

The New Brunswick Branch of the Mowat Family

ORIGIN OF THE MOWAT FAMILY IN SCOTLAND

Version 1. I grew up with the story that the origin of the name Mowat was De Monte Alto. According to speculation in the family, the De Monte Alto's in Scotland [who were subsequently called Mowats] were supposed to be descendents of a Spaniard serving aboard a ship that formed part of the Spanish Armada and which was wrecked off the Orkney Islands north of Scotland in 1588. This information was persistent but never to my knowledge verified until, in 1980 when I was on a sabbatical in London, England, I spoke with a Dr. Swan, at that time the York Herald of Arms at the College of Arms in London. I was surprised to find that he corroborated the claim that the De Monte Alto origin of the name "Mowat" was correct, but when I looked into where the Spanish ships were wrecked in a storm when they were fleeing from the English by sailing up and around Scotland, I came across a [map](#) that showed that all but one of the Spanish ships was nowhere near the Orkneys and the one that sank in that region was well off the islands:

Version 2. In going through papers in my mother's Mowat file, I found a document that my great Aunt Mayme had in her possession from *Speid's Genealogy of the Royal and Most illustrious Noble Families in Europe*. The document speaks for itself and I include the scanned document and a transcription of it for easier reading. There is no question in my mind that Version 2 is the correct one. Transcript of the document is given here.

EXTRACTS FROM SPEID'S GENEALOGY OF THE ROYAL AND MOST ILLUSTRIOUS NOBLE FAMILIES IN EUROPE

The arise of the name de Monte Alto, now MOWAT, was as follows:

*VIZ: Peter the First, Lord of Farnese, a castle in Etruria, Italy, founded this family anno domini 600— about a century afterwards, Charles, Lord of Farnese, who was Chief of the family returned from Italy to France, and there settled and was created Prince de Monte Alto by the Franc King, and assumed the same for his Sir name. Magnus the Fifth, Prince de Monte Alto married in the year 1000 Maria Anna Elenora, second daughter to the Emperor of Germany, and had issue by her three sons and four daughters, as appears from the Genealogys of the Emperors of Germany. It is evident by the Doomsday Book [*The Domesday Book is the record of the great survey of England completed in 1086, executed for William I of England, or William the Conqueror. "While spending the Christmas of 1085 in Gloucester, William had deep speech with his counsellors and sent men all over England to each shire to find out what or how much each landholder had in land and livestock, and what it was worth"*] that the most illustrious Prince Patrick de Monte Alto came over to England with William the Conqueror in the year 1066, so that, all of the name of Mowat in Great Britain and Ireland are descended of him. The Balga hollie Family are the lineal Representative and Chief of the name. They changed the name of de Monte Alto to MOWAT sometime after they came to settle in Scotland in the reign of MALCOLM the THIRD, KING of SCOTLAND [1058-1093]. The Lord of Farnese's second brother named Peter remained in Italy, where he assumed the title his eldest brother had there. He was afterwards made Consul of Orviedo, being the founder of the same, and General of the Florentine army. After his death the state was at the charge of erecting his statue upon horseback in the Church of St. Regerata in Florence. This branch of the family are now represented by Duke of Satera.*

The arms and castle used by the name of Mowat for their crest is in remembrance of their arise, the same with their motto "de MONTE ALTO" to show what their name was in former times; the Supporters, two Saracens with Tridents in their hands; the Chief of the name had been Admiral of a Fleet in the expedition to the Holy Land against the infidels [12th & 13th century].



The original genealogy was in the possession of my Great Aunt Mayme [Mrs. Geo. G. MacKenzie] youngest child of John L. and Elizabeth Mowat in Campbellton 1945. I suspect that she had the first transcrption made and that the addition below was written by her.

For John Mowat, Brewer, Aberdeen, Scotland.

John Mowat came to Canada and settled in Deeside, Quebec in the year 1834, being born in Aberdeen, Scotland. All of the Mowat family eventually settled in Campbellton, N.B. That branch of the family have no relatives of the name in any other part of Canada. John Mowat had two brothers and one sister. He came to Canada, another brother went to Australia in the early 1800's and the remaining brother and sister continued in Scotland.

An old clipping I once saw claimed that John Mowat shipped the first cargoes of Restigouche frozen salmon to London and New York that was ever sent from Canada. He was reported to be an authority on fiish culture, having learned the same in Scotland.

