

Leaders & Legacies

The Legends
of Lake on
the Mountain



An Early Adventure of
JOHN A. MACDONALD

With a Foreword by former
Prime Minister Brian Mulroney

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Chapter 1



Ghosts

Here lies John A. Macdonald.

Born January 11, 1815 in Glasgow, Scotland.

Died August 20, 1828, in Stone Mills, Upper Canada.

A clever boy – but just not clever enough.

John considered how his tombstone would read as he sweated underneath Owen Boggart's armpit. Although he had escaped the heavy-set man-child and his meaty fists all summer, John had finally pushed his luck too far as Owen dragged him across the ground.

Owen was not so inclined to win spelling bees or solve complex sums in his head. What the fourteen-year-old was known for was his effectiveness at wreaking vengeance – especially on those who might be poking fun at him.

Lanky and far lighter than his adversary, John was surprised to find himself being dragged to the stone

flour mill. It was John's father, Hugh Macdonald, who ran it. He pictured the overweight boy crushing him into flour. The Macdonald's house was only thirty feet away, but no one was outside to hear the commotion.

John saw another perfect sunset washing across the bay, bathing the village in a painter's light. He was sorry he had to see it through the filter of Owen's armpit. Stone Mills was a small, bustling community that sat on the edge of the Bay of Quinte, a magnificent collection of long, watery fingers that stretched out into Lake Ontario. Not only did the village sit along the bay, supporting the Macdonald's flour mill and other businesses, it also rested at the bottom of a spectacular, forested, flat-topped hill nearly two-hundred-feet high. The locals just called it a mountain.

On top of the flattened mountain was a small, mysterious lake, which John desperately hoped he would see again, if he survived this ordeal. There was nothing he loved more than to explore its twisted shoreline. John had even heard rumours lately that there had been sightings of something strange in the lake – something incredible.

The mill grew closer.

Perhaps Father was still working at the mill?

John's silent question was answered by Owen, as if he could pluck it out of his head and spit it back at him.

“Your father's not there. You think I'm stupid?”

asked Owen.

John bit his tongue. He was often amused by such obvious questions. As the hot breath of the furious boy scorched the back of his neck John kicked and thrashed in vain. He realized the mill would have recently shut down and his father would be putting in time helping the Robinson's with their new barn, as he had been doing all week.

The sun winked out of view as they entered the main floor of the three-level mill. John hoped to see one of his father's employees still working. Only the silent millstones stared back at him. He could hear the lull of the waterfall behind the mill, which powered everything. John listened for sounds from the basement where the meal bins were located but didn't hear anyone there, either. Finally, he craned his neck upwards in case anyone was still in the grain storage area of the attic. No sound. No one.

"You better not scream, Johnny. If you do, you'll only make things worse for yourself."

Owen was bold enough to humiliate John on his own property. In fact, he was even bold enough to call him 'Johnny.'

"Listen," said John, "Obviously there is some clear misunderstanding. What is it exactly that you think I've done?"

The boy grunted. "You know what you did. You and

George put a dead squirrel in my hat when I had it off at the bay yesterday. And now yer gonna get what you deserve – and George is next.”

John, despite being folded underneath Owen’s unpleasantly-scented armpit, managed to pop his curly-haired head out and feign shock. “Now what would give you the impression that George and I would do such a thing?”

“Hilda Scott saw you both do it.” With that, Owen head-locked John again and continued dragging the slimmer boy toward a corner of the large, open room.

“Hilda Scott!” John snorted. “You know you should never take the word of a Scot.”

John began to sweat more as he realized his humour wasn’t going to secure his escape this time. It was time to change tactics. “You’re right. It was a dastardly prank,” said John. “Perhaps I could help you in school with your worst subjects?” John wondered if that would mean ‘everything,’ but didn’t say so.

“You should know I don’t go to school anymore, Johnny. Not that I ever did with you anyway. Not everyone gets to go to a fancy grammar school in Kingston. Some of us just make do with what’s here.”

Owen tightened his grip on John’s neck.

“You show up in the summer here at Stone Mills, thinking yer something special,” Owen said. His fleshy face was heated. “Well this summer, maybe you’ll

figure out yer nothing special...”

The sound of voices outside in the distance prompted Owen to release his grip slightly. John wondered if he should try to break free and run as Owen jerked his round face toward the noise. The powerful boy forced John up against a huge pile of flour sacks that were sitting in the corner. One of the sacks was torn open, already oozing ground white flour.

The thickset boy shoved one of his paws in swiftly and scooped a generous amount of flour. He rubbed it all over John’s face and curly locks of dark hair until every inch of his hair and face were covered in dusty, white flour. John gasped and coughed as some went up his nose and in his mouth. With a satisfied smirk, Owen shoved his instant ghost to the ground.

“Yer lucky that’s all you got, Johnny,” spat the giant boy. And without another word Owen hulked away from the mill, running east along a dirt path, wiping his white hand on his shirt as he ran. John watched him go from a small window in the mill, blinking flour from his sweating eyelids. When he felt he was out of view, John punched the air with his fist in glee and let out a long whoop.

He had survived Owen Boggart! John mentally dismantled the tombstone he had created earlier, then burst from the darkened doorway. He ran west and at the last second, John locked eyes with a young boy, perhaps

four-years-old, who was out walking with his grandfather. The boy opened his mouth and screamed at the ghostly image charging toward him. The flour-covered John began to scream because he thought Owen must be behind him. John barrelled the young boy over, tripping himself along the way.

“Dang fool!” he heard the older man yell.

“Apologies!” hollered John, who had already picked himself up and scurried along the shore. His bare feet splashed along the bay, forcing warm sand between his toes. He fled to the very edge of Stone Mills, laughing so hard he had to clear tears from his eyes as he ran.

The more he ran, the more he thought how much the young boy had reminded him of his younger brother, little James, who had died at age five. John remembered how James had followed him everywhere, in the way little brothers do, even though John had only been seven.

As the sunset bled across the bay, John collapsed in a ghostly heap on the shoreline. Memories of the tavern in Kingston flooded his mind and he pressed his palms to his eyes. His tears of laughter had already turned to tears for the cruel death of his little brother.

He rolled over onto his knees and looked into the water at his smeared, white features and bit into his lip. As much as he could escape the Owen Boggart’s of the world, there was one thing John believed he would

never be free from – knowing that it was his fault his little brother was murdered.

As the waves shifted, he touched the side of his face. John slid his hands beneath the water and let the flawed image strain between his fingers.

The trembling water soon settled. Once again, the ghost had returned.