Nova Scotia Historical Review

Volume 6, Number 1, 1986

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# Nova Scotia Historical Review
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# Contents

# Editorial

In our highly successful December issue on J.F.W. DesBarres and Cape Breton, which is nearly sold out, we commemorated the founding, two hundred years ago, of Sydney. In this issue, we celebrate the bicentenary of the Charitable Irish Society of Halifax. This society, as Robert Harvey tells us in the lead article, was established by Irishmen who sought the convivial fellowship of their own, with an "affectionate and passionate concern" for those of their kindred "reduced by sickness, age, shipwreck or other misfortune."

Today the Society still provides charity, but in the form of grants to a wide array of institutions and groups throughout the province. The Society has also contributed $10,000 to the D'Arcy McGee Chair of Irish Studies, established this year at Saint Mary's University in Halifax. The University's plans for this chair, the only one of its kind in Canada, are described in the article by Cyril Byrne. Terrence Punch, the well-known genealogist who has also written so knowledgeably on the Irish in Halifax, has long worked to see a programme of Irish studies established locally. He writes in this issue on "Finding Our Irish."

Last year, the *Review* instituted an essay competition at the provincial high-school level. Students were encouraged to write on any aspect of Nova Scotian studies within the curriculum guidelines of either the History or English programmes. The submissions were judged by a panel of three provincial high-school teachers.

The first prize of $100 will be presented to Katie Brooks, a Grade 12 student at Cobequid Educational Centre, Truro, during her graduation ceremony. Her essay, "The Effect of the Catholic Missionaries on the Micmac Indians of Nova Scotia, 1610-1986," is published in this issue of the *Review*. It is an excellent example of historical research and writing. The second prize of $75 will be awarded to Robert H. Pineo, a Grade 12 student at Hants East Rural High School, for his submission, "Joe Howe: Faithful to the Nova Scotia Cause." This essay will appear in the December issue of the *Review*.

The Department of Education distributes 150 copies of the *Review* to provincial school libraries. This annual essay competition should foster the study of Nova Scotian history and increase awareness, among teachers and students, of the *Review* as a valuable teaching tool.

This issue of the *Review* has been made possible by a generous grant from the Nova Scotia Department of Culture, Recreation and Fitness.

# Contributors

ROBERT P. HARVEY
is a native of East Chester, Lunenburg County, but was raised in Halifax. He holds B.A., B.Ed. and M.A. degrees from Dalhousie University, and is presently a social studies teacher and head of that department at Sackville High School, Lower Sackville, Halifax County.

A keen supporter of local and provincial history, Mr. Harvey is a past president and the current historian of the Charitable Irish Society, of which he is a third-generation member. He is also the president of the Fultz Corner Restoration Society, and a member of the Sackville Heritage Society, the Halifax County Heritage Advisory Committee and the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society. He has been the recipient of various historical awards, including the Canadian Merit Award, 1978, and the Ted B. Blackburn Award of the Sackville Heritage Society, 1981. He has previously been published in the *Nova Scotia Historical Quarterly*, the *Journal of Education*, *Early Canadian Life*, the *Nova Scotia Historical Review* and the Halifax Herald Ltd. newspapers.

CYRIL J. BYRNE
was born in Corner Brook, Newfoundland, and educated at St. Dunstan's (P.E.I.), the National University of Ireland (Dublin), Oxford University and the University of Toronto. He is currently professor of English and co-ordinator of the Irish Studies Programme at St. Mary's University, Halifax.

Dr. Byrne's previous publications include *Gentlemen Bishops and Faction Fighters* (1984) and as co-editor, *Talamh an Eisc: Essays Canadian and Irish* (1986). The latter is a collection of papers from the sixteenth International Conference on Irish Studies, held at Saint Mary's University, 1983.

TERRENCE M. PUNCH
is a native of Halifax, where he is a well-known historical educator and writer. He holds a Diploma in Journalism, and B.A., B.Ed. and M.A. degrees from Saint Mary's University, as well as an M.A. from Dalhousie. He is presently a senior high school teacher, and curriculum development writer in the Halifax City Schools' social studies program.

Mr. Punch is a past president of the Charitable Irish Society, vice-president of the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society, chairman of the Genealogical Association of Nova Scotia, and president of the Genealogical Institute of the Maritimes. He is also a Fellow of the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society, and a Life Fellow of the Royal Society of the Antiquaries of Ireland.

Mr. Punch has had articles published in many Canadian, American and overseas journals. His books include *Genealogical Research in Nova Scotia* (1978; 1983) and *Irish Halifax: The Immigrant Generation, 1815-1859* (1981).

PHYLLIS C. WAGG
was born in Arichat and raised at St. George's Channel, on the Bras d'Or Lakes. She holds a B.A. from the University of King's College, an M.A. (Political Science) from Dalhousie University, and a Diploma in Education. A former teacher, she is now a freelance historical and genealogical researcher.

Mrs. Wagg is a member of the Genealogical Association of Nova Scotia, a former vice-president of the South Shore Genealogical Society, and has been published in *The Nova Scotia Genealogist*. Her particular interests lie in the history and genealogy of Cape Breton and eastern Nova Scotia; she is presently researching the history of Richmond County.

ROBERT J. MORGAN
was born in Windsor, Ontario, and was educated at the University of Windsor (Honours B.A.), Queen's (M.A.) and the University of Ottawa (Ph.D.). He is now an associate professor of history at the University College of Cape Breton, and the director of the Beaton Institute of Cape Breton Studies.

Dr. Morgan writes frequently on the history of early Cape Breton and is actively involved in archival and heritage concerns. He is currently president of the Association of Canadian Archivists, president of the Cape Breton Bi-Centennial Commission, and a director of the Miners' Museum, Glace Bay.

KATHERINE J. BROOKS
is the first-place winner in the *Nova Scotia Historical Review*'s provincial essay competition. She was born in DeKalb, Illinois, but has lived in Truro since 1969, and is presently a Grade 12 student at the Cobequid Educational Centre. Katie plans to attend the University of King's College. She has worked as a volunteer guide at the Little White Schoolhouse Museum in Truro, and is particularly interested in antique clothing and books. She has previously had a poem published in *Pandora's Box*.

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# The Charter Membership of the Charitable Irish Society

On 17 January 1786, "a number of respectable Inhabitants" who were "natives of the Kingdom of Ireland," met at the Golden Ball tavern, on the southwest corner of Hollis and Sackville Streets in Halifax, to found the Charitable Irish Society. At that meeting it was resolved,

> that as there are several Gentlemen, Merchants, and others, Inhabitants of this His Majesty's Province of Nova Scotia, who from an affectionate and compassionate concern for any of the Irish Nation, who Shall be reduced by Sickness, Old age, Shipwreck or other misfortune, have thought fit to associate themselves for the relief of such of their poor and indigent Countrymen and their Descendants as may hereafter be found worthy of their countenance and protection. For the due accomplishment of such laudable purposes, *It is agreed* That we the Subscribers hereto, do associate ourselves together, by the name and title of *The Charitable Irish Society*, hoping and expecting that all Gentlemen, Merchants and others of the Irish Nation, or of Irish Extraction, who are lovers of Charity, will chearfully contribute according to their ability, to this undertaking, and that such as now are or hereafter may be admitted Members of this Society, will Strictly adhere to the following Articles, . . .

The last of the fourteen articles of association read, "These Articles are to be fairly wrote in the Society's Book, and the present Members, with Such as shall be hereafter admitted Members, shall subscribe their names to them in said Book, in token of their free consent to, and observation of them." The "present Members" were those who had attended that first meeting, or who joined the Society shortly afterwards, and were thus the original subscribers to the articles: here follows a list of their names, in alphabetical order and with a brief note of identification, wherever possible. An asterisk [*] denotes the original office-holding members of the Society.[1]

1 The list occurs near the beginning of the first minute book of the Charitable Irish Society (MG 20, Vol. 65, PANS), just after the charter. It must have been drawn up later than November 1791, as the list contains the names of members who were admitted to the Society on the 17th of that month. The names of those members known to have joined the Society after 1786 have been excluded. With but one exception ("Robt. O'Brien"), the eighty-eight names transcribed above are of a single hand. Original signatures begin with the ninety-ninth name, and have not been transcribed. An earlier, literal, transcription of the charter with its list of names can be found in H.L. Stewart, *The Irish in Nova Scotia: Annals of the Charitable Irish Society of Halifax, 1786-1836* (Halifax, 1949), pp. 27-31.

1. **Allen**, John, a Shelburne loyalist; one of The Six Hundred.[2]
2. **Austen**, Henry, ship chandler.
3. **Austen**, Thomas, brazier/coppersmith.
4. **Bell**, William, a Chester shipmaster.
5. **Blake**, John, grocer; a loyalist.
6. **Boyd**, John, surgeon; a Shelburne loyalist.
7. **Brien**, David, loyalist grantee at Jeddore [?].
8. **Bulkeley**, Edward; son of Richard.
9. **Bulkeley**, J.M. Freke, comptroller of H.M. Customs; son of Richard.
10. **Bulkeley**, Richard, secretary of Nova Scotia; member of H.M. Council; judge of the Vice-Admiralty Court; master of the rolls.
11. **Bulkeley**, Richard, Junr.
12. **Bull**, Matthew.
13. **Butler**, Edmund, blacksmith.
14. **Clancy**, Roger.
15. **Cleary**, John, farmer.
16. **Cleary**, Richard, butcher.
17. **Cochran**, James, merchant; brother of Thomas and William.
18. **Cochran**,* Thomas, merchant; member of H.M. Council (vice-president).
19. **Cochran**, William, merchant; MHA for Halifax Township.
20. **Cody**, John, master mariner.
21. **Connor**[s], Constant[ine], shopkeeper (son-in-law of John Cody).
22. **Culliton**, Thomas.
23. **Cunningham**, Benjamin.
24. **Cunningham**, John, receiver-general of Quit Rents; justice of the Inferior Court of Common Pleas for Halifax County.

2 A group of loyalists who in the summer of 1783 presented to the commander-in-chief at New York, Sir Guy Carleton, a counter-petition to that of "The Fifty-Five," another group of loyalists, who were seeking large individual grants of land in Nova Scotia.

25. **Cunningham**, John, Junr.
26. **Dwyer**, Edmund, loyalist grantee at East Jeddore.
27. **Fawson**, Jones, formerly a lieutenant in the Royal Navy; commanded the armed schooner *Revenge* during the American Revolution.[3]
28. **Finucane**, Andrew, merchant; younger brother of the late Chief Justice Bryan Finucane (died August 1785).
29. **Fitzgerald**,* Gerald, barrister; supposed co-author--with Uniacke--of the articles of association (secretary).
30. **Frost**, Henry.
31. **Frost**, William.
32. **Hammill**, Daniel, loyalist grantee of Clements Township in 1784; one of The Six Hundred.
33. **Head**, Michael, surgeon; justice of the Inferior Court of Common Pleas for Hants County.
34. **Hickey**, Michael, cooper.
35. **Hill**,* Charles, auctioneer; supposed co-author--with Uniacke--of the articles of association (treasurer).
36. **Hill**, Charles, Junr., tide-waiter for the District of Halifax.
37. **Hogan**, John, of Digby.
38. **Hussey**, James.
39. **Johnson**, Roger, deputy commissary-general.
40. **Jones**, James, priest of St. Peter's Roman Catholic Chapel.
41. **Kavanagh**, Edward, brother of James and Lawrence.
42. **Kavanagh**,* James, merchant (1st assistant vice-president).
43. **Kavanagh**, Lawrence, of Arichat; merchant.
44. **Kelly**, Hugh, auctioneer; a loyalist grantee of Preston; one of The Six Hundred, at which time he was barrack-master at Brooklyn.
45. **Kelly**, James, a Shelburne loyalist [?].

3 Fawson died on 19 February 1833, in his 82nd year. He was the longest surviving charter member to remain active in the Society.

46. **Lawlor**, William, painter.
47. **Lombard**, Voster, of Lunenburg.
48. **Lynch**, Peter, hatter; a Shelburne loyalist (and Port Roseway Associate).
49. **Lynch**, Charles, town major.
50. **Maguire**, John, loyalist grantee at the Halifax/Hants County boundary.
51. **McGory**, Thomas, "gentleman."
52. **McMichael**, Daniel, shipmaster.
53. **McMonagle**, John, merchant; MHA for Windsor Township.
54. **Meany**, James, cooper.
55. **Meany**, John, mariner.
56. **Millet**, William, auctioneer.
57. **Moncrieffe**, Thomas (Major), formerly an officer in Gorham's Rangers and in the 59th Regiment of Foot.[4]
58. **Moore**, H.
59. **Moran**, John.
60. **Morris**, Charles, surveyor-general; member of H.M. Council.
61. **Mullen**, Mark, tobacconist.
62. **Mullen**, Timothy, planter.
63. **Murphy**, James, fisherman.
64. **Murphy**, Timothy, employee of H.M. Fuel Yard.
65. **Noonan**, Timothy, innkeeper.
66. **O'Brien**, John, innkeeper; proprietor of The Golden Ball.
67. **O'Brien**, Patrick, stone-cutter.
68. **O'Brien**, Robert, loyalist grantee at Preston.
69. **O'Loghlen**, Michael J.
70. **Parr**, John, governor of Nova Scotia.
71. **Phelan**, William, Roman Catholic priest [arrived in Halifax, May 1786].[5]

4 Richard Bulkeley Senr. excepted, Moncrieffe was the only charter member of the Society also to have come to Nova Scotia with Governor Edward Cornwallis in 1749.

5 See the articles by Phyllis Wagg and Cyril Byrne, below.

72. **Phelon**, Edmund, merchant; formerly proprietor of The Golden Ball.
73. **Phelon**, Edmund, Junr., nephew of Edmund Phelon.
74. **Power**, Manuel Lucas.
75. **Pyke**, John George, ropemaker; MHA for Halifax County.
76. **Sherlock**, Fo[r]ster, merchant.
77. **Sherlock**,* George William, merchant and shipowner; brother of Forster (2nd assistant vice-president).
78. **Shields**, John, shipmaster.
79. **Smithwick**, John.
80. **Smyth**, Robert, of Merigomish Harbour.
81. **Smyth**, Walter, of Merigomish Harbour.
82. **Thetford**, Henry, merchant.
83. **Tobin**, Michael, butcher.
84. **Tonge**, Winckworth, Naval Officer; MHA, colonel of militia and justice of the Inferior Court of Common Pleas for Hants County.
85. **Uniacke**,* Richard John, barrister; solicitor-general; MHA for Halifax County; principal author of the articles of association (president).
86. **Watson**, Thomas, merchant.
87. **Welsh**, William, merchant.
88. **Whitty**, William, yeoman.

# Black Beans, Banners and Banquets: The Charitable Irish Society of Halifax at Two Hundred

Robert P. Harvey

> When the helpless state of man, if left in his natural condition, is considered, he, of all the animals of creation will be found most in want of society. By means of well regulated society the weakness of man is protected, his wants relieved, his misfortunes alleviated and his moral nature improved.[1]

The sentiment expressed above explains, as well as anything, why the Charitable Irish Society of Halifax (the C.I.S.) was formed and why it has endured to enter its third century. Giving relief to the wants of man, particularly within the City of Halifax and its environs, and thus attempting to alleviate the misfortunes of fellow citizens, was the founding catalyst and has been the ongoing motivation which has fuelled this association for two centuries.

In the first years of the Society, new members were selected by a quaint method of using beans: if on a vote the prospective member received five or more black beans, he was rejected. This practice continued until 1793, when more orthodox balloting was introduced. On joining, new members were expected to make a contribution of twenty shillings to the charity fund, and then were assessed two shillings at every quarterly meeting. Missing a meeting was not taken lightly. At various times in the early history of the Society, fines were imposed on those who failed to answer the call to a quarterly meeting. There are many examples on record of members' names being struck from the roll for non-payment of dues, and at least one or two cases where members were denied the right to resign until they had paid up. In 1864, in an effort to improve the financial fortunes of the C.I.S., Thomas Connors was appointed the "Messenger," to collect dues which were more than twelve months in arrears. He was permitted to keep five per cent of the total as a commission, and in his first year he collected $425 owed to the Society; the practice continued, off and on, for the next twenty years.

This continuing preoccupation with membership dues serves to remind us that money, which was and is so often in short supply, was required to carry out the Society's chief purpose, namely, dispensing charity to ease the distress of fellow citizens. Its charitable accomplishments may have been and may continue to be considered modest, when compared to the work of large-scale agencies or the many facets of our modern welfare system.

1 "Preamble to the Revised Constitution of the Charitable Irish Society" [hereafter the C.I.S.], 25 March 1795. MG 20, Vol. 65, Public Archives of Nova Scotia [hereafter PANS].

However, the work of this Society has been consistent and unrelenting since 1786, and it has always been of a personal and direct nature.

While the charity of the Society was first directed to "any of the Irish nation who shall be reduced by sickness, old age, ship wreck or other misfortune,"[2] it soon was widened, in a revision of the articles of the constitution in 1795, to include all suffering people; the thrust of the charitable work of the Society, thus widened, has remained constant.

For most of the history of the C.I.S., charity was dispensed in the form of food and money to individuals. Society members have had a duty to "aid the poor and distressed [and] from time to time to inform the proper officers of the Society if [such deserving] cases came to their knowledge."[3] For many years, each member of the Committee of Charity was assigned a ward in the city, in which he was responsible for overseeing its special needs. While the charitable work of the Society has been concentrated in the City of Halifax, there have been noteworthy exceptions. During the Irish Famine of the late 1840s, for example, much of the city's relief effort was organized for Ireland by the C.I.S. or its members.

