

1959

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### Recommended Citation

Proctor, Samuel (1959) "Reminiscences or a Florida Pioneer: John M. McIntosh," *Florida Historical Quarterly*. Vol. 38 : No. 1 , Article 8.

Available at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol38/iss1/8>

REMINISCENCES OF A FLORIDA  
PIONEER: JOHN M. MCINTOSH

by SAMUEL PROCTOR

COMPARATIVELY FEW PIONEERS of nineteenth-century Florida left accounts of their lives or the times in which they lived. So engrossed were they in constructing the material and cultural foundations of a new state that they had little time for recording their experiences and observations.

John McIver McIntosh, in his brief biography, relates the facts of his early life. Born in North Carolina of Scotch parentage, he moved to Tallahassee, Florida, when he was twenty-three. During the Seminole War he worked in the Quartermaster's Department and then drove an express stage between what is now Gilchrist and Taylor Counties. He settled in Marion County in 1842 and lived there until his death in 1888. During his lifetime he held a number of public offices in his county—justice of the peace, judge of the probate court, and chairman of the board of county commissioners. He served as secretary of the board of trustees of the East Florida State Seminary, the first state-supported institution of higher learning in Florida.

If his diary is any indication, McIntosh did not have much formal schooling. He was a man, however, who understood the responsibility that a citizen owes his community. He played an important role in the establishment and development of the public school system in his county and in the passage of many laws pertaining to police and fire protection, the securing of county records, the licensing of businesses, the grading of public roads and construction of bridges, and the advertising of Marion County. It is believed that he donated the land upon which the county courthouse was constructed and he helped stimulate the agricultural and business activity of the area. When he died on October 23, 1888, he was the oldest resident of the county. He was buried in the Jim Carter cemetery, about six miles west of Ocala on state road 27.

The diary, as McIntosh refers to it, was really a small, pocket-size book in which he wrote a resume of the first forty-six years of his life. It is likely that all of it was written at one time, rather than over a period of years. The book is presently in the possession of McIntosh's granddaughter, Mrs. Ralph Hamlin,

Tallahassee, Florida. A typed copy of the diary is in the University of Florida Archives.

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John McIver McIntosh, the son of Murdock and Isabella McIntosh (deceased), were both natives of Scotland, but were brought to the state of North Carolina by their Fathers, Roderick McIntosh and Roderick McIver while in their infancy. Murdock<sup>1</sup> was raised an orphan in Wilmington and Cross Creek now called Fayetteville.<sup>2</sup> He lived there when Allen [sic] and Flora McDonald were the only citizens of the place before and at the Commencement of the Revolutionary War.<sup>3</sup>

Isabella McIntosh was raised in Moore County on Buffalo Creek<sup>4</sup> where she was married and died on 20, 24, or 26th [of] Sept. 1824, and was buried on her Fathers old place by his side. Murdock McIntosh died 7th [of] March, 1843, and was buried at the same place. He was upwards of eighty years of age.

John M. McIntosh the youngest of nine children was Born the 2d of August, 1807,<sup>5</sup> and Emigrated to Tallahassee, Florida in January, 1830, where he lived until 1831.<sup>6</sup> In the fall he went to St. Marks,<sup>7</sup> and in the month of July, 1832 him [sic]

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1. Murdock McIntosh was born about 1763.
  2. Fayetteville dates from 1739 when Scots, led by Colonel Alexander McAllister, settled a small community along the banks of the Cape Fear River named Campbelltown. In 1746-47 another group of Scotsmen established a gristmill and village at Cross Creek, about a mile northwest of Campbelltown.
  3. Allan and Flora MacDonald lived in Fayetteville for a few months in 1774-75. Flora is famous for her support of Bonnie Prince Charlie, last of the Stuart pretenders to Britain's throne. After Charles' defeat at Culloden in 1746, Flora helped smuggle him to the Isle of Skye and then into France. Later she became a toast of London society and married Allan MacDonald, son of the Laird of Kingsborough. They emigrated to North Carolina in 1774 and participated in the Battle of Moore's Creek during the American Revolution. Allan was taken prisoner at this battle along with some 850 other Tories.
  4. Moore County is in the south central part of North Carolina, and is about seventy miles northwest of Fayetteville.
  5. McIntosh's birthplace is presumed to be Moore County, North Carolina.
  6. Florida had been taken over by the United States in 1821, and its population grew rapidly. Most of the settlers moved in from the other southern states. Tallahassee, which had been selected in 1824 as the capital, and the surrounding area was the fastest growing section of the territory.
  7. St. Marks was on the Gulf coast, twenty-eight miles south of Tallahassee. As early as the territorial period it was an important port town.
  8. The Seminole War had begun December 31, 1835, and apparently

and C. L. Carruth went to Hicks Town in Madison County where [sic] he claimed as home until the middle of February, 1837, when he was employed by Capt. D. H. Vinton, United States Quarter Master as his Agent in the U. S. Qr. Masters Department for nine months at three dollars per day,<sup>8</sup> and afterwards carried an express once a week from Fort White<sup>9</sup> to Fort Pleasant<sup>10</sup> four months at the same price, at the Expiration of which time I was induced to put up a Sutlers store<sup>11</sup> at Fort Macomb<sup>12</sup> on the Suwanee River where I lived in Camp until November 1839. I then went to Fort Fanning<sup>13</sup> and remained there until 1840. I built a store at Wacahoota<sup>14</sup> where I lived until 1842. I settled at Little Orange Lake in Marion County<sup>15</sup> under the Act of Congress known as the Armed Occupation Act.<sup>16</sup>