A second coat of arms, probably a second version, was found in early papers and is given below

Coat of Arms

Historiography

The Mowat Coat of Arms illustrated left was drawn by an heraldic artist from information officially recorded in ancient heraldic archives. Documentation for the Mowat Coat of Arms design can be found in Burke's General Armory. Heraldic artists of old developed their own unique language to describe an individual Coat of Arms. In their language, the Arms (shield) is as follows:
 "Ar. a lion ramp. sa."
 When translated the Arms description is:
 "Silver; a black lion rampant."
 Family mottos are believed to have originated as battle cries in medieval times. A Motto was not recorded with the Mowat Coat of Arms.

Individual surnames originated for the purpose of more specific identification. The four primary sources for second names were: occupation, location, father's name and personal characteristics. The surname Mowat appears to be locational in origin, and is believed to be associated with the English, French and Scots, meaning, "dweller at, or near the high mountains." The supplementary sheet included with this report is designed to give you more information to further your understanding of the origin of names. Different spellings of the same original surname are a common occurrence. Dictionaries of surnames indicate probable spelling variations. The most prominent variations of Mowat are Mowatt, Mowatt and Mowats.

Information available to us indicates that in 1975 there were approximately 200 heads of households in the United States with the old and distinguished Mowat name. The United States Census Bureau in 1970 estimated that there were approximately 3.1 persons per household in America which yields an approximate total of 620 people in the United States carrying the Mowat name. Although the figure seems relatively low, it does not signify the many important contributions that individuals bearing the Mowat name have made to history.

No genealogical representation is intended or implied by this report and it does not represent individual lineage or your family tree.

Mowat

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Original of
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Original of this Genealogy was in possession of Mrs. Geo. G. MacKenzie, Campbellton, N.B. in 1945.

THIS POWERFUL FAMILY ROSE TO THE HEIGHTS and reads:

The surname Mowat is from the Norman Freud Mont Hault, Latinised as Monte Alto – "of the high mount." [The name appears to have evolved from *de Monte Alto* in Italy to *Mont Haut* in France and eventually [with the 't' in Haut pronounced] through *Mouat* to *Mowat* in Scotland.] It is said that the Monte Altos first settled in Wales. The first of them in Scotland was Robert the Montalto, who came in the reign of David 1 (1124–1153).

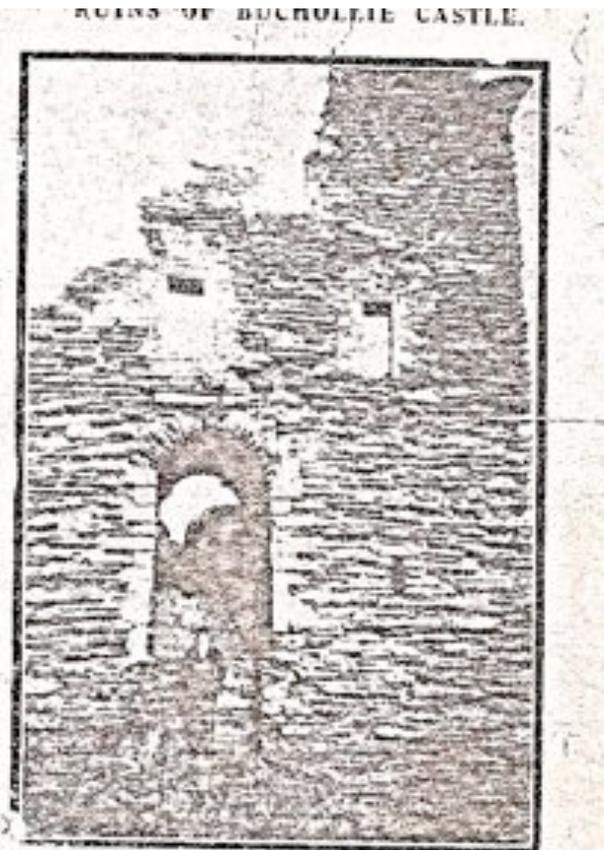
The family soon rose in power and in the reign of William the Lion had acquired lands in Angus. Michaelde Monte Alto was sheriff of Inverness in 1234, and William de Monte Alto was sheriff of Inverness in 1263. Mowats were settled in Ayrshire about 1400. It is still a fairly common name in Caithness and Orkney, but rare in its original home – Angus.