Bread was very often the form of local charity in the early years, and providing food to the needy, in one way or another, has been a continuing part of the Society's good works. Witness this example in 1792: "Mr. Watson presented a petition from Mrs. Barry which was considered. Resolved that the committee do allow her two loaves of Bread per week."[4] Providing bread and charity, human nature being what it is, was sometimes the cause of trouble in the Society:

> Mr. Patrick O'Brien prayed to be dismissed from acting as one of the committee of charity alleging that he did not wish to continue any longer a member thereof, on account of Mr. Lanigan's unprecedented and unwarrantable behaviour by involving the Society in debt to a considerable amount by issuing bread to different people without his consulting with a single individual of the said committee of charity.[5]

2 "Articles of Association," C.I.S., 17 January 1786. MG 20, Vol. 65, PANS.

3 "Duties of Members," *Constitution* of the C.I.S. (Revised 1961), Article II, Section 4, p. 14.

4 Minutes, C.I.S., 17 November 1792. MG 20, Vol. 65, PANS.

5 *Ibid.*, 18 November 1793.

The Society examined the charge seriously, for it took statements under oath from Lanigan's sons and wife. Perhaps the matter resulted because Lanigan had too generous a nature. In the end, the C.I.S. ordered that in future, action by the committee would be by a majority only.[6]

More than once, the Society, by casting its bread upon the waters, has had it returned, with interest. A John Henneberry received money from the C.I.S. on Christmas Day, 1797, due to a shipwreck near Canso. Four years later he paid back the full amount and at the quarterly meeting in November 1801, he was proposed as a new member. He was accorded the honour of being unanimously admitted, by a show of hands rather than by ballot, "on account of his manly conduct in refunding to the Society the three pounds ten shillings given at his distress. . . ." Then, completing this happy cycle, Henneberry, who had once been a recipient of the Society's benevolence, now took a place, in 1803, on the Committee of Charity, to provide it to others.[7]

In the present century, charitable assistance has somtimes taken the form of financial aid to education. During the 1920s, the Society provided students with scholarships to Dalhousie University and later to Saint Mary's, in the amount of $100. One recipient, who went on to become a Nova Scotia Rhodes Scholar, returned four times the amount of the original scholarship, years later. It was what he termed "fair Irish interest."[8]

In recent years the Society, through its Charitable Grants Committee, has dispensed sums of money twice a year to a score of volunteer community agencies, which directly assist the distressed of the city. Most recently, the Society has been making annual grants to Saint Mary's University, for the development of a collection of Irish records for research purposes. The total grant of $10,000 will be reached in the bicentenary year of 1986. As well, the Society is assisting Saint Mary's by formally supporting an application for the creation of a Chair of Irish Studies at the university.

6 Considering the length of time, two centuries, it is perhaps remarkable that but one serious breach of trust is to be found in the Society's records. In that case, the guilty party repaid two-thirds of the embezzled amount and his name was "erased from the roll."

7 Minutes, C.I.S., 17 February 1803. MG 20, Vol. 65, PANS.

8 In 1926, the Society's scholarship went to the future award-winning Nova Scotian novelist, Ernest R. Buckler.

Over the years, the charitable funds of the C.I.S. have been boosted in other ways than by the dues of members. The executive in the 1790s bought government lottery tickets, in a losing effort to add to the funds of the Society.[9] Of real benefit have been several important bequests, most notably that of Sir William Young, in 1887. At his death, this former premier and afterwards chief justice, left in trust $100,000 to ten local charitable organizations. From that time, the Society has annually received the interest of its share of $10,000. As for Sir William, the Society said:

> We will always remember with gratitude and cherish the name of Sir William Young who tho' not an Irishman proved himself, in his death, as well as in his life a warm friend of Ireland and her children, as the most liberal benefactor of the Charitable Irish Society of Halifax.[10]

The "banners and banquets" of the title recall the fellowship and comradeship which have characterised the history of this Society. Even a casual reading of its records indicates that its members have always enjoyed having a good time and that they have always known how to go about it. Most of these happy occasions have involved the expression of national feeling for Ireland. At first this was an emotional outpouring of a group of exiles banded together in a new land, but while there are few natives of Ireland among the Society's present membership, this national spirit is still strong and proud within the Society.

The Saint Patrick's Day banquets came about due to a wish, expressed in the early Minutes, to "dine together" on that day. The dinners have not always been held; of the two hundred Saint Patrick's Days since 1786, the Society has failed to dine perhaps ten to twenty per cent of the time. There were no dinners between 1802 and 1807, for example, because of the need to direct extra money to charity. On Saint Patrick's Day, 1847, before a parade and banquet, the Society voted £100 for relief work at Cork, required due to the famine. Father Matthew, of Cork, subsequently wrote to the Society, thanking it for the "Holy and Sublime celebration of the Festival of St. Patrick," which had resulted in the donation, but sadly observing

9 Minutes, C.I.S., 17 November 1796. MG 20, Vol. 65, PANS. The ticket numbers were 2156, 2157, 2158, 2153, 2154 and 2152. The last was bought by R.J. Uniacke and others for the Society.

10 *Ibid.*, 17 August 1887. MG 20, Vol. 70, PANS.

that "God alone can feed and save a whole nation."[11] In 1867, the uncooperative attitude of the bishop who would not grant a dispensation for meat--Saint Patrick's Day that year being a Sunday and Monday a fast day--resulted in no banquet. In 1870, the loss of the ship *City of Boston*, which was believed to be carrying members of the Society, forced the cancellation of the dinner.[12] There was no dinner in 1849, 1891, and again in 1921, due to political conditions in Ireland. Two World Wars caused the dinner to be cancelled in 1915, 1940 and 1941. Informal suppers or luncheons were favoured during these years of armed conflict.

Nevertheless, Society banquets are a great tradition in the city of Halifax. A remarkable dinner was held in 1795, when 119 persons sat down with H.R.H. Prince Edward Augustus, the future Duke of Kent and father of Queen Victoria, to dine at the British Coffee House. The Minutes tell us that "After a late hour the Society broke up highly satisfied with the entertainment and with that harmony which and ought to distinguish the Hospitable sons of St. Patrick and Ireland."[13] These early dinners should give comfort to modern officers of the Society when one realises that two characteristics have, for two centuries, continued to be associated with all C.I.S. banquets: more guests attend than members,[14] and dinner deficits are a perennial problem.

In 1792, the dinner was held at Andrew Gallagher's Tavern. Members were assessed five shillings each for dinner and ten shillings each for wine. Presumably it was anticipated they would drink twice as much as they ate. The money was to be paid "previous to their sitting down to dinner." Several public guests attended free, but the representatives of sister societies were expected to pay.[15] Unhappily the dinner resulted in a deficit of £2.3s. The solution arrived at was for the twenty members present at the May quarterly meeting to pay one shilling extra, and for a committee to be established

11 *Ibid.*, 21 June 1847. MG 20, Vol. 67, PANS.

12 *Ibid.*, 17 November 1870. MG 20, Vol. 69, PANS. C.I.S. members lost: John Barron, Walter Barron and Edward J. Kenny.

13 *Ibid.*, 17 March 1795. MG 20, Vol. 65, PANS.

14 In 1808, of the 102 at the St. Patrick's Day dinner, only one-third were members.

15 The North British Society and the St. George's Society, both of Halifax.

to collect five shillings each from the five members, named in the Minutes, who had not, in the words of the Minutes, "conformed" with the resolution to "dine together on St. Patrick's Day." Two did pay the fine and these Draconian measures appear to have worked, for the dinner of 1793 produced a surplus.

The "banners," themselves, serve as a reminder that the Society has always enjoyed dressing up on public occasions and showing off its colours -- mostly green. From the 1790s on, there are references in the records of the Society to the obtaining of scarves, flags, paintings, banners, harps and other insignia, or what the Minutes call "devices," used to boast of the organization's Irish heritage. At first, most of this material was used to decorate the site of the annual banquet. The Mason's Hall presented this picture to the eye on 17 March 1832:

> At the head over the President's chair were placed the [paintings of the] titular Saints of Ireland, England and Scotland hung around with national flags and the flags of the Militia, the Harp, the emblem of the emerald Isle occupied the lower end of the room, tastefully surrounded with evergreens, formed into an arch at the top. Suitable devices were also placed in other parts of the room; very tastefully arranged presenting to the eye of the Spectator. . . testimony of the taste and ingenuity of the managers and the national feeling which occupied their minds on this occasion. . . .[16]

The first record of the Society parading, other than for the funerals of prominent members, was on 28 June 1838. On that day, members formed up on the Grand Parade for a public procession in honour of the young Queen Victoria's coronation. Each member wore the symbols of the Society, a "harp on his breast," and a "shamrock in his hat." For the thirsty marchers the Society provided a hospitality tent on the Commons. A handful of members that day had dined forty-three years before, with Victoria's father, and among them was Michael Bennett, who had joined the Society in 1789, and who would remain active until his death in 1847.[17] The Society marched again in 1840 to celebrate Victoria's marriage to Prince Albert, and on this occasion members wore a "bow of white ribbon" above the harps on their coats.

16 Minutes, C.I.S., 17 March 1832. MG 20, Vol. 66, PANS.

17 The longest membership, as yet uncovered, is that of Richard Power, who in 1913 was given a life membership for being sixty-nine years a member.

Not wishing to depend solely on Queen Victoria for reasons to march, the C.I.S. held its first Saint Patrick's Day parade in 1842. With flags and banners flying, it marched to Saint Mary's for mass and an oration suitable to the day. The president and officers sat on a raised platform in front of the sanctuary. When the service ended, the parade re-formed and passed through the major streets of the city. After an afternoon nap, members gathered again for the banquet:

> The next evening passed on agreeably until about 3 o'clock next morning when our president still surrounded by his faithful followers, announced his high gratification at the proceedings of the evening, he then gave his last toast "Our next merry meeting" and the company then retired some accompanying him to his home, the Band playing all the way. . . .[18]

Even a foot of newly fallen snow did not keep the C.I.S. at home and off the streets in 1867:

> The procession headed by the Volunteer Band playing the time-honoured air of *St. Patrick's Day* moved north along Barrington Street. . . .after marching through several of the principal streets the procession halted in front of Government House where three cheers were given for 'Her most gracious majesty the Queen' and three for 'Sir W.F. Williams, Lieut. Governor'. . . .the cortége proceeded to the 'Archepiscopal Residence' where three cheers were given for the 'Archbishop and clergy.' On arriving at the [Masons'] Hall three hearty cheers were given for 'old Ireland our green Isle of the Ocean' and for the 'land we live in' and 'the day we celebrate' when the members dispersed to their homes highly pleased with the day's proceedings. . . .[19]

Looking for more opportunities to parade, the Society held its first picnic in 1846. It began with a procession through the city to the Queen's Wharf, where passage was taken on the steamer *Micmac* to Prince's Lodge, the site of what was termed the "rural festival." The picnic attracted 530 people, including "250 of the fair daughters of Erin and Acadia." After a day of eating, singing, music and sporting events, the party continued with a dance at the Masons' Hall; the Minutes record that the event was held on the "teetotal" principle. The Society, as a result of this new venture into outdoor excursions, also acquired new property, namely swings, quoits and cordage.

18 Minutes, C.I.S., 17 March 1842. MG 20, Vol. 67, PANS.

19 *Ibid.*, 18 March 1867. MG 20, Vol. 69, PANS.

In this event one can see the origins of the Society's late summer or fall outings of today.[20]

In 1849 the C.I.S. marched in a parade marking the centenary of the founding of Halifax. The Society's own, Beamish Murdoch, gave an oration at the Commons and, on the motion of Joe Howe, a hospitality tent was provided. The acquisition of flags, banners and other paraphernalia required for parading produced the Society's first marshal in 1850, in the person of John Egan.[21] About the only invitation to march that was turned down came in 1856, when the Society decided not to take part in ceremonies connected with the laying of the corner-stone for the new asylum, Mount Hope, in Dartmouth. The C.I.S. did, however, accept the invitation of the St. George's Society of Halifax in 1864 to take its traditional place next to the North British Society and march in a procession celebrating the tercentenary of William Shakespeare. On that occasion, Joe Howe delivered an address entitled "The Bard of Avon."

The pride felt by the C.I.S. in Ireland, its history and its heroes is perhaps best expressed by the Society's continuing interest in the legendary Brian Boru, who defended Ireland against the Vikings a thousand years ago; a large weapon said to have been his sword was acquired by the Society.[22] In parades, it was the privilege of the chief of police to carry it, and after the C.I.S. stopped parading sometime before 1900,[23] it was eventually lent to the Ancient Order of Hibernians (the A.O.H.), who continued to carry it into the 1920s. During the early part of this century, the C.I.S. very often accepted the invitation of the A.O.H. to send its senior officers, decked out in their regalia, in a barouche to participate in the Saint Patrick's Day Parade.

But back to the hero, Brian Boru, of whom the Irish chroniclers said: "Brian was the last man in Erin who was a match for a hundred. He was

20 Their Excellencies the Governor-General, Lord Dufferin, and Lady Dufferin attended a Society picnic on McNab's Island, 4 August 1873.

21 The longest-serving marshal was Erin Patrick Mulcahy, who carried the Society's shillelagh from 1952 to 1973.

22 This may be the sword presented to the Society by the Uniacke family, 17 February 1855.

23 The Society's ceasing to parade on its own may be symptomatic of a general decline in C.I.S. fortunes. Membership between 1874 and 1914 dropped from 380 to 161. Such a decline was only equalled during World War II, when more meetings seemed to be cancelled then held.

the last man who killed a hundred in one day. His was the last step that true valor ever took in Erin."[24] The first step of the Charitable Irish Society was taken two hundred years ago. On 17 January 1786, to use the words of the earliest Minutes, "respectable inhabitants of this province, natives of the Kingdom of Ireland," created the articles of association of the oldest such Irish society, in what would become Canada. In all, 88 men signed the articles and thus became the charter members of the Charitable Irish Society.[25]

The 1780s were years of violent change. The ideas of the social and political philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had taken root; the American Revolution had ended and the French Revolution was about to begin; Nova Scotia was attempting to cope with a doubling of its population, as loyalists arrived in great numbers; New Brunswick and Cape Breton had been erected into separate colonies; and in France Louis XVI and his queen, Marie Antoinette, sublimely drifted towards the abyss. All of which was not lost on the Charitable Irish Society.

The preamble to the revised constitution of 1795, cited at the beginning of this article, was largely the work of Richard John Uniacke. It reveals the influence of Rousseau, Locke, Jefferson and the other influential thinkers who were part of a fundamentally changing world. In a small corner of that world was Halifax, described by a contemporary visitor as a "collection of old shacks on the shore, remnants of old tents and spruce wigwams on the Commons, which had been erected and subsequently abandoned. . . .[All this] bore silent evidence of the poverty and suffering of the great multitude."[26]

The town was still largely confined to the eastern slope of Citadel Hill, although some of the more prosperous residents were moving to country estates in the west and south ends of the peninsula. The town of about five thousand was now connected to Annapolis Royal by a mail courier who travelled the route every two weeks. Two other national societies were formed in 1786, one English -- the St. George's Society -- and the other,

24 Seumas MacManus, *The Story of The Irish Race* (New York, 1972), p. 282.

25 In 1938, the stag tradition of the St. Patrick's Day banquets was broken when "the ladies were privileged to attend." In 1982, Doreen M. Havey became the first woman member of the C.I.S.

26 Thomas H. Raddall, *Halifax Warden of the North* (Toronto, 1948), p. 104.

the German Society.[27] Halifax merchants constructed a wooden sidewalk that year along Barrington Street from Duke and then down George to Hollis. And the social scene was highlighted by the visit of the sailor prince, William Henry, the future King William IV, known affectionately through the fleet as "coconut head."

Among the wooden buildings of the new Halifax was a structure well known to Prince William and others as a tavern, inn and place for social gatherings--and, at times, for public business. It was the Golden Ball Tavern which occupied the south-west corner of Hollis and Sackville Streets. The property had been acquired in 1783[28] by one John O'Brien, innkeeper, who subsequently offered the public "lodgings at 9d per night; beef soup or mutton broth everyday at 12 o'clock till the weather gets warm." O'Brien assured gentlemen that they might "Lodge as privately as in any private lodging. . .and that Good attention will be given and all favours gratefully acknowledged by their most obedient and obliged humble servant."[29] Prince William frequented this and other establishments during his sojourn, as confirmed by a fellow officer:

> I met him [the Prince] on the Parade. He, Major Vesey and myself walked about the town all morning. He would go into a house where he saw a pretty girl and was perfectly acquainted with every house of a certain description in the town. He dined with the Commodore and Captain of the fleet at O'Brien's Tavern.[30]

Thus it was, to this establishment, that the members of the month-old Charitable Irish Society were summoned in February of 1786:

> The members of the Charitable Irish Society are requested to meet at Mr. O'Brien's Tavern on Friday next at 6 o'clock in the Evening to choose officers

27 T.B. Akins, *History of Halifax* (Belleville, 1973), p. 90.

28 Registry of Deeds, Halifax County, Vol. 19, p. 236; Vol. 27, p. 129. The Golden Ball, located on lots 15 and 16, south of the corner of Sackville Street, along the west side of Hollis Street, was operating as early as 1771. John O'Brien appears to have been running the establishment by 1780 and purchased it from Edmond Phelon, 19 November 1783. It was repurchased by Phelon, 28 March 1789. Phelon was the godfather of Mary O'Brien, daughter of John.