In the year of 1843 I was appointed a Justice of the Peace and in 1845 Florida became a State and was changed from a Territorial government to a State government.<sup>17</sup> The first State

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McIntosh's work was connected with supplying the troops.

9. Fort White was on the south bank of the Santa Fe River, about two miles from its mouth, in what is now Gilchrist County. (Referred to on Drake's Map, 1840.)
10. Fort Pleasant was on the east bank of the Econfinee River in what is now Taylor County. (Referred to on Westcott's Map, 1857.)
11. A privately owned and operated army store in which provisions, whiskey, and supplies were sold to army personnel.
12. Fort Macomb was on the west bank of the Suwannee River below Charles's Ferry in what is now Lafayette County. (Referred to on Colton's Map, 1855.)
13. Fort Fanning was on the east bank of the Suwannee River, about five miles south of Wilcox, in what is now Levy County. (Referred to on the Topographical Engineering Map, 1856.)
14. The name of a station on the Seaboard Airline Railroad in Alachua County near Levy Lake. It appeared on the Taylor Map, 1839, as Watkahoote Fort.
15. This was one of the two oldest communities on Orange Lake. Before the Civil War it was one of the richest communities in Florida and many large plantations were located along the lake. The father of General J. B. Gordon of Georgia owned the plantation where the town of Orange Lake is now situated. (See *Florida Times-Union and Citizen*, Special Edition, February, 1896, 50-51.)
16. The Armed Occupation Act of August 4, 1842, offered a quarter section of land to "heads of families and single men over eighteen years of age, able to bear arms, who should, within one year of the passage of the Act, make an actual settlement in that part of Florida lying south of the line dividing townships nine and ten." This line ran three miles north of Palatka and ten miles south of Newansville and included Marion County. (See Dorothy Dodd, "Letters from East Florida," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XV [July, 1936], 50-51.)
17. After settling the controversy over whether Florida was to be one or two states, she came into the Union as the twenty-seventh state on March 3, 1845.

Legislator [sic] sat in July, 1845, at which Session I was appointed, and being the first, Judge of Probate for Marion County, and served 4 years.

In the year of 1847 I was Married on the 4th of October to Sarah Elizabeth Carter of Thomasville Georgia <sup>18</sup> I had got tired of keeping Bachlors [sic] hall which I had done for about 5 years and a part of the time my nearest Neighbor was 7 miles from my place.

In 1851, I sold my farm at Orange Lake and concluded to move to Ocala, and on the request of many of my Friends consented to be a candidate for the office of Judge of Probate, the law or constitution being altered so as to give the Election of all Judges to the People, and the first Monday in October, 1851, I was elected Judge of Probate for the two years by 65 votes. In 1853, I was again elected Judge of Probate by a majority of nearly two to one over my oponent Major Dixon the candidate of the Whig party. <sup>19</sup>

My Brothers name is

Daniel M. McIntosh

P.O. Jones Borough

Moore Co. N. C.

My sisters are Margaret Coffee & Nancy McDuffee

P.O. Morristown N. C.

(In pencil on next page)

Isabella McIntosh born April 16, 1876

Died 1905

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18. Sarah Elizabeth Carter was born in 1833, and died October 5, 1880, at the age of forty-seven. She was the daughter of Blake Anderson Carter, an early settler of Ocala, who died in 1858. Sarah Carter and John McIntosh were married in Ocala, October 8, 1847, by a Reverend Mr. Jones. There were five children born of this union: James Know Polk McIntosh (September 11, 1850-October 2, 1854), Asa McIntosh (March 2, 1853-May 21, 1953), John Mays McIntosh (March 22, 1854-January 28, 1855), George McIntosh (February 13, 1870-February 16, 1870), and Isabella McIntosh (April 16, 1876-June 18, 1905).

19. In 1848 the Whig Party in Florida elected Thomas Brown as governor by a majority of 499 votes and continued its control of the legislature. The party carried four counties in East Florida, including Marion County. The Whig Party, nationally and in Florida, was destroyed by the slavery controversy and related political issues. In the election of 1852 the Democrats of Florida carried the election. See Herbert J. Doherty, Jr., "The Florida Whigs" (Master's thesis, University of Florida, 1949), 194, and Edwin L. Williams, Jr., "Florida in the Union, 1845-1861" (Doctoral dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1951), 496.