Axel Mowat, an Admiral in the Danish-Norwegian fleet, who died in 1661, was descended from an Aberdeenshire family of the name. They are listed in clan books as a sect of Sutherland.

BUCHOLLIE CASTLE AND THE MOWATS

I found the first reference to Bucholli castle through a clipping my Uncle Harold Mowat sent my mother and which was among her papers. Reference to the Mowats and Buchollie castle as well as the origin of the name Mowat are also to be found on the internet. One internet site for those interested is given here:

www.caithness.org/caithness/castles/bucholie/historicfamiliesbucholiecastles.htm



The scanned clipping, along with a transcript of the text has been included here:

“The ruins of Buchollie Castle, Parish Canisbay – the ancient home of the Mowats in Caithness, where at one time they held considerable landed property, including Freswick, Aukengill and Brabstermire.” The source goes on to say that “Calder records that the family originally came from the south and the Latinized name in ancient charters is ‘De Monte Alto’. During the reign of Robert the Bruce, the name of William Mowat appears in the list of Scottish nobles and chiefs who sent the Declaration to the Pope maintaining for all time, the civil and political independence of Scotland. This famous document was drawn up by Abbot Bernard de Linton at Arbroath Abbey. At an early period the Mowat family possessed land in Aberdeenshire, and when the acquired property in Caithness the name Buchollie was taken from their estate in the parish of Turriff, now called Hatton”

Further to the castle – the Biography of Sir Oliver Mowat, Premier of Ontario 1872 to 1896, sketcily traces his family from the last Mowat in the Castle as follows:

MAGNUS b.1624 > DAVID 1654-1711 > No records because of fire > OLIVER 1764-1823 > SGT. JOHN b. 1791 > Sir OLIVER b.1820-1903. Oliver’s parents were both born in Caithness-shire, Scotland and there is a distant cousin of our branch originally in New Brunwick.

The ruins of Buchollie Castle, parish of Canisbay – the ancient home of the Mowats in Caithness, where at one time they held considerable lauded property, including Freswick, Aukengill and Brabstermire. Calder records that the family originally came from the south and the Latinised name in ancient charters is “De Monte Alto.” During the reign of Robert the Bruce, the name of William Mowat appears in the list of Scottish nobles and chiefs who sent the firm Declaration to the Pope maintaining for all time the civil and political independence of Scotland. This famous document was drawn up by Abbot Bernard de Linton at Arbroath Abbey. At an early period the Mowat family possessed land in Aberdeenshire, and when they acquired property in Caithness the name Buchollie was taken from their estate in the parish of Turriff, now called Hatton.

OUR BRANCH OF MOWAT FAMILY JOHN MOWAT

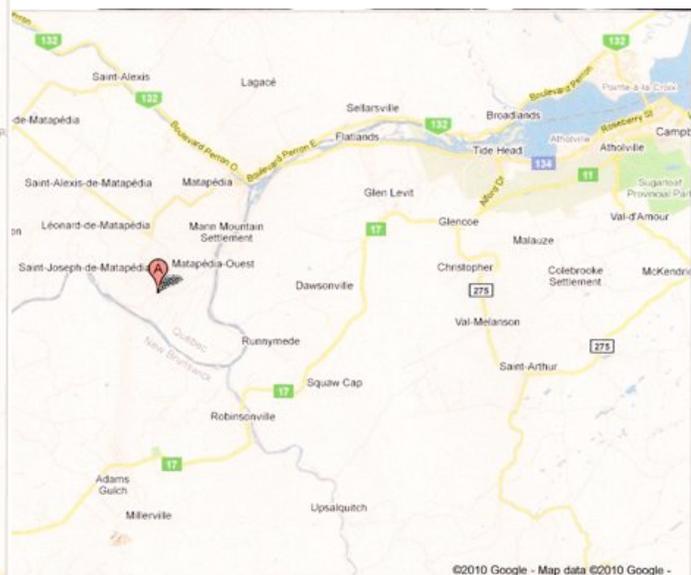
John Mowat, the man responsible for our branch of the Mowats, was born in Old Machar, a district of the city of Aberdeen in Scotland on November 4, 1784. On May 8, 1820 he married Anna Irving who was born in New Deer, a nearby district of Aberdeen, September 1, 1786. Their eldest child was John L. Mowat born June 29, 1821.