29 "History Briefs," undated newspaper clipping, ca. 1940s. C.I.S. scrapbook in possession of the Society.

30 George Mullane, "Old Inns and Coffee Houses of Halifax," *Collections* of the Nova Scotia Historical Society, XXII (1933), p. 10.

> for the ensuing year and to regulate other Business for the good of Society. All Irishmen or sons of Irishmen who wish to become members of that Society are requested to send their names to the subscriber previous to said day.[31]

We take 1786 as the genesis of the Charitable Irish Society. However, for a century, a myth has persisted that the origins of the C.I.S. are much earlier and almost coincidental with the founding of Halifax. The tradition appears to be based, in part, on a reference in a nineteenth-century book, *Irishmen in Canada*, which states that "The president of the Irish Charitable Society was in 1755 appointed one of His Majesty's Council for the Province of Nova Scotia."[32] In that year, Captain Charles Morris (I), surveyor-general of the province, was appointed to His Majesty's Council for Nova Scotia. However, it was his grandson, the Hon. Charles Morris (III), who was the first of that name to fill the chair of the Society in 1811.

It may be that the author confused several generations of this prominent family who carried the same Christian name. However, historians J.W. Regan, T.B. Akins and L.G. Powers have also, over the years, put a certain faith in the idea of an earlier origin. There is no doubt that Irishmen in Halifax did gather informally, at least, to mark Saint Patrick's Day prior to 1786. George Mullane records that "In 1782, four years before the establishment of the Charitable Irish Society, a number of Irishmen and their friends dined on St. Patrick's Day at Sutherland's Coffee House which was situated on the west side of Bedford Row."[33] Until documentation of an earlier Irish Society is uncovered, however, we may conclude with Mullane that "the existence of such a Society is only mythical."[34]

Following 1795 membership was widened, from natives of Ireland and their offspring, to include non-Irish nationals, providing that "they are not members of any other national society in the province." While this provision

31 *Halifax Gazette*, 14 February 1786. There is some evidence that Governor John Parr chaired early meetings of the Society. The first formal president is taken to be Richard John Uniacke; vice-president, Thomas Cochran; senior assistant vice-president, James Kavanagh; junior assistant vice-president, George W. Sherlock; treasurer, Charles Hill; secretary, Gerald Fitzgerald.

32 Nicholas Flood Davin, *Irishmen in Canada* (Shannon, 1969), p. 146. The introduction to the 1969 reprint of his 1877 work cautions that "It needs . . . to be used with care . . . ."

33 Mullane, "Inns and Coffee Houses," p. 7.

34 George Mullane, "Men Who Have Added Lustre to Annals of Charitable Irish Society," in *Morning Chronicle* (Halifax), 18 March 1912.

was ultimately to be changed to "natives of Ireland, descendants of Irish men or women and descendants of any past, present or future member of this Society. . ."-the C.I.S. has waited in vain for a descendant of a future member to apply for membership--the 1795 regulation did allow a number of illustrious non-Irish Nova Scotians to join, including Samuel Cunard and Joseph Howe. As the Society's first historian, the late Dr. H.L. Stewart, observed: "It was indeed notable that quite often men of other racial groups thus chose the Irish organization as expressive of their interest and purpose." If we may be allowed to take liberties with the comment of Isocrates on the Greeks and the widened use of the term to include non-Greeks, the Charitable Irish Society made the term "Irish" applicable more to those who cherished Irish ideals than to those who were Irish merely by inheritance of blood.[35]

In the early years of the Society following 1786, the leadership of the C.I.S. had close ties with the colonial aristocracy of the day. The founding president, Richard John Uniacke, a native of Castletown, Cork, was solicitor-general and later attorney-general for more than thirty years. Between 1786 and 1817 he occupied the president's chair twelve times. He was thirty-three years old at the founding of the Society and just ten years before had escaped a charge of treason related to the Eddy Rebellion in Cumberland County, during the American War of Independence. He was honoured and revered in the C.I.S., but the newly-arrived loyalists resented his prominent position in the community and termed him that "great lubbery Insolent Irish Rebel."[36]

Richard Bulkeley, a founder of Halifax with Cornwallis in 1749, was the second president. Bulkeley, for thirty-five years provincial secretary, also served variously as judge of the Vice-Admiralty Court, registrar in Chancery and master of the rolls. Bulkeley, a Dublin native, had a military background before coming to Halifax. He and his three sons were all members of the Society. One son, James M.F. Bulkeley, was president in 1794 and died in

35 H.L. Stewart, *The Irish In Nova Scotia* (Kentville, ca. 1949), p. 83.

36 Edward Winslow, as quoted in Brian Cuthbertson, *The Old Attorney General* (Halifax, 1980), p. 14. In this bicentenary year the C.I.S., in cooperation with the Old Youghal Society, in Ireland, is erecting a suitable monument to Uniacke, the man termed by Stewart the "ruling spirit" of the Society in its earliest period.

office, age thirty-five, just two years after his father.[37]

Thomas Cochran, another early president, was an M.H.A. and a member of the old "Council of Twelve," as well as a prominent merchant of early Halifax. He was the father of a future chief justice of Gibraltar and of a general of the Peninsular War and the War of 1812, and the grandfather of Sir John Inglis, the "Hero of Lucknow."

In the early decades, three of Uniacke's sons were presidents of the Society, a continuity which helped to maintain a dynasty of conservative office-holders. Crofton Uniacke was president in 1810 and Richard John Uniacke Jr. from 1819 to 1821. The latter set two records in the annals of the Society. He was elected both a member of the C.I.S. and its president on the same night in 1819.[38] Also, during his first year as president, he was indicted on a charge of murder.

Uniacke met and killed William Bowie in a pistol duel, over a question of honour, on 21 July 1819; the incident took place near what is now Lady Hammond Road, in the north end of the peninsula. Uniacke's second was the vice-president of the C.I.S., Edward McSweeney, who suggested that Uniacke and Bowie fire a second time, as both had failed to find a mark with the first exchange of shots. It turned out that McSweeney was heavily indebted to Bowie, and along with Bowie's second, he also faced a murder charge. The trial was held in the newly-completed Province House, in what is now the Legislative Library. In a dramatic courtroom scene, which included two of his brothers and his father, Uniacke, who had defended himself on his family's honour and his own personal integrity, heard the jury acquit him and the others.[39] There were those who believed that the guilt of Bowie's death haunted Uniacke and shortened his life; he died a judge of the Supreme Court in 1834, at the age of forty-four.

The Hon. James Boyle Uniacke, another son of the first president, served as the Society's president in 1828 and again in 1839, 1840 and 1846. To complete the "establishment image" of the early Society, it need only be recorded that the last to hold the office of governor of Nova Scotia, John

37 At least two other presidents died in office: A.A. Thompson, 1940, and W. Ryan Sutherland, three days after eloquently presiding over the Festival of St. Patrick, 1972.

38 Minutes, C.I.S., 17 February 1819. MG 20, Vol. 66, PANS.

39 Cuthbertson, *The Old Attorney General*, pp. 76-77. Bowie had been president of the North British Society of Halifax in 1816.

Parr, a veteran of Fontenoy, is the first name on the list of original members of 1786.[40]

While establishment-oriented and loyal during its early period, it would be wrong to think that the C.I.S. did not register, at times, its political opinions, at least indirectly. The Festival of Saint Patrick as noted previously, was cancelled several times as a form of political protest. Furthermore, Daniel O'Connell, the champion of Catholic emancipation and of the movement for repeal of the union of Ireland and Britain, was clearly the darling of the Society. Joseph Howe, while president of the C.I.S., visited him in Ireland in 1838. At O'Connell's death in 1847, the Society officially mourned for a month, a mark of respect equalled, up to that time, only by that shown at the death of Richard John Uniacke, the founding president, in 1830. In 1875, the centenary of O'Connell's birth, the Society acquired an O'Connell banner to carry in processions.[41]

Also counterbalancing the establishment aura of the Society's early leadership was the presence among the membership of some of the earliest and best-known leaders of political reform in Nova Scotia, such as William Cottnam Tonge, whose clashes with Lieutenant-Governor John Wentworth, in the first decade of the nineteenth century, proved something of an inspiration to Nova Scotia's greatest political reformer, Joseph Howe. Howe joined the Society in 1832, and became its vice-president just a fortnight before his famous trial for criminal libel in 1835. His supporters, many of them members of the C.I.S., bore him in victory from the courtroom--a Daniel O'Connell for Nova Scotia. When he was serving his last of four terms as president in 1847, his reform party won, at last, a majority in the elections to the legislative assembly, which would result in the formation of the first responsible government in the British colonies. In that first responsible executive council of nine, sat four presidents of the Charitable Irish Society: James Boyle Uniacke, president of the council and the first premier of Nova Scotia; Joseph Howe, provincial secretary; with Michael Tobin and Lawrence O'Connor Doyle.

40 The first name on the roll of members in 1986, is that of the current lieutenant-governor of Nova Scotia, the Hon. Alan R. Abraham.

41 The Hon. W.A. Henry moved that the Society mark the centennial of O'Connell's birth. Some 320 members subscribed $560 to pay for the banner, "The Liberator." It was painted by the Halifax artist, C.C. Green. Some of the sewing was done by the Sisters of Charity at St. Patrick's and it was first carried in a torchlight procession, 6 August 1875. It continued to be carried in parades until the 1920s. There is some hope that it may be restored and put on display at a future time.

Elected public servants have long had an association with the C.I.S. Lawrence Kavanagh, who was the first Roman Catholic to sit in the Nova Scotia Legislature, seven years before O'Connell won Catholic Emancipation in Britain, was a Society member when this significant achievement was made. William A. Henry, a Father of Confederation, was president in 1873 and 1874. Henry was, as well, the first from this province to sit on the Supreme Court of Canada. Sir John S.D. Thompson, premier of Nova Scotia and later prime minister of Canada, a man whom Sir John A. Macdonald described as "the greatest discovery of my life,"[42] was president in 1876 and 1877. The Hon. Lawrence Geoffrey Power, a member of the Senate of Canada for more than forty years, a Privy Councillor and Speaker of the Upper House, 1901 to 1905, was president in 1895 and 1896. Author, politician and jurist, James Wilberforce Longley, was president from 1909 to 1911. Sir Malachi Bowes Daly, lieutenant-governor during the 1890s, was president in 1868 and 1869. He, like the late Senator Felix P. Quinn, the president of 1916, was a member of the Society for more than fifty years. Of the latter, the press in reporting the Festival of Saint Patrick in 1925 said, "A Charitable Irish Society banquet without a song from F.P. Quinn would be lacking in a most important factor."[43] In later years, Quinn frequently delighted the Upper House on Saint Patrick's Day with his singing and story-telling.[44] Former premier, the late Senator Harold Connolly, was a member for nearly fifty years and another former premier, the Hon. Gerald A. Regan, is a current member. All the foregoing indicate a tradition of the twinning of membership in the Society with leadership in politics, a tradition that has endured for two centuries.

A constant source of strength to the C.I.S. has been the continuity of family membership over the years. The current senior member is the retired senator, the Hon. Richard A. Donahoe, who joined the Society in 1932 and served as president in 1939. He became the youngest person in the history of the Society to preside over a St. Patrick's Day banquet, at age twenty-seven, in 1937. He is, at present, the Society's only Life Member. His sons, the Hon. Arthur Donahoe, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly,

42 Bruce Hutchison, *Mr. Prime Minister 1867-1964* (Don Mills, 1964), p. 101.

43 Minutes, C.I.S., 17 March 1925. MG 20, Vol. 70, PANS. Clipping inserted in the Minute Book; Quinn sang "How Ireland Got Its Name" and "The Dear Little Shamrock."

44 *Debates of the Senate*, Vol. 101, No. 31, 17 March 1955, pp. 308-310.

and the Hon. Terence Donahoe, Chairman of the Policy Board and Minister of Vocational and Technical Training, are active members of the Society, the former having been president in 1978. Their uncles Robert and the late Edward Donahoe, were also presidents, and the ancestors of this family constitute more than a century of association with the Society. Fittingly, the current president, Dr. Brian Craig Uniacke Cuthbertson, is a direct descendant of the founding president through his son, Crofton Uniacke.

Over the years the C.I.S. has reflected the changing community from which it draws its life. This reality was dramatically revealed in the mid-nineteenth century. The Society which idolized Howe in the 1830s and cheered at his reform victory in the late 1840s was a Society in transition. It was still outwardly loyal and still boasted second-generation Uniackes, but it was becoming remarkably more Irish and Catholic than in the first sixty years. As the historian T.M. Punch has verified, the percentage of natives of Ireland in the Society rose from 67 per cent in 1838 to 80 per cent in 1848. Moreover, Catholic membership, which stood at 78 per cent in 1838 had increased to 92.5 per cent a decade later. To a large extent this change was a reflection of the altered nature of Irish immigration to Nova Scotia between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[45]

By the 1850s the changed nature of the Society, which was by then less conservative, could be seen clearly during the presidency of William Condon, at the height of the Crimean War. Irish Nova Scotians soon came to decry the hostilities publically. This position was reflected in the Irish press of Halifax, with pronouncements such as "England not Russia is the cause of the war." The historian George Patterson, assessing the hostility of the Halifax Irish, asserted that "They were in sympathy with Russia and meetings were held, in secret, at which the conduct of Great Britain . . . was denounced."[46] Quite a contrast to 1798, when the Halifax Irish of the C.I.S. gave no comfort to the intrigues of the French in Ireland with members of the newly-formed United Irishmen.

The period of the 1850s boiled over into an unseemly, impassioned and nasty politico-religious struggle which pitted the "loyal" Protestant against

45 Terrence M. Punch, *Irish Halifax: The Immigrant Generation, 1815-1859* (Halifax, 1981), p. 35. Of the 228 members of the C.I.S. in 1848, only 17 were Protestant and only two of those were Irish natives: John S. Thompson and David Hare.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 55.

the seemingly "disloyal" Catholic Irish. As if the Crimean War were not enough of an issue, that matter became meshed with the construction of the Nova Scotia Railway. Stabbings, lawlessness, strikes and the famous Gourly Shanty Riot were all a part of this violent period of our history. Needless to say, and almost unavoidably, the Charitable Irish Society, due to its growing Irish Catholic and less conservative nature, was at the centre of the controversy. The two chief opposing personalities were presidents of the Society -- Condon and Howe.

Joseph Howe, in 1855, was chief commissioner of railways for the province. Under the guise of finding railway workers for Nova Scotia, he was also carrying on clandestine recruiting, in the United States, for the British army. His recruiting of men for the "N.S.R." -- which could mean either Nova Scotia Railway or Nova Scotia Regiment -- caused William Condon, the president of the C.I.S. in 1855, to expose Howe's efforts for what they were. A vindictive struggle followed which would stain Howe's reputation, would contribute to the defeat of a government, and would have political consequences for a generation in Nova Scotia. The presidency of the Charitable Irish Society would never again be as political. In future, the Society would, in general, revert to the position reflected in its first sixty years, as that of a social, charitable and loyal institution.

Perhaps the final exception to this non-political status of the Society -- one "last hurrah" -- can be seen in its interest, from the 1880s to the 1920s, in the Irish Question in British politics, and in the issue of Home Rule. A special meeting of the Society on 24 March 1882 unanimously passed a resolution requesting that the Dominion Government be asked to "concur in a resolution from the Hon. Member of Victoria N.B. that a similar form of government [dominion status] be granted to Ireland," and that in the "interests of the Empire [Home Rule] should be granted to Ireland and that the political prisoners should be immediately released."[47]

Among the "political prisoners" was the leader of the Irish Home Rule movement, Charles Stuart Parnell, who had been incarcerated in Kilmainham Jail, Dublin, for activities related to the enforcement of Prime Minister Gladstone's Land Act. Within a month of his release, Parnell wrote to the secretary of the C.I.S., James O'Brien, thanking the Society for a

47 Minutes, C.I.S., 24 March 1882. MG 20, Vol. 69, PANS.

copy of the resolution, passed 24 March, which he had "read with much pleasure."[48]

In the meantime, another special meeting had been held on 11 May, over the "dastardly assassination" in Dublin of Lord Frederick Cavendish, the newly-arrived lord lieutenant, and the chief secretary. The motion condemning the action was made in an "eloquent manner" by the premier and attorney-general of Nova Scotia, the Hon. John S.D. Thompson.[49] Later in the 1880s, the Society took part in receptions for visiting representatives of the National League, including a lecture by Justin McCarthy. The issue passed out of the records of the Society in the 1890s, perhaps a local result of the Irish Question subsiding in British politics, due to the government's policy of "Killing Home Rule with Kindness."

