

Ulster-Scots in Canada

by Brian McConnell

Brian is a lawyer by profession but has been researching and writing about Ulster-Scots heritage in Canada for several years. Before completing a degree in law at Dalhousie in Halifax, he obtained an Honours Degree in History from Queen's University at Kingston, Ontario and was accepted into the M.A. program there but opted for law school.

Between the beginning of the colonial period and the end of the twentieth century it is estimated that more than 500,000 people arrived in Canada from Ulster.

The three Maritime Provinces of Canada, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, was where many of the Ulster immigrants first came and holds the record for a number of firsts because of this.

In 1760 the first large group of settlers from Ulster to come to Canada settled the Townships of Onslow and Truro, Nova Scotia and founded the town of Londonderry. Many had come from Londonderry, New Hampshire where they had settled approximately 40 years earlier after departing Londonderry, Ireland.

The founders of Londonderry, Nova Scotia were so-called Ulster-Scots, persons of northern Irish background whose forebears had previously lived in Scotland. Many had arrived in Ireland during the Plantation period of the seventeenth century although Scots had been coming to the north of Ireland for several hundred years prior to that. Two hundred and twenty-nine families with surnames such as McNutt, Kennedy, Taylor, Blair, McLellan, McCurdy, Morrison, and Wilson settled Londonderry, Onslow, and Truro Townships of Colchester County, Nova Scotia.

One of the most famous Nova Scotian political families was also included in this group of Ulster Scots who originally came from Londonderry, Ireland. This was the Archibald family and perhaps the most noteworthy descendant was Sir Adam George Archibald who was born in Truro,

Ulster refers to the old province of Ireland which at one time included three counties now in the present Republic of Ireland (Donegal, Cavan, and Monaghan) and six counties now in present-day Northern Ireland (Antrim, Armagh, Down, Londonderry, Tyrone, and Fermanagh).

Nova Scotia in 1814 and was a delegate to the Charlottetown, Quebec and London conferences that created Canada in 1867. Later he was Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Manitoba and then succeeded Joseph Howe as Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Nova Scotia.

Other well known members of the Archibald family included Samuel George William Archibald, who later became chief justice of the Province of Prince Edward Island and Charles Archibald who became President of the Bank of Nova Scotia in 1918. In recent years the family has been represented by Gordon Archibald, retired President of Maritime Telephone and Telegraph Corporation, and his son, George Archibald, Progressive Conservative member for Kings North in the Nova Scotia legislature.

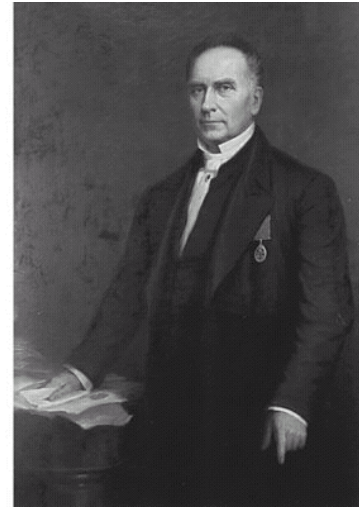
In the 1840's the first large number of immigrants arrived in Prince Edward Island from County Monaghan departing by the port of Belfast. By 1850 one quarter of the Island's population was Irish and in the capital of Charlottetown more than 40% were from Ulster.

Many of the Ulster immigrants to Canada continued to experience close involvement with Ireland. This link was demonstrated during the debate over Home Rule for Ireland early in the twentieth century, which had been largely opposed in Ulster. The beginning of World War I suspended the issue but after the war ended the debate continued in Canada and it was encouraged by the establishment in 1924 of the Self-determination League of Canada and Newfoundland in Toronto.

An immigrant of Ulster Scot ancestry, Lindsay Crawford, was elected President of the League at its first national convention. Crawford toured the Maritimes but received a rough reception. In Sydney, Nova Scotia supporters of the union of Ireland and Great Britain filled the hall he was to speak in and made it difficult for him to deliver his speech. In Fredericton, New Brunswick town officials simply barred him from speaking. The partition of Ireland into Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State (predecessor of the Republic of Ireland) caused the self-determination league to lose its relevance and fold.

Lindsay Crawford followed in the tradition of many Ulster Scot immigrants to Canada who became active politically. Robert Baldwin (1804-1858) who led the movement for responsible government in Upper Canada (now Ontario) was the son of Ulster-Scot settlers. James Boyle Uniacke, Nova Scotia's first Premier was the son of Ulster Scots.

The early Ulster immigrants were active in forming cultural associations and in supporting education. Once such association which still meets today is the Saint Patrick's



Ulster-Scot, Robert Baldwin (1804-1858), an Upper Canadian reformer who attained responsible government for his province in 1848

Society of Saint John, New Brunswick which was formed in 1819. The earliest of the Maritime Irish groups was the Charitable Irish Society of Halifax founded in 1786.

In the field of education, Ulster Scots immigrants also played a significant part in promoting and founding the establishment of educational facilities. One example was Charles Allison, a prominent merchant of Ulster-Scot descent who had left the Church of England to become a Methodist bought land at his own expense and opened a school in Sackville, New Brunswick in 1843. In 1858 Mount Allison's degrees received official recognition and in 1875 it granted the first degree ever to be received by a woman anywhere in the British Empire.

The history and traditions of the Ulster Scots immigrants to the Maritimes and other parts of Canada are promoted by the Ulster Scottish Society of Canada which was established in Halifax in 1995. This non-profit society which is also non-political and non-religious has members throughout Canada. Further information about the Society can be obtained by contacting its Secretary, Robert Fisher, at 2346 Agricola Street, Halifax, N.S. B3K 4B6 or its President, Brian McConnell, at P.O. Box 1239, Digby, N.S., BOV 1A0

"In Ireland there are three main divisions of the people, - the Irish, the Anglo-Irish, and the Scoto-Irish (or Ulster-Scots), which are represented by the three principal Churches, the Roman Catholic, the Protestant Episcopal, and the Presbyterian. These do not entirely coincide, as some of the Anglo-Irish are Catholic, and some of the Scoto-Irish have become Episcopalians, but roughly speaking the three divisions may be distinguished according to the Church to which each belongs. All these people are largely of Celtic origin." Source: Reverend James Barkley Woodburn, "The Ulster Scot: His History and Religion", London, H.R. Allenson, Limited, 1914