgot to order some in proper time, but

you know glue May be made by boiling

calf or sheep skins, as I have often seen

in the highlands -- I believe glue may also

be made of fish & probably the french

may teach you the secret --

I believe it would be a

good way to get certain parts of your

work, & as much as possible thereof, done

by the Job at a certain sum, by which

much misspent time & Imposition would

be avoided, & you would have little farther

trouble with that part, only to see that

it be right done & by agreement --

Thus I believe it is

common enough on the Island to get a

cellar dug so many feet deep, wide & long

at a certain rate --

After the stones are gathered
you might also make an Agreement with the
mason to build the cellar wall of such
& such thickness & sufficiency & height
for a certain sum, himself or you furnishing
the man to work the mortar --

You might also make an
Agreement with one to cut, square, lead
float & bring the frame to the spot
yourself furnishing the Bullocks to drain
it, to finish & to put up the frame
at a certain price -- But in regard to
the frame care should be taken that it be
well supported here & there at the distance
of a very few feet with proper posts or
perpendicular timber for to enable it to
bear weight without yielding -- The
dimensions of the timbers length & width
should also be mentioned, & a general clause
in every such Agreement specifying that
every thing be quit sufficient --

Boards, clapboards, and
shingles are likewise bought or sawed
at a certain price per thousand feet, &
when ^they are to be brought home, if in a boat

you might agree by the voyage or load

But there are other certain

Jobs about it that cannot easily be done by

the Piece, & for them there is no other way but daily hire

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But in every agreement by

the lump or piece let the party always be

tied down to execute it properly, & let the

manner in which it is to be executed be

described as well as possible which probably

will be a bar against Imposition or slights

worth -- If any of our people or of the

others in the neighbourhood will prove

disobliging to you on that or any other

occasion, keep an Account of it, till it

please God we meet, for it is improbable

any one can have a worse opinion of their

Justice honor gratitude & regularily than

I have of theirs -- I have experienced it all

at their hands, and since no superior motives

will operate on them, & that any other

method on my part is thrown away on

them, I am determined, if I am to live among

them, to lay aside my farther method &

Regards, & to deal out that Measure to

each, which he gives me -- whatever

they may think perhaps it may soon be

in my power to oblige them more than
they are aware of beyond the Bounds of
Lot 36 on each side, or to punish them
with very little trouble to myself, if they
continue disobliging to you or attempt to
impose on you on this occasion, & you May

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take your own way of acquainting any of
them with this at any time you see it
necessary --

I believe there goes out as
much Nails, paint, & Glass, by this ship
directed to you as May be enough, which
will prove a considerable saving to what
buying them there would prove.

I am sensible that cash goods
& Provisions will be Articles which would
prove very convenient & even necessary
on an occasion of this sort [...]

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What is in this and in the
other paper is all that Occurrs to
me on the subject, & is all that is
in my power to do -- I confess I
will be uneasy until I hear from

you whether you will be able to

goe to work & to proceed, for It

runs much in my head that you

will have too much difficulty

to be able to do any thing -- I only

give you the Powers in case you see

you may be able to do any thing, in

which case it is a very eligible thing.

In all events do not fatigue

or fret yourself under any difficulty

that may occur in carrying it on --

if you think you may attempt it, do so

but do not over walk yourself, or

be too early or late out, & by no

means in damp or wet weather, &

keep your mind perfectly ^easy -- Whatever

happens do not let it hurt your

spirits or health --

Annotations

Winter River

Winter River is in Lot 34.

plaister palace stone

Plaster stone is gypsum. Antoine Beaumé's A manual of chemistry, translated by J.A. (1786), defines "gypsum, or plaster stone": "Those called gypsa, alabaster, and plaster stones, are calcareous selenites formed by nature" (69).

[...]

Untranscribed is a section on payment.

Private Instructions and Hints Regarding the Building of the House recipe from Early Modern Maritime Recipes: https://emmr.lib.unb.ca/recipes/556