Prior to the Great War and the introduction of a third Home Rule Bill, the Society organized a meeting at the Academy of Music for T.P. Connor, M.P. and the Irish Parliamentary Fund. It was reported that the Home Rule Fund had $625 ready to be transferred to the national office in 1911.[50] In November 1913, a resolution in support of "Mr. John Redmond and the people of Ireland, in their agitation for Home Rule"[51] passed unanimously, with a copy sent to Redmond, who was at that time at the height of his power as successor of O'Connell and Parnell. As the time came for the passage of the Home Rule Bill in Britain, the annual meeting of the C.I.S. in 1914 passed the following: "That this Society unite with the Irish people in Nova Scotia in any action that may be deemed advisable to offset any movement that may be started in the province in opposition to Home Rule for Ireland."[52]

The Society was still trying to decide on an appropriate sort of celebration to mark the passage of the Home Rule Bill when it and the bill were overtaken by the events at Sarajevo on 28 June 1914. The Society spent the war years supporting the Canadian effort and waiting for peace and

48 Charles Stewart Parnell to James J. O'Brien, 6 June 1882. Original in possession of T.M. Punch.

49 Minutes, C.I.S., 11 May 1882. MG 20, Vol. 69, PANS.

50 *Ibid.*, 17 February 1911. MG 20, Vol. 70, PANS.

51 *Ibid.*, 17 February 1913.

52 *Ibid.*, 17 February 1914.

Home Rule.[53] Regrettably, the end of the war and the coming of peace in Europe did not mean peace in Ireland. The Easter Uprising of 1916 in Dublin was followed by the creation of an Irish Republic, complete with a Declaration of Irish Independence in 1919.

The C.I.S., which at the beginning of the war had supported the moderate Redmond and his Parliamentary Party, by 1920 was speaking out strongly against British violence in Ireland and against the reluctance of the Lloyd George government to honour the Home Rule pledge of 1914. At a special meeting of the Society held on 29 November 1920, a long motion was passed unanimously by a standing vote:

> . . . be it resolved by the Charitable Irish Society of Halifax that we condemn the violation of its solemn pledge by the English Government; that we demand as citizens of the empire the immediate withdrawal of the army of occupation from Ireland and the extension to Ireland of the right to decide her own form of government in the only way open to civilized people, viz: by the will of the majority of the people.[54]

Among leaders of the Society taking part in the discussion of this one-sided resolution were Dr. H.L. Stewart, Justice J.W. Longley, Senator A.B. Crosby and F.P. Quinn. The Minutes record that the discussion was "highly loyal and patriotic in character but of stern denunciation of the conditions prevailing in Ireland. . . ."[55] It is clear that the Society wanted both self-government for Ireland and its continuation as part of the British Empire. The meeting adjourned with the singing of "God Save Ireland" and "God Save The King." A copy of the resolution was sent to Prime Minister David Lloyd George. The C.I.S. had thus added its voice to the growing outcry in Britain which demanded an end to the violence and atrocities which had been occurring in Ireland following the cessation of hostilities in Europe.[56]

53 By November 1915, the Society had raised by subscription $1119 to buy a machine gun for the C.E.F., only to learn that there were none available. In the end, $1000 was given to the Soldier's Disablement Fund and the rest to the Red Cross.

54 Minutes, C.I.S., 29 November 1920. MG 20, Vol. 70, PANS.

55 *Ibid.*

56 It is interesting to note that the Society's condemnation of the violence in Ireland came just seven days after "Bloody Sunday" in Dublin, when fourteen British officers and ex-officers were killed in their homes and more than a dozen Irishmen had been gunned down, at a football match, by British forces.

An acknowledgement was received by the Society from Lloyd George in February 1921, and within a year the Irish Dail had accepted the proposal of Dominion status and an Ulster partition. The C.I.S. celebrated the event with a banquet and officially took no notice of the short-lived civil war that persisted for another year.

The "last hurrah" was over. The Society had, in the twentieth century, been evolving into an association with an increasingly local view, which included its charitable work. A request for aid by the Sisters of Mercy of Galway, Ireland, was rejected in 1888, and in 1892 a spirited debate ensued at the annual meeting over the insertion of the word "local" to describe the charity concerns of the Society.[57] There were those who still argued that conditions in Ireland should be of equal concern to the C.I.S. as were the charity needs of Halifax. The "local" view won the day. By the 1930s this philosophy and the settling of the Irish Question to the satisfaction of the C.I.S. precluded active intervention by the Society in Irish affairs. The C.I.S. continues to remain, however, a sympathetic and compassionate observer of the Irish situation and among recent additions to the Society's papers is a copy of the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1986.

Essential periods of renewal, with a redefinition of purpose, have occurred from time to time in the first two centuries of the life of the Charitable Irish Society. The ability of the Society to change and adapt to meet the prevailing needs of its evolving milieu is partly the reason for its longevity. Renewal, however, has always included a continuing love for and fascination with Ireland and things Irish. Mostly, the Charitable Irish Society of Halifax has continued from the time of Uniacke to the present because, in an ever imperfect world, the human spirit, in its finer moments, recognizes that "the human race[is] but as one Society and the wants and misfortunes of every individual [are] equally entitled to compassion and relief."[58]

57 Minutes, C.I.S., 17 February 1892. MG 20, Vol. 70, PANS.

58 *Ibid.*, 25 March 1795. MG 20, Vol. 65, PANS.

# The D'Arcy McGee Chair of Irish Studies, Saint Mary's University

Cyril J. Byrne

The ties between Ireland, Scotland and the Atlantic region are numerous. It is not an exaggeration to say that the spiritual home of the majority of the anglophone population is the Celtic realm of Ireland and Scotland. In terms of language alone, anyone with an identifiable Irish or Scottish Highland ancestor can be brought back in two hundred years to a society which was Gaelic-speaking. Of course, in many instances a Gaelic-speaking ancestor and society are much closer in time than two hundred years. This fact alone has affected the language spoken in the Atlantic region to a very considerable extent; in some places, such as Cape Breton and Newfoundland, the modern spoken language is almost indistinguishable from that spoken in the places whence their ancestors originated. However, even in modern urbanized places such as Halifax and Saint John, the unmistakable traces of the earlier tongue are still in evidence. The immense popularity of Irish and Scottish music is not an accident; the rhythms and melodic qualities of that music are intimately related to the music to whose resonances, embedded in the folk consciousness, we instinctively respond.

The Celtic culture of this region, whether of Irish or Highland Scottish origin, is a legacy which gives the Atlantic area so much of its distinctiveness and which enables the visitor from here to Ireland or Scotland to feel comfortable and immediately at home. The survival of that legacy depends upon the development of a conscious awareness of its shared origin with the present-day cultures of Ireland and Scotland. The strengthening of ties with the flourishing modern cultures of Ireland and Scotland can only strengthen our culture, providing us with insights and perceptions of which we otherwise would be deprived. Without the intellectual and imaginative stimulation provided by contact with and study of that heritage, we will be left with the falseness of sentimental memories, leading inevitably to absorption in the blandness of an urbanized consumer culture. It is with this need to provide an intellectual, imaginative and artistic grasp of Ireland's significance in the culture of this region that a proposal was made to establish a Chair of Irish Studies at Saint Mary's University.

The Charitable Irish Society of Halifax decided to sponsor this Chair as a project to mark the Society's bicentenary. A proposal was made to the Ministry of State for Multiculturalism in 1982 in conjunction with Saint Mary's, and was finally accepted by Multiculturalism in 1985. The D'Arcy McGee Chair of Irish Studies will begin operation at Saint Mary's in September 1986. The purpose of the Chair is to serve as the centrepiece of a program of Irish and Irish-Canadian studies and research. It will provide

a focus for the study of the Irish contribution to Canadian life and culture; its research facilities will eventually cover a variety of aspects of the cultural links between Ireland and Canada, but will concentrate its efforts in three areas: literature and folkculture, history and immigration, and politics. It is also hoped that in future, the Irish Studies centre will provide a liaison point of contact for individuals and groups in Canada interested in various aspects of the Irish heritage in Canada, and that it will help coordinate cultural exchanges between Ireland and Canada on an academic as well as on an artistic and personal level.

The Charitable Irish Society, as a token of its committment to the preservation of the Irish heritage in Nova Scotia and Canada generally, has provided the University with an annual grant of $2,000 for the purchase of Irish books and materials for the Irish collection at Saint Mary's. A number of important and rare items have been purchased to date with this grant, including a complete microfiche copy of Griffith's Evaluation of Ireland. Griffith's Evaluation is an essential tool for anyone doing emigration or family history research, since it provides otherwise unavailable information on personal landholdings of every piece of ground in Ireland before the great exodus after the Famine. The grant is also being used to acquire copies of various parish registers for areas in Ireland whence large numbers of persons emigrated to Canada, especially to the Atlantic region in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Some of these registers are at present being purchased for the Irish collection.

The study of the Irish in Canada, their origins and contribution to our country's cultural and political life has long been neglected. If one looks through the lengthy lists of those who have made major and minor contributions to every aspect of our culture, one is struck by the huge number of Irish who are represented. And in no part of Canada is one more aware of the Irish presence than in the Atlantic Provinces. In Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, an overwhelming percentage of the population is of Irish origin. In Nova Scotia, the Irish strength in absolute numbers is evident in Cape Breton, Halifax and Cumberland County. But numerical strength can be deceptive from a variety of points of view; for instance, the Irish population in Halifax during most of the eighteenth century was numerically small (it swelled considerably at the century's end). However, the number of Irishmen who held important positions in both church and state during that century was proportionately large and some of this social elite, such as Richard John Uniacke,

Bishop Charles Inglis (whose nickname was "Paddy") and others like them, exerted an enormous formative influence in the nascent period of the city and the province.

It is important and significant that the Chair of Irish Studies will be attached to Saint Mary's University, since this institution was founded by the Right Reverend Edmund Burke, a native of County Kildare in Ireland, who became the first Roman Catholic Bishop in Halifax. Burke was a member of the Charitable Irish Society, and from his time onwards, there has been a continuing and close relationship between the University and the Society. Members of the Society have contributed to the University's development, not just as students, but as alumni, teachers and other officers of the University. The Board of Governors of Saint Mary's usually includes one or more members of the Charitable Irish Society. In the past, the Society has provided bursaries for students attending the University. A mutual benefactor was the late Patrick Power of Halifax, a former president of the Charitable Irish Society. The Patrick Power Library at Saint Mary's was named in his honour, as an acknowledgement of his benevolence.

The Irish association with Saint Mary's is also evident in the names of those who have served as principals and presidents since the institution's beginnings under Bishop Burke: O Brien, Walsh, McMahon, Kennedy, Thornton, Donohue, Clahane, Lynch and Malone. Another of the obvious Irish connections is that for the first half of this century, the College was under the direction of the Irish Christian Brothers, many of whose members were from Ireland. Going back to the very early years of the College, one finds the Reverend Richard Baptist O Brien, president in the 1830s and 40s and a life-long enthusiast for the Irish (Gaelic) language, teaching classes in that language to monoglot Irish speakers trying to learn English. By a curious historical irony, the first classes in the Irish Studies Program will be ones on the Irish language.

The Irish Studies Program at Saint Mary's will not attend solely to the tradition with which Saint Mary's in the past was so intimately related and with which it is still fondly associated, namely the Irish Catholic one. The scope of both the studies and the research collection will instead be the whole Irish tradition: north and south, orange and green. Indeed, the Irish collection at Saint Mary's contains recent contributions of books on Northern Ireland presented by the British Council in Ottawa, and books and journals dealing with the whole of Ulster are being acquired with part of the funds contributed by the Charitable Irish Society. And there is

particular appropriateness in this, since the ideals of the eighteenth-century founders of the Charitable Irish Society were that Irish persons, irrespective of their denomination, be members of the Society. Throughout its history the non-denominational nature of the Society has been maintained, and it is only natural that this be reflected in the activities of the Chair the Society has sponsored.

The Trust established by the University will fund the activities of the Chair, and the operations of the Chair will be overseen by a committee composed jointly of members from the University and the Society. The occupant of the Chair will be appointed by the University in the ordinary way any academic appointment is made. He or she will teach and conduct research in some aspect of Irish or Irish-Canadian culture, whether linguistic, literary, historical, geographical, political, or any other appropriate interest. When funds permit, it is hoped to appoint an executive director, a member of the University faculty, who in addition to research and teaching, will coordinate the activities of the Chair.

The acquiring of such records as Griffith's Evaluation and copies of the Irish parish registers point to an obvious focus of interest, namely Irish genealogy. This is not to suggest that the Chair's primary interest is the facilitating of the investigation of individual family trees; however, Irish family history is an obvious way for people of Irish descent in Canada to acquire an interest in the much broader culture from which, through their family, they take their origin. The area of genealogy is much misunderstood, since it does generally suggest an almost narcissistic interest. However, family history as such is quite an acceptable part of many academic disciplines, including history and ethnography. It has been recognized as providing valuable insights, not only to individual family historians, but also to those interested in the intricate make-up of society. A close reading of such a recent book as *The Canadian Establishment* by Peter C. Newman reveals to what a large extent the researching of that book was focussed on genealogy. And especially in the history of the Irish in this area, the re-creation of the intimate social details revealed through genealogy allows one to compose the jig-saw pieces of the Irish influx to this area, the missing pieces of which are buried in family history.

Aside from satisfying a growing curiosity in people of Irish descent about their ancestry, the Chair will help explore larger issues relating to the phenomenon of immigration and the kinds of societies the immigrants created. The research facilities we would hope to have in place over the

next five years will assist in the investigation of the fascinating ways in which society here and its Irish analogue developed in parallel and divergent ways. Moreover, for students involved in this program, there will be the possibility of seeing similarities between the experience of the Irish immigrant society of two hundred or more years ago and that of more recent groups of immigrants. How did the large groups of Irish (Gaelic)-speaking newcomers cope with the problems of cultural assimilation? These and other kinds of comparative ethnic research will help to dispel some of the mythology which has developed about the Irish and their experience in this region by replacing it with detailed factual information. The usual result of these sorts of study is the discovery of a greater complexity in what the mythology suggests was a simple society possessing simple, straightforward norms and values.

The complete range of projects, courses and interests suggested here will require more funding for the Chair than the $600,000 which is now in the Trust fund. To this end the Chair's committee will be organizing a fundraising drive to bring the Trust's resources to $1,000,000, the interest from which annually would be sufficient to finance the Chair's operation. Any donation would be welcomed and, in line with the provisions of the Income Tax Act, any donation of over $25 will be granted a tax credit. Donations should be sent to the Irish Chair Trust, Saint Mary's University, Halifax, N.S.

# Finding Our Irish

Terrence M. Punch

There is an Irish fact in the province of Nova Scotia, but detecting overt signs can prove remarkably difficult. The names of a few churches, the seldom-noticed inscriptions on old headstones, a scattering of place-names, a small handful of book titles do not amount to much, especially when they are weighed against the robustness of the gathering of the clans, or the more stately commemorations of the Loyalists. Do people read church signboards and associate St. Patrick or St. Malachy with Irish people living nearby? Will the visitor to Carroll's Corner, Castlereagh, Mulgrave, New Dublin, Irish Cove or New Waterford be struck with wonder at the Irish ambiance of the place? How many people read grave markers or study books about the Irish in Nova Scotia? Even these few traces of the Irish presence go largely unheeded -- neither a commendable nor a necessary state of affairs, when measured against the facts.

Consider some of the Irish who have contributed to the government of Nova Scotia: governors John Parr, Charles Hastings Doyle, Richard G. MacDonnell, Archibald W. McLelan, Malachy B. Daly; the administrator, Richard Bulkeley; and attorneys-general Richard John and James Boyle Uniacke, S.G.W. and Sir Adams Archibald, William A. Henry, Alonzo J. White, John S.D. Thompson, Walter J. OHearn, Richard A. Donahoe. Several of the foregoing, as well as Philip C. Hill, Harold Connolly and Gerald A. Regan, became premiers of the province, and one -- Sir John Thompson -- rose to be Prime Minister of Canada.

Recall too, prominent political men such as Bryan Finucane, Rupert George, Lawrence O'Connor Doyle, W. Cottnam Tonge and Lawrence Kavanagh; business leaders such as James and Michael Tobin, George Sherlock, Patrick Power, Thomas and Edward Kenny, William Stairs and Isaac Mathers; educator Richard Baptist O'Brien; surgeon Michael Head; inventors Charles Fenerty and W. D'Arcy Ryan; and fathers Coady and Tompkins who founded the world-famous Antigonish Movement.

Finally, think of the contribution made to many major religions in Nova Scotia by pioneers such as Charles and John Inglis, and William Cochran (Anglicans); James Jones, Edmund Burke, William Walsh and Thomas Connolly (Catholics); Edward Manning (Baptist); James Murdoch (Presbyterian); and the Allison family (Methodists). What all of the above have in common is that they or their paternal ancestors were born in Ireland, and each devoted all or part of his career to the public life or improvement of Nova Scotia.

Have these men and their fellows left a heritage behind them, the reader

may well ask. Their works and their progeny have survived them. Their achievements have been so familiar to generations of Nova Scotians that they are now accepted without question, and often without proper recognition or appreciation, as part of the general fabric of our lives: those Irish Nova Scotians did not achieve advantages only for themselves but for all who came after them. When a Roman Catholic sits in the legislature, when you or your offspring attend Saint Mary's, King's, Acadia or Mount Allison universities, when your newspaper is made from wood pulp, or when you keep your savings at a cooperative bank, you benefit from the work of these men.

It is easy to take an impersonal legacy for granted, but family heritage is something one expects to endure in one's consciousness. It is therefore remarkable that many Nova Scotians, including some of Irish extraction, know neither the numbers of the Irish in the province, nor that the Irish ethnic group forms part of their own ancestry. Such obliviousness is not what one would expect of a people who have amounted to between fourteen and seventeen per cent of the population for over two hundred years.