When his wife died John Mowat emigrated to Canada with his young son in 1834.

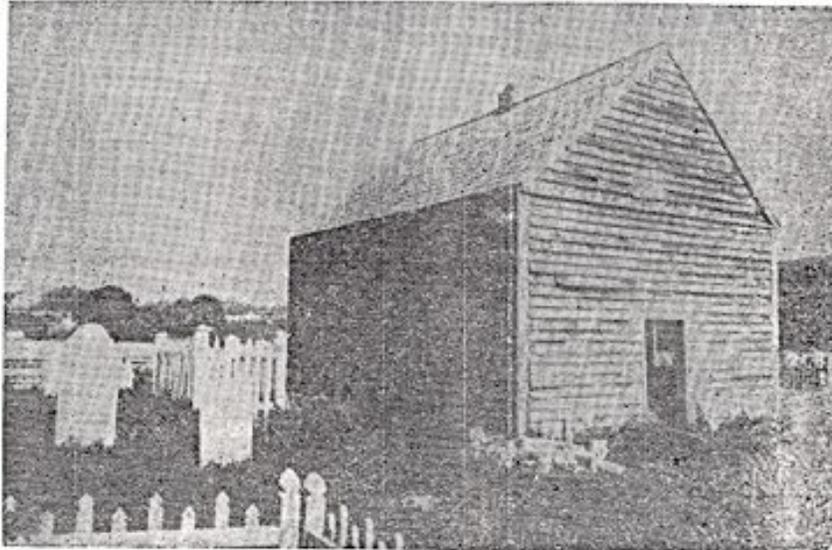
One cannot help but speculate why John Mowat, whose legacy indicates he had money and a good education, should have emigrated to New Brunswick and chosen to settle in the wilderness area up the Restigouche River.

Mowat had grown up in Aberdeen on the Dee River in Scotland a river that is famous world wide for its fine Atlantic [salmon fishing](#) and it is clear from the writings of his son, that he was an expert on salmon culture and hatcheries. It is therefore entirely possible that before immigrating to Canada he may have known of the Restigouche River's reputation for the abundance and size of its Atlantic salmon. The shipping of salted Restigouche salmon to England in sailing ships [they could easily navigate the river up as far as Campbellton] had started in the early 19th century and, having an interest in the salmon fishery he may well have known this. It would be no surprise then that he would choose to settle on a section of the Restigouche River that was prime salmon fishing country. Whatever the case, he received a Government land grant at or near Moore's Settlement on the north shore of the Restigouche in Quebec, near the border with New Brunswick. He called his grant Deeside because it reminded him of his home in Scotland (Lovell's Gazetteer of Dominion of Canada, 1908, Part 1 F5008 L91 1908 Archives). It is instructive to view the Google maps of the area below. From the placement of the Deeside Road, the Mowat grant is obvious.

John Mowat lived 13 years at Deeside and did not remarry. He died in 1847 at the age of 63 and is buried in Plot 9 of the Athol House Cemetery on the Fraser Mill Property in Atholville – see details next page.



Brief Historical Sketch of Athol House Cemetery and Church



OLD ATHOL HOUSE CHURCH IN CEMETERY

The Athol House Cemetery is the oldest British Cemetery in Restigouche County. Samuel Lee set aside land for this cemetery about the year 1790 and a Rev. Mr. Dripp, a Church of England missionary, consecrated the ground for the cemetery. The oldest existing grave marker is dated 1791.

The Cairn was placed in the cemetery in 1931, in memory of Rev. James Stevens. The first permanent Presbyterian minister to serve this district. He arrived here from Scotland in 1831 and served this district until his death in 1864, at the age of 64 years.

The Church was placed in the cemetery about 1810, after Robert Ferguson became owner of the property, and remained the main place of worship until the Presbyterian Church was built in Campbellton in 1834.

The Campbellton Cemetery was started in 1802 and few burials took place in the Athol House Cemetery after that date.

The Old Athol House Church served as both a place of worship and a school house and continued to do so until the development of Campbellton when the children of the area attended school in Campbellton. Rev. Mr. Young of the Church of England was the first minister and teacher.

