



Quick Facts—Macdonald's Early Years

1. John A. Macdonald was born in Glasgow, Scotland on January 11, 1815.
2. In 1820, the Macdonald family emigrated to Kingston in British North America. John A. was 5.
3. John's father Hugh Macdonald was a shopkeeper in Kingston for 4 years.
4. When John was 9, Hugh Macdonald relocated his family to the Loyalist settlement around Hay Bay north of Adolphustown, where he rented a house and operated several shops in this farming community of Upper Canada.
5. For the next 11 years, John A. would call this area of the Bay of Quinte his home. His father and mother, two sisters and three adult cousins (Allan, Lowther and John Macpherson) lived here throughout this period of his life.
6. John went to school with his two sisters in Adolphustown for 2, possibly 3, years.
7. He went to private schools in Kingston for 2, possibly 3, years.
8. In 1830, Hugh Macdonald moved his family to Glenora in Prince Edward County where he rented a gristmill. He was also a local magistrate.
9. That year, when John turned 15, he journeyed to York (now Toronto) to write his law entrance exam. He passed and soon after began articling in the law office of George Mackenzie of Kingston. This marked the beginning of his astonishing 61 year career. He began work at 15 and died in office as Prime Minister of Canada in 1876. He was an autodidact (self-taught) like his contemporary Abraham Lincoln.
10. When John was 17, Mackenzie sent him to run a new branch law office in Napanee.
11. When John was 18, his cousin Lowther Macpherson became seriously ill and needed someone to run his law practice temporarily. Even though John was still a student of law, he moved to Hallowell/Picton to run the law firm as a *pro tem* lawyer.

12. John practised successfully in Picton/Hallowell for two years under the guidance of his cousin Lowther, who was convalescing nearby. In those early pioneer days of Upper Canada, this paralegal practice was allowed by the Law Society.

13. In 1834, John learned of the death of his former employer George Mackenzie in a cholera epidemic.

14. That same year, John defended himself on a charge of assault resulting from a prank. He won his case, but his co-accused was not so fortunate.

15. In 1835, John passed his law examination at the Law Society. He was only 20 but was granted authority to practice as an attorney.

16. He practiced law again in Hallowell/Picton for a few months in 1835.

17. During the summer of 1835, John A. moved to Kingston to open his first law office. Many of his new clients were also clients of his former employer, George Mackenzie.

18. At 21, he was called to the bar and practiced law successfully in Kingston for two years taking on and winning some difficult and controversial cases. He volunteered in many civic organizations in Kingston.

19. John served in the militia defending Upper Canada during the abortive Rebellion of 1837 in Toronto.

20. He defended 8 rebels and won their release in 1838.

21. He began to practise corporate law at the age of 24.

20. He entered local politics for the first time as an alderman in Kingston at the age of 28.

21. He entered Canadian politics the following year. And the rest, as they say, is ...