If one judges merely by recent census figures that suggest that there are about fourteen per cent of us having Irish ethnic origins, one will be greatly and even grossly misled. Any fair-minded person will agree, despite the patrilinear bias of census questions concerning origin, that as many of us can be Irish through our mothers as through our fathers -- another fourteen per cent. Even if half the Irish married one another, there would remain seven per cent to add to the fourteen per cent, for a total of 21 per cent. Although some exogamy (marriage outside the group) has gone on in each of the several generations since immigration, it is scarcely forfeiting credibility to claim that one Nova Scotian in four is wholly or partly Irish by origin.

The Irish share with the Germans the dubious distinction of being the most underestimated ethnic groups in Nova Scotia in terms of numbers. Whereas the confusion of the words *Deutsch* and Dutch, and the bitterness of two world wars may explain the consistent undercounting of the Germans in the province, the reasons for the Irish being reckoned below their real strength are perhaps less apparent. The Irish have suffered the defection of many descendants of eighteenth-century Ulstermen to the Scots group, the origin to which some of them undoubtedly belonged. Again, there were those who considered that being "Irish" would hinder their social and occupational ambitions: there is abundant evidence that the Irish in Nova

Scotia laboured under and had to contend against a negative stereotype.[1]

Two factors have facilitated the loss of Irish identification without anyone's conscious effort. One of these has been the exogamy already mentioned. The apparent willingness to marry outside the group characterizes people who live in urban or industrial settings where the population is heterogeneous, and in which inter-racial prejudices do not flourish as well as they may in more isolated communities. The census records consistently support the view that the Irish tended towards towns and cities in Nova Scotia. The two other nationalities in the province which shared the Roman Catholic religion of the majority of the Irish happened to be groups characterized by high endogamy (marriage within the group): the Scots were geographically concentrated, while the Acadian French spoke a different language.[2] Therefore, Irish intermarriage took place frequently with "Protestant" ethnic groups, the English and the "foreign Protestants." Much Irish marriage in Nova Scotia was a function, not of ethnic prejudice, but of propinquity.

The strong resemblance and even identification between some British and some Irish surnames operates to obliterate personal Irish identity. Those whose forebears came from Ireland, but whose surname was not obviously Irish, could come to believe that their family was not really Irish, but English or Scottish. In his list of the most numerous Irish surnames, Sir Robert Matheson's first thirty entries include several of ambiguous origin: 2/Kelly (also may be Manx or Scots); 5/Smith (ubiquitous origin); 14/Gallagher, 16/Kennedy, 18/Murray, 20/Moore, 21/McLaughlin (all are equally Scots names); 26/Wilson (English or Scots); 27/Dunn (also Scots); 29/Burke (may be French); and 30/Collins (also English).[3] The community of surnames

1 Terrence M. Punch, *Aspects of Irish Halifax at Confederation* (Halifax: 1981).

2 D. Campbell and R.A. MacLean, *Beyond the Atlantic Roar: A Study of the Nova Scotia Scots* (Toronto, 1974), especially chapter three.

3 Robert E. Matheson, *Special Report on Surnames in Ireland...* (Dublin, 1909), p. 7. This book is an excellent means of linking a family to its proper district. The surname maps which are offered for sale today have a more limited usefulness in tracing families. This is due to several reasons, the main ones being that only the most numerous or most famous surnames are shown, and that the whereabouts of a surname in the mid-seventeenth century is no guarantee of a family name's location in the years 1760 to 1845, when most emigration to Nova Scotia took place. After all, the 1650 location predates the extensive Cromwellian confiscations, the Williamite settlement, the operation of a century of penal laws, and the consequent itinerancy of families away from their traditional areas.

runs through the full gamut of Irish family names, and the difficulty is not minimized by the knowledge that throughout its history, Ireland has received infusions of ethnic stock from England, Scotland, France, Germany and Scandinavia, to cite only the better known examples.

As if settler names do not create enough confusion, there is also the tendency of certain indigenous Gaelic Irish surnames to appear English or otherwise non-Irish. Edward MacLysaght, the Irish name authority, mentions 73 of the former and 36 of the latter, in a far more exhaustive list.[4] Examples of such names which reached Nova Scotia are Canty, Coakley, Deyarmond, Delahunt, Dun(s)worth, Hamill, Kehoe, Melia and Rafter. During the 1840s, Irish Catholics having British-sounding names such as Caulfield, Harrington, Herrick, Jenkins, Lantry, Lovett, Lawton, Pye and Strawbridge reached these shores.[5]

The purport of this introduction has been to suggest that the Irish have been proportionately underrepresented in census returns and popular awareness. There has been some loss of "Irish" due to intermarriage, the desire to be considered something other than Irish, and the basic mistake made by some who believe their family cannot be Irish because their surname does not look or sound "Irish." Once this has been understood and accepted, one may seek the place of origin of one's ancestors in a more realistic frame of mind.

Nowhere is the dichotomy between genealogy and family history more readily demonstrable than in the research necessary to find the location of a family in the old country and the reasons why the ancestor left home. Genealogy traces an ascent for a family tree, while family history places a family in its "historical, geographical, social and occupational contexts. . . ."[6] If ancestry is to be of interest to anyone except its compiler, the names and dates must be accompanied by a narrative which incorporates background and incident. Most of the suggestions that follow are directed towards the search for context which pinpoints family origins in Ireland.

The chance of success in Irish research is intimately related to the quantity of detail one can produce when beginning the Irish part of the search. The

4 Edward MacLysaght, *Irish Families Their Names, Arms and Origins* (Dublin, 1957), pp. 309-310.

5 D.F. Johnson, *The St. John County Alms and Work House Records* (Saint John, 1985), *passim*.

6 Terrick V.H. FitzHugh, *The Dictionary of Genealogy* (Totowa, N.J., 1985), p. 105.

minimum requirements for this are three: a name or names, a time frame, and a geographical reference. The name is usually known, but if it is at all common -- and most Irish ancestors bore common names -- it needs the support of related names to facilitate an identification. "Daniel O'Brien from Ireland" is insufficient information for research. There will have been several hundred contemporaries having the same name, some well-documented, others mentioned barely in one record. If family history or Nova Scotian records indicate that Daniel's wife was Anne Twohig, and that his sister was married to Thomas Lombard, a modicum of research will reveal that this family had a connection with County Cork.[7]

It is almost inconceivable that anyone would begin research in another country without at least one name for which to search. Many a time, alas, that one name is all there is to go on with. The second factor, that of a time frame, then assumes greater importance. It is usually possible to work out at least a relatively brief span of years within which the ancestor was born or emigrated. For one who wishes ancestral research done in Ireland, the birthdate is of greater worth than the date of emigration, not least of all because there are far more records of baptism and birth than there are of emigration. More often than not there is a record in Nova Scotia of the death or burial of the immigrant ancestor. Even if one allows for some inaccuracy of age as stated on a headstone or in a newspaper obituary, the given age is unlikely to be erroneous by more than a few years, and at most by a decade.

If our hypothetical Daniel O'Brien died in 1892 at a stated age of 72 years, we should expect his birthdate to have fallen within half-a-dozen years on either side of 1820, a range of 1814-1826. If his wife Anne Twohig is buried near a stone inscribed 1817-1894, her birthdate *could* be anywhere from about 1811 to 1823. Her children's birthdates may clarify which end of that range is more likely correct. If she had a child born in 1863 and another in 1865, it certainly favours a birthdate nearer 1823 than 1811. Locating the couple in several provincial census returns (e.g., 1871, 1881, 1891) should assist in approximating the year of birth. Since many Catholic registers in Ireland began in the period 1805 to 1830, one's first primary source may well depend on the calculations made concerning the birth and baptism dates of an ancestor.

7 Matheson, p. 36.

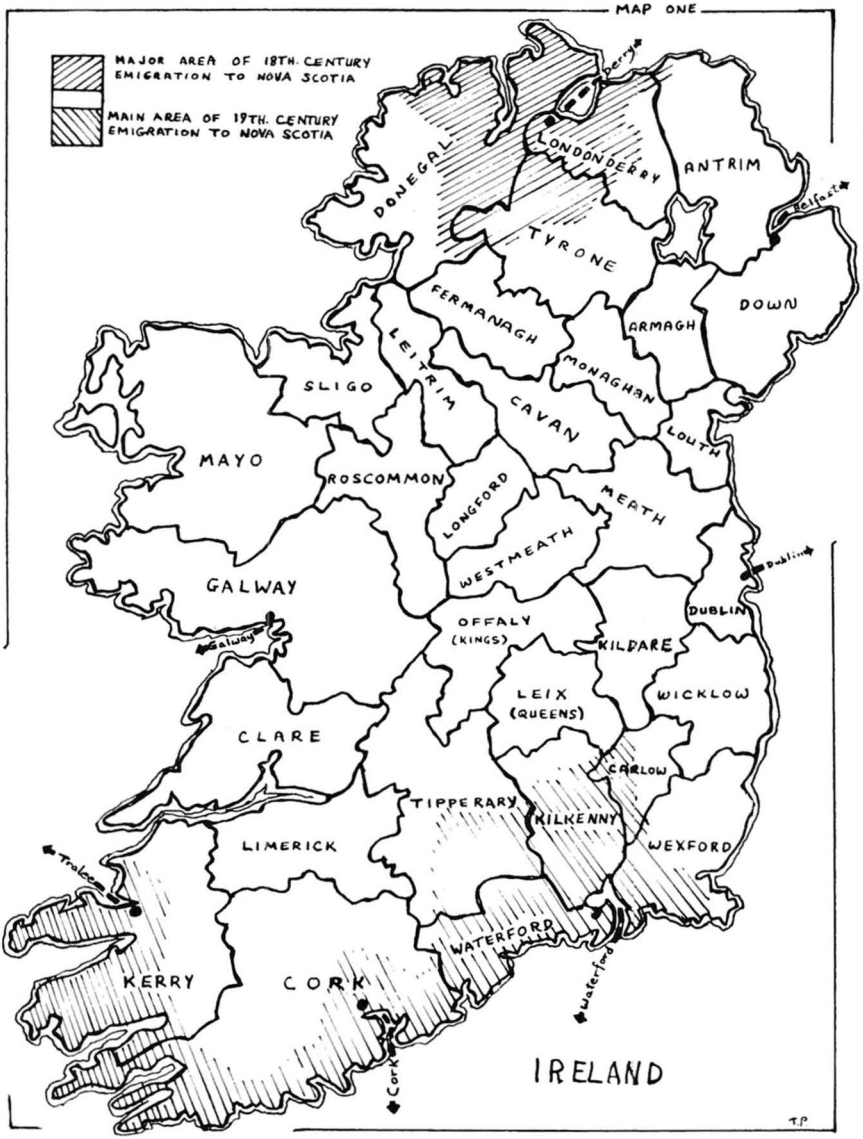
The third factor is that of providing a geographical context for the ancestor in Ireland. Genealogical records divide logically into those which are concerned with linkage and those which concern location. It is utterly essential in Irish research to narrow the search for a family as closely as possible in terms of location before emigration.

One of the first and more distressing discoveries made by those conducting Irish research is the tragic history of Irish records. The destruction of the Four Courts, Dublin, in 1922 has had two consequences, one unhappy, the other helpful. Negatively, there was the loss of the Church of Ireland (Anglican) registers deposited there, as well as many census returns and most of the older Irish probate records. Positively viewed, the situation has inspired those involved with Irish records to seek ingenious substitutes for those sources one takes for granted in more typical jurisdictions. Nonetheless, Irish records remain defective, often in the areas that most concern transatlantic descendants of inhabitants of Ireland.

Additional confusion sometimes results from unfamiliarity with the land divisions and denominations used in Ireland. Ireland had four provinces: Ulster, Connacht, Munster and Leinster. These in turn divide into 32 counties, as may be seen on Map One. Unless a surname is rare indeed, it must be traced at least to a specific county if one wishes to have much chance of success. Smaller than the counties were the baronies, of which Ireland had 324, twenty-two of which had exactly the same name as another barony, while a further 95 were differentiated only by a term such as "east/west" or "upper/lower." More useful and significant were the parishes, which often crossed county lines, and numbered more than two thousand throughout Ireland. One really must have both parish *and* county if the parish name is not unique. There are fourteen each of parishes called Donaghmore and Kilbride, and eleven Kilmores, to mention a few that are especially plentiful. Finally, the country outside incorporated boroughs was subdivided into townlands, more than 55,000 of them.[8]

Since civil and Anglican parishes were generally co-extensive, many records such as civil surveys, census returns, tithe applotments (land valuations upon which a legally-enforcible tithe was levied to support the established church) were created on that basis. One should not worry if research turns up a parish of origin that does not appear in lists of civil

8 *General Alphabetical Index to the Townlands and Towns, Parishes and Baronies of Ireland* (Dublin, 1861; reprinted Baltimore, 1984).


MAP ONE
MAJOR AREA OF 18TH. CENTURY EMIGRATION TO NOVA SCOTIA
MAIN AREA OF 19TH. CENTURY EMIGRATION TO NOVA SCOTIA
Derry
DONEGAL
LONDONDERRY
ANTRIM
Belfast
TYRONE
FERMANAGH
ARMAGH
DOWN
LEITRIM
MONAGHAN
SLIGO
CAVAN
LOUTH
MAYO
ROSCOMMON
LONGFORD
MEATH
WESTMEATH
Dublin
GALWAY
Galway
OFFALY (KINGS)
DUBLIN
KILDARE
LEIX (QUEENS)
WICKLOW
CLARE
CARLOW
TIPPERARY
KILKENNY
WEXFORD
LIMERICK
Tralee
WATERFORD
KERRY
CORK
Waterford
Cork
IRELAND
T.P

parishes. On the one hand, the so-called "parish" may be the name of a townland, village or barony, while on the other, Roman Catholic parishes often took their names from the townland or village where the church or chapel was located. Thus, Leighlinbridge (Co. Carlow) is the Catholic equivalent of the civil parish of Agha, while the Kilkenny parish of Templeorum is Fiddown in another guise.[9]

Loss or destruction of records and the potential confounding of geographical data are not the only frustrations in Irish research. That country's sectarianism is a lesson in the harm that religious prejudice can do a nation, and should cause us to rejoice in the Canadian ideal of a pluralistic society. Ireland's largest denomination is the Roman Catholic, but in the eighteenth century that church was legally restricted for political motives. Probably only the gullible really believed that "Papists" worshipped statues; instead it was the political orientation of many Roman Catholics towards France or Spain that motivated official discrimination. The upshot is a serious lack of Catholic registers for the years before 1800 in all but a few urban parishes, for fear of having records used to discover names of practicing Catholics. This is a more serious deficiency than the wholesale loss of Anglican records, as members of the latter church were permitted to own land. Irish land records from 1708, which are intact and enormously informative, may serve as an alternative source for the lost Anglican registers, but have much less to tell about Catholics.[10]

Most Nova Scotians of Irish descent will learn early in their efforts that their ancestors frequently lived in the wrong areas to be included in extant records, were of the wrong faith at crucial periods, or that for any of a multitude of reasons the search proves to be more of a chore than they had expected it to be. It is a cardinal rule for anyone doing Irish research to determine as closely as possible where in the homeland the immigrant lived. Sometimes the "family home" will be an area rather than one specific community. Irish social history tells us that people who could not own land wandered about in search of employment and short leases made to them by "middlemen." Most of those known as Irish gypsies or tinkers are the successors of those spalpeens (itinerant farm labourers) of earlier centuries. Researchers should be alert to the existence of this social class

9 *Irish County Maps Showing the Locations of Churches in Leinster Province* (Salt Lake City, 1977), pp. 9, 34.

10 P.B. Phair, "Guide to the Registry of Deeds," in *Analecta Hibernica No. 23* (Dublin, 1966), 256-276.

that had less security even than had the poorest cottager supporting his family on the potatoes grown on less than an acre of rented land.

Most of the Irish who emigrated were drawn from the poorer classes in society: the dispossessed, the day labourers, the hungry, the unemployed. They left an overpopulated country which was strained beyond its capacity to carry a population which rapidly mounted to above eight million by the 1840s. Few landlords sailed to British America with their belongings wrapped in a kerchief. It was not the successful storekeepers who filled the holds of the timber ships. The majority of Irish emigrants left to escape harsh economic conditions which bore down hardest on an agrarian peasantry least able to sustain adversity, since they had no savings to fall back upon nor property to liquidate.

Emigrants from Ireland to Nova Scotia were farmers, fishermen, small traders, cottagers and itinerant labourers. Few of them achieved mention in contemporary public records. Newspapers did not report the death of an obscure Daniel O'Brien who left a widow and two children, unless he died under sensational circumstances. Land indexes seldom notice such people because they held no land. This should indicate why one must utilize every scrap of evidence available here in order to find where our ancestors lived in Ireland. An Irish Catholic might wed in 1775, die about 1810 aged 60, leave four surviving children, yet not appear in one major record in Ireland. Few Catholics then had headstones, deeds, wills, church registers; nothing but descendants, and those wanting to know their line of ascent. Protestant countrymen of similar economic standing usually fared little better in terms of the records.

Fishing fleets took Irish people across the Atlantic, at first mainly to Newfoundland, but for those intending to stay in America that could become the first voyage of the migration. Those who took a second voyage to reach Nova Scotia or other parts of mainland North America are known as the "two-boaters." At least into the early nineteenth century this pattern of migration endured among the southern Irish, so far as Nova Scotia is concerned.[11] Others came directly; opportunity to do so existed from the founding of Halifax in 1749, as contemporary shipping records for the port

11 Terrence M. Punch, "The Irish Catholic, Halifax's First Minority Group," in *Nova Scotia Historical Quarterly*, X, 1 (March, 1980), 34-35.

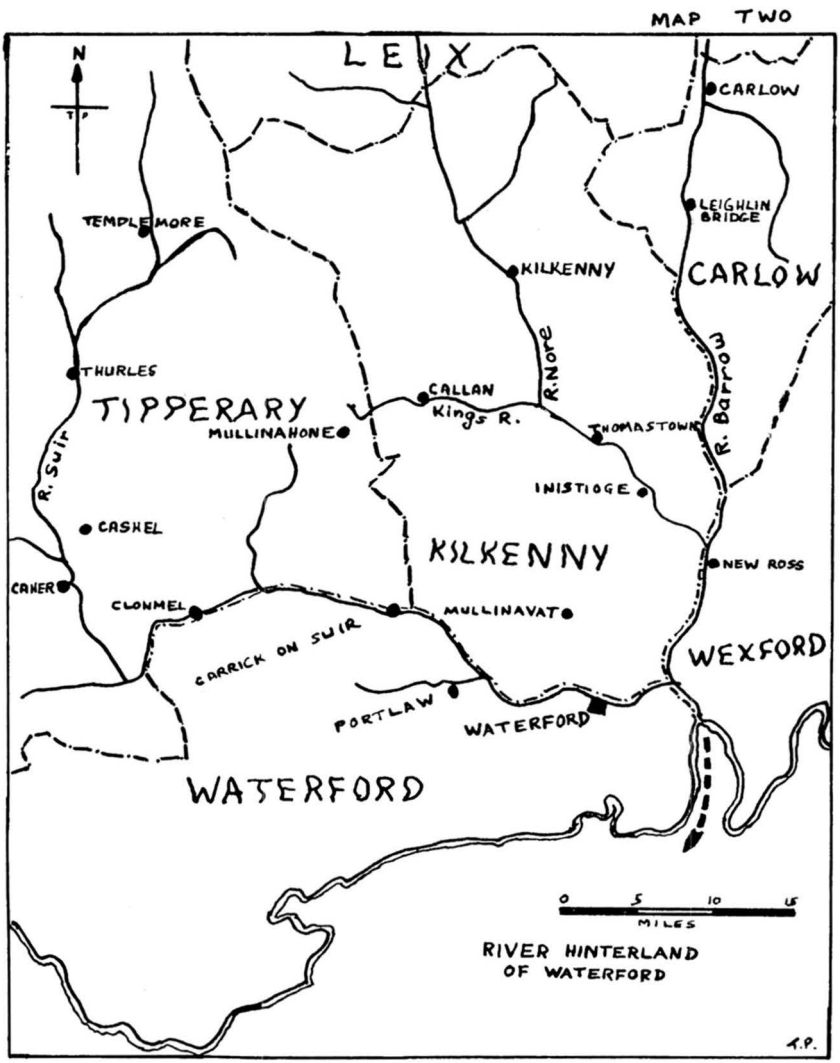
reveal.[12] Likewise, the closure of the Baltic timber trade in 1808 led to the redirection of that trade to the eastern coast of British America. Among the miscellaneous cargoes used to fill the nearly empty holds on the westward voyages were human beings, often Irish people who were glad to avail themselves of the cheap passage, and not unduly concerned about conditions of life in the steerage.

Several significant possibilities may be gathered from knowing about the migration patterns. Firstly, people who were two-boaters may have left some documentary traces of their passing in the shipping or church records of the intermediate country. For example, an Irish person who reached Nova Scotia via Newfoundland may appear in a record of that island. Secondly, the general areas from which immigrants came may sometimes be deduced from a knowledge of the port from which they sailed. For eighteenth-century migration to Nova Scotia, Londonderry was the key port, while for the early nineteenth century Waterford was of major significance. Londonderry was the port through which emigrated people from the Ulster counties of Derry, Donegal and Tyrone. They travelled to the port on or beside the tributaries of the River Foyle. The outlet of the Suir-Barrow-Nore system was Waterford Harbour, the port from which sailed many emigrants from Wexford, Carlow, Kilkenny, Tipperary and Waterford counties. Maps Two and Three show the riparian hinterlands of those two key harbours.

If your family came directly from Ireland to Nova Scotia before Confederation, it almost certainly arrived before the outbreak of the Great Famine of 1846/50. It is likely to be between 140 and 230 years ago that your ancestor left Ireland. This is certainly long enough for oral tradition about origin to have become lost or garbled. The potential for error in oral memory is considerable, yet one can make diligent efforts to learn whether anyone in the family (out to remote cousins) has heard even a scrap of useful lore concerning this critical point.

Some clues may pertain to another line entirely and have had their origins in something a family member read seventy years ago about a family of the same surname, and the details of which were passed down in the family without mention of how or where the "facts" had been acquired. Sometimes the clue proves useful, as in the case of a woman who recollected that her grandmother (died 1903) had once mentioned that her family had been

12 Shipping Returns, Halifax, 1750-1753. Great Britain, Colonial Office Records, CO 221, Vol. 28, microfilm, Public Archives of Canada [hereafter PAC].


MAP TWO
N
LEIX
CARLOW
LEIGHLIN BRIDGE
TEMPLEMORE
KILKENNY
CARLOW
THURLES
TIPPERARY
CALLAN
Kings R.
R. Nore
R. Barrow
MULLINAHONE
THOMASTOWN
R. Suir
INISTIOGE
CASHEL
KILKENNY
NEW ROSS
CAHER
CLONMEL
MULLINAVAT
CARRICK ON SUIR
WEXFORD
PORTLAW
WATERFORD
WATERFORD
0 5 10 15
MILES
RIVER HINTERLAND
OF WATERFORD
A.P.


HINTERLAND OF PORT OF LONDONDERRY (DERRY)

buried on a point of land in a harbour and that the place was called so-and-so. The place-name was rather different, as things turned out, but there were sufficient points of identification to offer a lead. An Irish researcher visited the location and found a stone bearing the given names. Further work established a connection and opened a line to 1760.

Once in a long time, an ancestor sent or received a letter from his relations at home, and the correspondence has survived. In those rare instances one may learn the whereabouts of the ancestor's relative in Ireland.[13] Even more occasionally, a forebear kept a diary or brought out from the old country a Bible in which he wrote an address, as "Prospect Hill Farm, County Cork." Literate families had that much advantage over their unlettered brethren.

The gamut runs, then, from the personal document or oral tradition to the reasoned approach of locating a family origin in Ireland. Given that one can place the time of immigration fairly closely in date, one can sometimes gain a sense of the family's location by determining the major areas of movement to Nova Scotia from Ireland about that time. In the period before 1775, the prevalent counties of origin were those of western Ulster (Donegal, Tyrone and Derry) and the southern counties of Dublin and Cork. Later, thanks to the fishing-boat migration, Wexford, Kilkenny, Waterford and Carlow became more prominent. While the latter continued to be major sources into the nineteenth century, Cork and Tipperary assumed greater importance. While Wexford and Carlow declined as leading suppliers of emigrants to Nova Scotia in the 1830s, Kerry began to contribute considerably to the flow of emigrants reaching this province. Collectively, the eleven counties supplied above 85 per cent of the total Irish migration to Nova Scotia.

In conjunction with the notion of association between people in Ireland and Nova Scotia, one needs to be aware of the migration pattern known as *chain migration*. According to this model, people tend to follow the route taken by relatives, neighbours and friends to the new world, and to settle where possible near one another. Callan and Thomastown (Kilkenny), Midleton (Cork), Dungarvan and Kilmacthomas (Waterford), Mullinahone and Clonmel (Tipperary) supply examples of towns from which previously-acquainted people migrated to Nova Scotia.[14] If yours is one of eight Irish

13 Terrence M. Punch, "Letters from Home," in *The Irish Ancestor*, VII, 1 (Dublin, 1975), 1-6.

14 Terrence M. Punch, *Irish Halifax: The Immigrant Generation, 1815-1859* (Halifax, 1981), pp. 9-10.

families which settled at a certain place and there is a tradition or local history to the effect that the community was peopled about 1835 by several Irish from Waterford, you should investigate whether people of your surname then lived in or near that port or its hinterland.

Records connected with a death in Nova Scotia afford a number of possibilities for the researcher to learn the place in Ireland which was home to his ancestors. Does a headstone commemorate the immigrant ancestor? If great-grandfather has no stone, has one of his near relatives a memorial that gives a birthplace? Even if you learn only the name of the county, you have made progress in narrowing Ireland down from 32 counties to one. When, for example, you see a stone such as that at St. John's Cemetery, Halifax, stating that William Brown died in 1865, age 79, and was a native of County Tipperary, you have taken a step towards finding his background. More helpful would be a stone such as that to John King, which says he died on 2 December 1881, age 82, a native of Dublin. If this is literally stated, you know he came from Dublin City. You sometimes learn more. A stone at Mount Olivet Cemetery, Halifax, honours Catherine Brown who died in 1901, age 55, a native of Killcross, Co. Kilkenny. Killcross is a townland in the parish of Inistioge, and the birth falls in 1845/46, when Catholic registers exist for that parish. Catherine's parentage and probably other information should be traceable.

Two further instances will be cited, one as being a clue for further research, the other for the point it makes. A stone at Holy Cross Cemetery in Halifax commemorates Patrick Carroll from Ireland, died 1888, and his wife, Elizabeth, died 1900, a native of Newfoundland. If their marriage cannot be found in Nova Scotian records, there is a good chance it exists in Newfoundland, and perhaps the register will have something to say about Patrick's birthplace. In St. Paul's Cemetery at Herring Cove, near Halifax, stands the monument of James O'Connell, born on 23 July 1810 at "Glasshouse, Parish of Slaiverhue, Co. Kilkenny." By coincidence Dr. Richard Walsh, a speaker at the Halifax conference of the Canadian Association for Irish Studies, eloquently recalled his native place and mentioned the building at Slieverue, known as "the glass house." Walsh pinpointed the stretch of road on which O'Connell had been born. The moral is that we do not know when or how a piece of information will be explained or corroborated. Learn all you can from the monumental inscriptions of any Irish immigrant who was connected to your family. People were more likely to marry into or associate with families they had known at home than they

were with people -- even Irish -- who were strangers until immigration brought them to the same host community in Nova Scotia.

Headstones are not the only posthumous trace of an immigrant's origins. From 1864 to 1877, and after 1908, Nova Scotia had government registration of deaths. It is worth looking to see whether that record says anything more specific about a place of origin than simply "Ireland." Sometimes the record proves expansive and tells not merely the county of birth, but the names of the parents of the late immigrant. Check several newspapers for the obituary of the Irish forebear. If you are fortunate, the county or birthplace will be mentioned. Also examine the burial records of church and cemetery, as clergy and sextons sometimes put down the Irish birthplace of those they interred. Occasionally in early years a testator made a bequest in his will to the church or the poor of his native place, or named his heirs in Ireland with addresses specific enough to enable the executors to locate the beneficiaries.

If a family was Catholic, and any of its members from Ireland was married after reaching Nova Scotia, look up the church record of the event. Many priests followed the practice of mentioning the native parish of those whom they united in marriage. Most Irish place-names can be deciphered; you cannot do too much to "Knocktopher," even in Latin! As with the death records, there are government records of matrimony, and these did not lapse in 1877, but continued unbroken until the present. In a province where major Irish immigration ceased about 1846, these records are more likely to mention the younger children of immigrant families, or the second marriages of older immigrants.

Apart from death and marriage there are the records relating to daily life. Settlers who wanted a grant of land from the government submitted petitions in which they set forth particulars of their past lives. Among the details commonly mentioned were origin, length of time in Nova Scotia, age, marital status, the number of children, military service or other activities giving the petitioner what he hoped would be a claim on the bounty of the authorities. For example, George King sought land at Musquodoboit in 1825. His petition says that he had arrived from County Donegal in 1820, and that he had a wife and five children. Francis O'Regan stated in his request for land at Joggins in 1829 that he came from Derry, Ireland, was 34 years of age, and had arrived in the province in July 1819.[15] If the

15 Examples derived from Land Papers, RG 20, Series A, Public Archives of Nova Scotia [hereafter PANS].

petitioner states when he arrived but gives his origin simply as Ireland, there is still some value in the reference, since only a limited number of vessels delivered immigrants to the province in any given year. By seeing from whence ships had sailed, a perusal of hinterland maps of Irish ports may suggest likely places of origin for further research.[16]

Mention of military service may prove an extremely valuable piece of information, subject to two considerable reservations. Firstly, can you learn the regiment to which the forebear belonged? Secondly, do the description or depot books for that regiment exist from the period in question? If these can be answered affirmatively, you may send to the Public Archives of Canada and request interlibrary loan of the appropriate War Office, series 25 (W.O. 25) film. The information about the soldier will vary minimally from regiment to regiment, but one can expect to learn the age at enlistment, the native parish and county, a full physical description, and the date and circumstances of the subject being struck off strength (e.g., discharged, deserted, dead).

Apart from physical details, here is what we learn about one soldier in the 64th. Regiment: Private John Bolton, age 20 at enlistment in 1803, native of Donain [Townland of Doonan, Parish of Tickmacrevan], County Antrim, a tailor by trade, given honourable discharge at Halifax, N.S., on 1 June 1815.[17] It is very doubtful that such a mass of information about one man in one record exists elsewhere for the likes of John Bolton. When one considers the number of discharged and deserted military personnel who wound up in Nova Scotia during and just after major wars, the value of military records is apparent. Some depot and description books survive from about 1759, but it is only after 1800 that the supply is large and the chances of success become fair to good.

Research into the career of one soldier led this author into the records of the poor commissioners in Nova Scotia. Among the most immediately compelling documents in that large array of paperwork are the personal affidavits of those who received help from the commissioners in various

16 Especially useful is J.S. Martell, *Immigration to and Emigration from Nova Scotia 1815-1838* (Halifax, 1942). It seems probable, from a perusal of Martell, that O'Regan, used as an example of a petitioner, came to the province via Halifax on the brig *Frances-Ann*, out of Londonderry, and arriving on 31 July 1819. *Ibid.*, p. 48.

17 Description Book of the 64th Regiment, 1813-1815. Great Britain, War Office Records, WO 25, Vol. 449, microfilm reel B-5472, PAC.

parts of the province. Those who received assistance supplied personal details to justify the provincial authorities in reimbursing local commissioners for help given to deserving cases. Not a few of the transient poor told where they had come from. Consider the case of Edward Devan, laid up with rheumatism and unable to support himself. In the winter of 1841/42 he was being assisted at Pictou. Devan stated that he was 68 years old, and had come to Pictou from Newfoundland 25 years previously. Either through illiteracy or stiff fingers the man was obliged to make his mark rather than sign his affidavit. Usefully he added that he was born in the parish of Holycross, County Tipperary.[18]

Equally itinerant, but not necesarily in need of help, were those whose relatives lost track of them in the hustle and bustle of the migration of assorted family members on various ships at different dates. Morris/Maurice Connolly of Halifax lost touch with his brother-in-law Patrick Healey, and it appeared to Connolly that one means of attempting to contact Healey was through an advertisement in a newspaper published in New England for a predominantly Irish immigrant readership. We learn that Healey came from Loughboy in Kilkenny City. Reference to a townlands index reveals that this was Loughboy Park, St. Patrick's Parish, Kilkenny City.[19] No record within Nova Scotia supplies that particular piece of information, and the lesson is that researchers must be ready to cast their nets very widely indeed to increase their chances of picking up the necessary information.

Another example of having to look outside both Ireland and Nova Scotia for reference to the origin of Irish people who landed in this province is supplied by the workhouse record of Saint John, New Brunswick. The barque *Catherine* left Irish passengers at Yarmouth, N.S., but who were they and what became of them? Eight of them, with names such as Killane, McInnes and Finan, had made their way to Saint John by the end of November 1846, where the record states that they originated in County Mayo, and had sailed from Killala.[20] Consultation of a map reveals that these immigrants must have come from northeastern Mayo, as Westport is the logical port for most of that county.

18 Assembly Petitions, RG 5, Series P, Vol. 82, item 99, PANS.

19 *Boston Pilot*, 23 July 1842. The New England Historic Genealogical Society is preparing a publication based on the immigrant notices in that newspaper.

20 Johnson, pp. 35-38.

Sometimes first names supply hints as to origin. A few were very localized within Ireland. Regrettably the common names (e.g., John, Patrick, Mary, Michael, Bridget) tended also to be the most geographically widespread. However, Irish naming practice and the local provenance of some names may supply a lead for the researcher by directing attention to specific areas. Many, though of course not all, Irish families named the eldest son for his paternal grandfather, the next boy for the maternal grandfather, the third boy after the father himself; the eldest girl for her maternal grandmother, the second for her paternal grandmother, and the third daughter for the mother herself. Here are a dozen examples of names which had a geographical pattern of use. If any of these were used within an immigrant family group they could suggest the county or region of origin of someone in the group. Each name is followed by the county or counties in which it was commonly though not exclusively found:

Austin, Augustine – Galway, Mayo;
Bernard – Cavan;
Colman – Cork, Waterford;
Dominic(k) – Galway, Mayo;
Eugene – Londonderry;
Florence – Cork;
Hyacinth – Galway;
Kieran – Kilkenny;
Malachy – Armagh, Down;
Moses – Wexford;
Sylvester – Cavan, Wexford;
Valentine – Carlow, Wexford.

Far more useful are the great land surveys of nineteenth-century Ireland, of which two were national in scope and which tell in detail who were the occupants of every piece of rural land in all of Ireland. With the aid of the indexes to the Tithe Applotment Books of 1823-38, and to Griffith's Valuation of 1848-64, the location of people of all but the most landless class can be determined at a time when emigration was actuallly taking place. Griffith's Valuation exists in microform, while the Tithe Applotment awaits publication or reproduction; at present the latter must be consulted in its manuscript form at Dublin.

The microfiche of Griffith's Valuation was purchased for the Irish research collection at the Patrick Power Library, Saint Mary's University in Halifax, using part of a continuing donation being made by the Charitable Irish Society for the purpose. Anyone who wishes to visit that library may use this valuable finding tool. The indexes to the Valuation have an added feature for all but the major cities, in that they indicate the surnames in each parish that had been there during the Tithe Applotment of 25 years before. It

is therefore possible to draw up a list of which parishes in promising areas had members of certain families living in them about 1823/38 and in 1848/64. One possible explanation for the disappearance of a surname from a parish during the interval would be emigration. One must write to Dublin to learn particulars of the names indexed to the Tithe Applotment, but the names of all occupants in Ireland as given by Griffith's is as close as Saint Mary's University for residents of Nova Scotia. A guide to the use of Griffith's has been published and is also available for consultation at the Public Archives of Nova Scotia.[21]

Also forming part of the Irish collection at Saint Mary's is a microfiche index of the 1901 census list of Irish townlands, parishes, etc. It is an expeditious way of checking any place-name about which you may be curious. Irish place-names do not always spell as they sound in English, and vice versa. Be imaginative in devising ways to mis-spell words. Cork has a Desert, a Disert, a Dysart, and a Dysert. Put that in the mouth of one having a good brogue and add a recording clerk who knows neither Irish nor County Cork. It would require a nice ear and a very specialized knowledge to differentiate which place was intended. The author has seen Rathdowney written "Radooney," "Addue" for what was found to be Aghadoe, and "Rock Quarry" for Rockcorry. With patience, a glossary, imagination and even a bit of humour, a seemingly meaningless place-name can eventually prove helpful in the search.

In the preceding discussion of ways and means of determining the place of origin of an Irish Nova Scotian family, there has been no mention of what may appear an obvious source -- the immigration record. This area forms one of the major deficiencies in the public records of the province. British North American colonies did not require the naturalization of Irish people, since they were already British subjects and would remain so in Nova Scotia and the other colonies which now form part of Canada.

The other major immigration record is usually the passenger lists of the vessels which transported the settlers to the colonies. Years of correspondence and personal research for such lists have been fruitless for the most part. Two lists, almost certainly incomplete, have been found and published:

21 Terrence M. Punch, "Using Griffith's Valuation on Microfiche," in *The Nova Scotia Genealogist*, II, 2 (1984), 69-72.

those for the *Polly* (1798) and the *Aide-de-Camp* (1839).[22] These present all the known passenger lists of Irish immigrant ships to Nova Scotia before 1850, and are an infinitesmally tiny part of what must have been hundreds of vessels carrying thousands of passengers from Ireland to ports in Nova Scotia. As matters stand, then, one has virtually no hope of finding an available passenger list which will prove that a certain forebear came to Nova Scotia on a specific ship at a definite date from a stated location.

There is one exercise that can be performed to mitigate this gap in our records. That is the reconstitution of a passenger list *in toto* or in part, as a consequence of information available in another source. As a small contribution to the published passenger lists for Nova Scotia's Irish, the following appendix offers a partial reconstitution of the roster of those travelling aboard the ship *Cumberland* in 1827. This vessel reached Halifax in June of that year, 43 days out of Waterford, reportedly carrying 350 passengers.[23] Shortly after their arrival, 27 passengers died and were buried in the Catholic cemetery at Halifax. The burial records are informative enough to enable one to identify 53 of the people aboard that ship. The list published in the appendix "finds" about thirty Irish arrivals in geographical terms. Its source is the registers of St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church, 1827.

While we wait and hope for the production and publication of Irish location records and the types of indexes which can help to show where a specific family may have lived, we can try out the various records at this end of the immigrants' voyage. Firstly, keep an open mind about the possibility of having an ancestor out of Ireland, and secondly, remember that there is little sense in rushing off to Ireland or hiring someone to do your research unless you have some idea where in that country the immigrant had lived. Either way, it comes to "finding your Irish."

Partial Passenger List of the *Cumberland*, 1827

1. **Coady**, Anne, born at sea, bur. 2 July 1827, age 3 weeks.
2. **Coady**, William, father.
3. **McDonald**, Mary, mother.

22 Terrence M. Punch, "The Pasengers of the *Polly*," in *The Irish Ancestor*, VIII, 2 (Dublin, 1976), 82-84, and Terrence M. Punch, *Genealogical Research in Nova Scotia* (Halifax, 1978), p. 82.

23 Martell, p. 48.

4. **Egan**, Elizabeth, bur. 2 July 1827, age 18 months.
5. **Egan**, William, father.
6. **Hickey**, Bridget, mother.

7. **Buggy**, John, bur. 2 July 1827, age 1 day; born after arrival.
8. **Buggy**, Mary, bur. 10 July 1827, age 2 years, sister.
9. **Buggy**, John, father, died at sea, 28 June 1827.
10. **Crawley**, Mary, mother.

11. **Brian**, Charles, bur. 3 July 1827, age 13 years.
12. **Brian**, John, father.
13. **Byrne**, Anne, mother.

14. **Lowrey**, Michael, bur. 8 July 1827, age 8 years.
15. **Lowrey**, John, father.
16. **Myers**, Catherine, mother.

17. **Whelan**, Francis, bur. 9 July 1827, age 35 years; born Kilkenny City.

18. **Dowling**, Eleanor, bur. 9 July 1827, age 2½ years.
19. **Dowling**, Peter, bur. 9 July 1827, age 7 days; born after arrival.
20. **Dowling**, James, father, "passengers on the *Cumberland*."
21. **Mulhall**, Eleanor, mother, bur. 9 July 1827, age 40; born St. John Parish, Kilkenny City.

22. **Parker**, Catherine, bur. 11 July 1827, age 25 years; born Inistioge, Kilkenny.
23. **Gorman**, Denis, husband, a blacksmith.

24. **Meaney**, John, bur. 12 July 1827, age 40; born Brownstown, Kilkenny.
25. **Meaney**, Richard, son, bur. 12 July 1827, age 13; born Brownstown, Kilkenny.

26. **Kerwin**, Thomas, tailor, bur. 12 July 1827, age 40; born Co. Waterford.

27. **Loughnan**, John, bur. 12 July 1827, age 34; born Co. Carlow.

28. **Brennan**, Catherine, bur. 12 July 1827, age 45; born Co. Kilkenny.
29. **Kenny**, Nicholas, husband, bur. 20 July 1827; born Co. Kilkenny.

30. **Reed**, Eliza, bur. 13 July 1827, age 10 months.
31. **Reed**, Thomas, father.
32. **Nary**, Margaret, mother.

33. **Walsh**, Patrick, bur. 14 July 1827, age 58; born Cashel, Tipperary.
33. . . . . , his wife.
35.- 41. Their seven children.

42. **Foyle**, Thomas.
43. **Sally**, Judith, wife, bur. 14 July 1827, age 50; born Parish of Castlecomer, Kilkenny.

44. **Dowling**, Thomas, bur. 15 July 1827, age 57; born Thomastown, Kilkenny.

45. **Hammon**, Henry, blacksmith, bur. 15 July 1827, age 60; born Gowran, Kilkenny.

46. **Hickey**, Margaret, bur. 16 July 1827, age 30; born Cashel, Tipperary.

47. **Carroll**, John, cooper, bur. 17 July 1827, age 23; born New Ross, Wexford.

48. **Keating**, William, bur. 23 July 1827, age 50; born Parish of Mothel, Kilkenny.

49. **Buggy**, John.
50. **Canfill**, Mary, wife, bur. 25 July 1827, age 63; born Castlecomer, Kilkenny.

51. **Clear**, Pierce, baptised 1 July 1827, age 6 weeks; "born on the *Cumberland*."
52. **Clear**, William, father.
53. **Delaney**, Margaret, mother.

# A Letter of Father William Phelan, 1786

Cyril J. Byrne

This letter was written by Father William Phelan sometime after his arrival in Halifax, which we can infer from the letter to have been 17 May 1786. The letter gives an interesting account of Father Phelan's departure from Ireland and voyage out to Halifax; moreover, it gives an account of Father Phelan's admission to the Charitable Irish Society at that society's second meeting. The manuscript is preserved in the Archives of the Archdiocese of Dublin, Ireland. It is clearly a letter of Father Phelan's, even though its closing salutation and date are missing; conceivably, this part of the letter may have been written on its envelope, which was discarded. The letter's rhythm suggests that its ending is not far from the no longer extant closing salutation.

Father Phelan had a somewhat tempestuous career in Nova Scotia, having become embroiled in a jurisdictional row with his superior, Father James Jones, O.F.M. (Cap.). Phelan appears to have had an inordinate interest in money, which apparently was the reason for his initial flight from Ireland and his subsequent departure from Nova Scotia. A full account by Terrance Murphy of Father Phelan's career in Nova Scotia appeared in the *Canadian Catholic Historical Association, Study Session*, Vol. 48 (1981), pp. 26-42, under the title "James Jones & the Establishment of R.C. Church government in the Maritime Provinces." The article gives no details concerning Father Phelan's career in the Diocese of Ossory, where he had served before coming to Halifax. The Irish Diocese of Ossory is almost totally coextensive with modern County Kilkenny. Thousands of Kilkenny people migrated to the Atlantic area in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and made up a very large part of the Irish population of Halifax.

Father William Phelan was a native of Kilmacshane, Inistioge, Co. Kilkenny. He was born c. 1741 and completed his studies in Rome, where he was ordained in 1767, having become about that time a Doctor of Divinity. Following his return to Ireland, he was made parish priest of the Parish of St. Patrick in the City of Kilkenny in December 1769. He subsequently was appointed to the Parish of Dunnemaggan and Windgap in 1772 and later became parish priest of the Parish of Thomastown and Tullaherin in 1783. He was appointed Chancellor of the Diocese of Ossory, 26 August 1777. Canon William Carrigan, whose four-volume *History and Antiquities of the Diocese of Ossory* is the source of this information about Father Phelan, is somewhat vague about Phelan's career after 1782 when, with all the clergy of the Diocese of Ossory, he was registered, as required by a Catholic Relief Act passed by the London and Dublin Parliaments in that year. A copy

of the clergy registration is printed in Carrigan's history. Father Phelan left Nova Scotia in 1793 and apparently went to Philadelphia, where he died in 1795.

Dear and Most Respected Doctor,[1]

By this time, nay long before this letter reaches you, my sudden flight must have ceased to be the common Topic of conversation among my former friends and acquaintances. You have been wearied by the enqueries of friends and foes concerning me. You had a disagreeable part to act on the occasion -- still worse would your situation have been, had I communicated my intentions to you before I left the Kingdom, or had I sooner and before the nine days wonder occasioned by my unexpected disappearance, taken the liberty of addressing you. I have had my failings, but assure you ingratitude was not of the number. I gratefully love and respect you, and notwithstanding my failings, have still some hopes I am not totally forgotten, or disregarded by you. You have too good a heart and too well acquainted with the frailties of man not to make those indulgent allowances for the *humanum est errare*[2] one who constantly sees and wishes to rectify his errors. I have imprudently and blameably involved myself in family and worldly concerns, to which attribute social dissepation, neglect of Pastoral Duty, Debts etc. These last, the immediate cause of my sudden departure, have been, I am convinced, as well as my other frailties greatly exagerated. In this I can't expect a better state than others have experienced in similar circumstances. It is however an ill wind, that blows nobody good -- tho' this report must be injurious to me, yet it will not injure it may serve the turn of some of my creditors by raising the pity of those friends who may indulge or assist them. How far my debts have been misrepresented you can judge from what I solemnly declare to you. – That my real and just debts the day I left Ireland did not amount to £300 and for the discharge of this sum in time not immediately, I have left ample provision, more than a sufficiency vested in the hands of Trustees for that purpose. I have lost

1 The letter was written to Dr. Thomas Troy who was Bishop of Ossory (1776-1786), and elevated to the Archbishopric of Dublin in 1786. Archbishop Troy was the most powerful and influential Catholic cleric in Ireland during the crucial years leading up to the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829, which he was not destined to see become law, having died in 1823. Rev. William Carrigan, *The History & Antiquities of the Diocese of Ossory*, 4 vols. (Dublin, 1905), I, 180-201. The spelling of the original letter has been retained throughout this transcription.

2 To err is human.

double that sum in cash *lucrum ressans, Damnum emergens*[3] &c. by unfortunate Darby Brenan and whole or very near £200 or more by my Sister Walsh[4] and tho' I could have struggled to subsist, and pay this debt in the course of time, I preferd my humiliation and letting myself down amonsget [amongst] those acquainted with my former affluence to remaining a permanent monument of considerable distress in the company of those who had witnessed my more prosperous days and circumstances.

I don't pretend to justify this resolution, it originated perhaps from Pride rather than from any other more laudible principle -- yes -- but how unhappily few are there to be found always armd and influenced by that Summit of Evangelical perfection -- self denial -- *abnega temetipsum*[5] -- but trust in the all: I shall in future be reconsild to its practice than I have at that or any other period of my past life. Indeed, I thank my God, I am better resignd to my present and future lot whatever it may be, than I expected I ever should at the time I left Ireland when tumult of various passions nearly unmannd, and sunk me into despondency. I really. . . this instructful serenity of mind, I have been a total stranger to these five years past. But why tire you with these trite reflections, with this uninteresting history of my feelings -- Were you here would you not gratify me -- allow my reciting them -- and why not indulge my writing them -- I have done. An account of my voyage to Hallifax &c will perhaps prove more entertaining. My adventures till I set out from London have been communicated to you by my worthy friend Lanigin.[6] On the 13th of March I took my passage on board the Brig *Mary* John Wright Commander burthen 200 tuns. Paid eight guineas for my diet and a birth in the steerage finding my own bed etc. A birth in the Cabbin and Cabbin Table I could not get under 25 guineas, a sum that would badly agree with my finances. On my journey to London I met a young lad from Ireland, who had been a servant, coming to try his fortune. While I was in London he got no place and occasionally attended me there. When I was leaving it -- he begd I would

3 Expecting gain but sustaining a loss.

4 Darby Brennan cannot be identified; however Brenan or Brennan is a very common Kilkenny surname as is Walsh, obviously the married name of Phelan's sister.

5 Deny yourself.

6 Rev. James Lanigan (1737-1812) was curate of the Cathedral of St. Canice, Kilkenny in 1782 and became Bishop of Ossory in 1789 (Carrigan, I, 211-216).

mediate with our Captain to give him passage for half price, that he would attend the Cabbin and I applied and represented him as my own Servant, whom I had then dischargd. The Captain received him on the terms proposed. This circumstance known to every one on Board procurd me a respect and attention, which I otherwise would not have been granted. The Captain allowd my old servant to attend me make my bed etc. He introduced me when we had got clear of the London Shipping to his Cabbin where I dined, drank Tea, played Whist &c and formd some oppinion of the respective characters I met there, but studied most that of our mighty Captain whose frowns or smiles only could then affect me and could observe he was very vain both of his person and mental accomplishments.

You will not be surprized that such a character could not bear with any degree of temper the smallest opposition to his oppinion or sentiments, he was otherwise a goodnatured man, an expert, and an attentive seaman, I took care never to contradict him, and in trivial unimportant matters -- even when wrong -- I supported his opinions and by these methods and other seasonable strokes of Blarney I so far insinuated myself into his good graces, that I had more authority in the cabbin during the voyage than any real Cabbin passenger. My bed birth in the sterage was a very comfortable one, there were three decent men, two women, and three tradesmen my messmates in the steerage. Their fare was while our fresh beef held -- Some of it every day boild with soup, and alternately potatoes and dumplin, plenty of sea biscuit and ship beer. When the fresh meat was expended, there was excellent waterd mess beef with potatoes one day -- The same with dumplin the 2d -- and every 3rd day mess pork, peas, soup and potatoes -- The Cabbin extraordinary fare was tea, coffee, chocolate, wine, punch, porter, hames, tongues, foul, savd tripes, butter and cheese -- Some of the steerage passengers had their own tea, sugar, spirits and bottled porter. I had mine with cheese and butter to amount of £1.17. We had a very tedious disagreeable passage of it, did not arrive here till the 17th instant -- viz. nine weeks & two days. Other ships, that left London a week, & a fornight after us arrived here a week & a fornight before us, yet our vessel was an excellent sailor, and as good a seaboat, tho' 26 years old, as ever I wish to put a foot in, but it was the first time our Commander crossed the Atlantick. There may be latitudes in which Westerly winds may be less prevalent than the most direct which we attempted to pursue. We at one time had 13 successive days of the hardest blowing weather with the wind right ahead of us, that I ever remember

-- under bare poles, helm lashd & we drifted back to the Easterd better than 2 knots an hours during that period. While these gales, squalls &c continued & we had several of them, but of shorter duration than the above, there was not sitting standing or lying without being lashd or fast graspd to something. Till the 26th of April the weather was disagreeable cold, tho we were for several days before, as well as then in latitudes from 43 to 45. Suddenly on the 26th & from then till the 3rd of May the climate changed, the weather grew pleasantly warm -- and as suddenly on the 3rd became extremely cold. We were then on the brink of the Grand Newfoundland Fishing Bank. We did not cross it. It's [*sic*] width is about 50 leagues. N.E. winds drove us to the S of it. While getting around it, we had every day cold, heavy fogs. On the 12th of May got soundings 70 fathoms. Supposd ourselves near, or on the Banks of Sable Island -- lay to for an hour -- got out our fishing lines -- caught 5 Hallowbuts in shape and flavour not unlike a Turbot -- two of them weighd about 200 lbs -- the nexte day caught some Cod -- I was not an hour sick during the passage. but in the very cold weather got Gilblanes all over my fingers and toes -- To avoid possible insults, I conceald my ministerial character while on board -- no one knew what I was but two acquainted with me before I came on board -- on the 29th Ulto. one of our passengers, a married lady was safely delivered of a daughter on board -- in one of our hard gales we shipd two very heavy seas, which washd a pig, two geese, a coup & some fouls overboard. Met and spoke with several ships, mostly French, when the latter I was interpreter. The almost only book I read on board, was a treatise on navigation, the theory of which I am tollerable master of at presente -- About 10 leagues from Nova Scotia coast met with about 40 American Schooners cod fishing -- Each had from 9 to 12 hands on board & caught on an average, as they informed us, about three tuns per week -- The Harbour of Hallifax is a very safe and spacious one -- At its entrance are two formidable batteries -- We had a beautiful day & moderate breese wafting us into it -- The town appears to advantage from the Harbour -- it is built from the water edge on a gradually rising ground -- it is larger than Carlow, but not so large as Kilkenny -- All the houses, churches &c except the foundations are entirely of wood -- the outside painted white and the shingles slateformd and coulord -- they are in general but small, & mostly very neat. When we came up close to the town several boats with merchants &c came alongside of us -- I came ashore in one of them. A boat with three gentlemen in it coming towards our ship turned back with us. We landed together

-- one of the gent: a Mr. Kavanaugh[7] askd me -- was not my name Phelan was I not a clergyman. I answered with surprise in the affirmative -- was introduced to Revd. Mr. Jones[8] agd about 45 & congratulated wellcomd, conducted to the best Inn in Town Mr. O Bryans[9] -- guess my amazement on the occasion, as no one here could have an intimation of my coming -- but the mystery was soon cleared up -- Mr. Jones my confere here, a Capuchin, at the latter end of last summer got the principal R. Catholicks here to address the Revd. Mr. Phelan of the same order in Dublin, & request his coming here to assist Mr. Jones, & this Gent: they expected in every ship that arrivd here this month past from Ireland, or London -- These mistakes being rectified I privately and candidly told my history to Mr. Jones, who as yet appears to me a very rational proper man. He very justly censured my pride, and silly delicacy in not writing to you from London, or at least disclosing my situation to my respectable friend in London Mr. Hussey[10], who might have approved me for this mission, and perhaps

7 The well-known Kavanaugh family from Cape Breton had three members who were prominent in Catholic affairs in Nova Scotia at this time: Lawrence, James and John. James Kavanaugh is most likely the person alluded to here, since he owned a fishery on Melville Island about this time and is the Kavanaugh brother most closely associated with Halifax.

8 Rev. James Jones, O.F.M. (Cap.) (c. 1741-1805). Born Dunshaughlin, Co. Meath, Ireland. First English-speaking missionary to the Irish Roman Catholics in Halifax; Vicar General of the Diocese of Quebec and superior of the Mission of Nova Scotia, 20 Oct. 1787. See Rev. Angus Anthony Johnston, *A History of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nova Scotia*, 2 vols. (Antigonish, 1960), I, 122 ff.; Angus A. MacKenzie, *The Irish in Cape Breton*, (Antigonish, 1979), p. 458.

9 *The Nova Scotia Gazette & Weekly Chronicle* (Halifax), 12 March 1780, contains an advertisement for the inn called the Golden Ball, John O'Brien, Keeper. The advertisement states that the Golden Ball had formerly been kept by Edmund or Edward Phelon, most likely the person of the same name mentioned later in this letter as being a distant relative of Father Phelan. The Golden Ball was the site of a dinner for St. John's Masonic Lodge on 27 December 1780. O'Brien was a member of this lodge. Roman Catholics were frequently members of Masonic Lodges in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century; indeed, the most prominent Irish Catholic of the nineteenth century, Daniel O'Connell, was a member of a Masonic Lodge in Dublin. The Golden Ball was situated at the southwest corner of Hollis and Sackville Streets and was also the location of the formative meeting of the Charitable Irish Society, 17 January 1786. [My thanks to Terrence M. Punch for the information in this and subsequent notes on Halifax notables mentioned in this letter.]

10 Rev. Thomas Hussey was a powerful Catholic cleric and diplomatist who became the first President of Saint Patrick's College, Maynooth, the most famous Catholic seminary for the training of priests in Ireland. Hussey later became Bishop of the Diocese of Waterford and Lismore. Hussey was very close to people like Pitt in London who were attempting to reach some sort of accommodation with the Catholics in Ireland who were at this time still disenfranchised. [Rev. Patrick Power], *Parochial History of Waterford & Lismore* (Waterford, 1912), xii-xiii.

procurd me some serviceable recommendations -- but as *jacta erat alea*[11] we should endeavour, of a bargain to make the best. He then told me that previous to his being invitd and wrote for by the R. Cath: here to Cork last spring, there was an intinerant Canadian Priest, one Burk[12], son of Irish Parents, but who could hardly speak a word of English appointed with Vicarial Powers to visit, & superintend the mission of Nova Scotia, he was here at the time Mr. Jones arrivd -- in a few days after he left this town, & went to the settlements adjoining the Gulf of St. Laur: thickly inhabitd by the original French settlers, and natives, who are R. Cath: where he said he could do much greater good and live much more at his ease. At his departure he told Mr. Jones one time or other he may revisit this place, but would never return to settle or reside here. The day after my arrival Mr. Jones wrote to Mr. Burk acquainted him of my being here, and requesting till his return to this town, or till I could conveniently wait on him, to grant me faculties &c. Mr. Jones tells me there is no doubt of my obtaining them, & that we shall have his answer in the course of three week. There is a young man now at Quebeck, born in Ireland ready for ordination at the next Quat. Tem.[13] He had been educated & compleated his studies in the Bishops Seminary there -- whether the Bishop destines him for the mission of this Province or means to keep him at Quebeck, where a Clergyman who talks English must be extremely useful Mr. Jones knows not. Yesterday by a vessel from Cork Mr. Jones receivd a letter from his Confrere Mr. Phelan of Dublin, but at present removd from thence & appointed Parish Priest of some small district near Dublin. In this letter he declines for the present the invitation sent him from hence & only mentions the possibility of his coming here at some distant period. *At the beginning of the year the Irish inhabitants of this town set on foot the institution of a National Charitable Society, the Scotch &c had some of the kind before them -- They met & imbodied for the first time the 17th of February last -- their 2nd meeting was to*

11 The die has been cast.

12 Father Phelan confesses later in the letter to being "new & forlorn" and his remarks on Father Joseph-Mathurin Bourg (1744-1797), who was born of *Acadien* parents at Grand Pré is proof of it. Father Bourg was the first *Acadien* priest. Ordained by Bishop Briand in 1772 at Montreal, he became Vicar-General for Acadia (the whole Atlantic region exclusive of Newfoundland) and was granted a pension by the British for his services in keeping the Micmacs loyal to them (Johnston, I, 106-110).

13 *Quatuor tempores*, ember days, four periods of canonically regulated fasting, at which times ordinations to the various stages up to and including the priesthood took place.

*be held on the evening of my arrival the 17th instant -- I was introduced there -- after I had been seated a few moments, I was called out by one of the members -- the Secretary of the Society followd us shortly after -- and informed me, if I would accept it that I had been admitted a member -- thankd them for the honour, and was immediately by the signature of my name installd dubd &c. There were fifty one members present -- Governor Parr President -- his secretary Vicepresident -- no one admitted a member but an Irishman, or Irishman's son. I receivd more dinner invitations that night from Protestants & Cath: than I could accept for a month. I have been from house to house with them every day since I came here so much that I am at present more tird of feasting, then I have been while on board of feasting -- claret, very choice, and a great deal of it everywhere -- and everything else proportionably characterstick of Irish hospitality.* Our chapel here, rather large for our congregation, is just finishd -- It is not as yet painted, it wants an altarpiece, a few beams & lining boards -- is in every other respect elegantly laid out with pews & gallery all round it as Protestant churches are. They are also erecting within 30 yards of the chappel a residence house for the clergyman who may attend here -- it will consist of kitchin, cellar, 2 parlours, at the back of each a bedchamber &c -- The shell, doors, window frames, sashes & part of the chimneys are compleated. Adjoining the Chappel Yard & house is a burying place. The lot inclosing the whole has been purchased, &c placed in the hands of trustees for the use of the community. Purchase, building &c has already cost them about £1700. The bulk however of this sum has been collected at the close & immediately after the War when this town was the only Rendevous, dockyard, place of defence & safety his Majestys Navy or Army possessd in America, & when of course money was in greater plenty & not of half the value it bears here at present. There is very little of it here now, and, if peace continues it will shortly be much scarcer. Their trade already here, as in the other settlements of this Province, for want of cash, begins to be carried on by exchange of merchandise, rum for one thing, that for another. Everything we ate or wear here as yet, if you except potatoes & a little beef, comes from the Old Country, as they call it, viz: England. Our only return for this consumation is some fish, lumber, that is boards, plank, spars, &c and a few furs -- All of these articles as yet have turned out very inadequate provision for our importations. This town however, being the principal seat of government in the Province, must always fare better than the other settlements. Our navy, Army, Dockyard, Chief Governor & all constantly draw from the Old Country & circulate in cash or bills on home a great deal of money. I rode out four miles from & round

the town. It has been all a wood, but burnd down some years ago. What I have seen of it is a poor, miserable soil, & so stony, that fee simple of the best spot cleard in it, is not equal to the expences, which must have attended it's [*sic*] original cultivation. I am informd, however, that the ground immediately about this town is by far the most stony & barren part of N. Scotia & tho bad it appears I have seen excellent potatoes, & a little well looking wheat & oats produced by it. All kinds of grain, even wheat, roots &c are now planting here. The intence, & long continued winter, frosts & snow fertilize the earth, which added to the proportionately intence heat of the next three months, quickens & hurries vegetation so fast, that their harvest comes in earlier here than it does in Ireland. The frost is sometimes here from Christmas till May, & penetrates so deeply into the earth, that when a thaw takes, it heaves up huge hidden stones to the surface, expands & levels dry walls, whose foundations have been laid on the surface &c. The weather since I came here has been exceedingly fine, dry & serene. Fogs at sea all along this coast are very constant the greatest part of the year, but seldom reach the shore, & on account of these fogs the approach to the coast & getting into the harbours is often dangerous. I was entertained & slept the first night at Mr. O Bryans who keep a publick house here & who untill the parochial house should be completed, offerd me a room, horse to ride, &c. Mr. Jones diets & lodges with a namesake & distant relative of mine Mr. Edmond Phelan[14] he is Mercht. here -- purchasd many houses & has a few spots of cleard ground near the town & several grants of lots from 500 to a 1000 acres at some distance from the town all unimprovd except one where he has cleard a few acres -- he boards & lodges two young gentl: besides Mr. Jones -- he calld on me the morning after I arrivd & insisted on my removing to his house, where I should, he sd, be wellcome as long as it may suit my conveniency to remain with -- that with him I'd be out of the way & temptation & of company, expence &c -- I acceptd his profer -- was then conducted to pay my respects to the Governor -- by whom I was receivd with affability & pollitiness, promisd his patronage &c -- our chappel is 50 feet long & 40 wide -- I said Mass in it Sunday at 9 -- few attended, the usual hour of prayers being 11, at this hour Mr. Jones as usual sd Mass -- a vast concourse of every Sect in Town attended expecting to

14 Edmond or Edward Phelan [Phelon], former owner of the Golden Ball inn (see note 9) was listed in a real estate valuation of property holders in Halifax, c. 1779, as worth £750, indicating he was, indeed, one of the wealthiest men in the city (PANS RG1, Vol. 411, doc. 7).

hear me preach -- I wrote a short discourse which, if I remain here I must deliver next Sunday, tho' I have hardly time to commit it to memory & write this letter -- I say if I remain here -- I must inform you that several colonies of Fishermen about Cape Canso & the island of Cape Breton, some French, but mostly Irish R. Cath: have wrote here & elsewhere calling for a clergyman -- It was proposd to me till our house should be in readiness about October next, to take a trip to these quarters -- baptize, marry -- instruct &c the Fisheries there are almost entirely the property of merchants here -- A Protestant mercht: Mr. Sherlock[15] propritor of fishing settlements there is setting out this week to superintend them during the season -- he offers me a passage, board & lodging while in his quarters -- and whatever his men order me fish or money, he'll pay me on our return here -- Mr. Cavanaugh & others, when on their settlements, offer the same terms -- I have agreed to go & sail the latter end of this or beginning of next week -- The Gut of Canso is about 40 leagues from thence to these settlements on Cape Bretoun from 3 to 30 leagues. I am not particularly fearful at sea -- it agrees with me -- I am naturally curious, & fond of travelling, consequently my consent could not be a reluctant one, & tho' it had, still would I have accepted of the proposal from the prospect of doing some good there. I attended laste sunday at Mr. Jones's Mass & exhortation. Before Mass the litanies of our B. Lady were sung by some of the French settlers -- the air, or musick a traditional imitation, I suppose, of their French forefathers -- there is a peculiar & characteristick sameness in French musick of every description, which renders it disagreeable to those accustomd to more pleasing variety. We had some sort of Latin & English rhimes sung in the same stile at the Elevation & Communion -- what they were I know not, but Mr. Jones wishes to introduce more of them from, he tells me this principle -- that singing & chanting being a favorite & much venerated devotion in the other Congregations & houses of worship here, he thinks it adviseable for us by this method to protract our hours of worship to some equality with thiers [*sic*]. I am too new & forlorn here as yet to intrudingly offer my opinion on the occasion, or on several other points of discipline practicd here. Mr. O Bryan, the gent: before mentiond in this letter is a native of the Queen's County -- was many years a trooper -- often quarterd in Kilkenny -- I am told there is here in a thriving money making

15 Fo[r]ster Sherlock (1750-1811), merchant in Halifax; died at Manchester, Guysborough Co., May 1811 (*Royal Nova Scotia Gazette* [Halifax], 29 May 1811).

way a son of Mr. Reynolds[16] the Brazier, High St. Kilkenny -- I have not seen him yet. I have seen Mrs. Mullowny[17] a native of Kilkenny, her sister is married to one Carrol at the corner of William St. -- he sells leather &c -- this Mr. Mullowny is one of the richest men here. I this day saw John Grady,[18] Father Gradys brother, he enjoys rude health, he has workd hard, he tells me, since he came here in various employments -- He engagd a monday last with a Gent: within a few miles of town for £20 with diet washing, & lodging till the 20th of May nexte. Father Thos Power's brother Ned is now in Philidelphia rich -- keeps a publick house there, & a reputed wife. I am just returned from beholding what was a novel to me. At the other side of our harbour, wide about a league, & half, a tract of land about 200 acres all in a blaze -- the fuel of these flames were some decayd trees, which escapd the flames or were not entirely burnd, when first the woods were set fire to, and a very thick underwood, which grew since. On this opposite side of the bay they are erecting this summer a great number of houses for the reception of some Quaquers from New England who are coming to carry on a Spermacety Whale Fishery on the Coaste of South America, or Africa, I forget which. England gives a bounty per tun of the oil, an encouragement the New States cant afford them. By the English renewd Act regulating her trade with America -- no American bottom can bring into our harbours any sort of good or merchandize notwithstanding this act within this week two American ships have venturd here with flower, but were seizd, & condemnd -- some of the states have

16 Andrew Reynolds (1756-1802), shopkeeper in Halifax (*Nova Scotia Gazetter & Weekly Advertiser*, 28 January 1802); Richard Lucas' *A General Directory of the Kingdom of Ireland*, 1778, lists Henry Reynolds of the High Street, Kilkenny, as brazier and pewterer.

17 John Mullowney was one of the five Catholics who petitioned the N.S. Legislature in 1781 for the repeal of the laws against the practice of Roman Catholicism and the ownership of land by Roman Catholics. He was active in the Catholic community in Halifax and was Captain of a packet plying between Halifax and Philadelphia. John Mullowney's wife's first name was Catherine.

18 There does not appear to be any record available for John Grady in Halifax; however, Very Rev. Patrick O'Grady (1745-1822) was a priest in the Diocese of Ossory and had been P.P. of Freshford. He was a native of Kyle-na-seach, Kilmanagh, Co. Kilkenny. He was an enthusiastic and eloquent speaker of the Irish language (Carrigan, II, 274).

enacted similar regulations with regard to us, which for the presant much distresses us here by enhancing the price of many kinds of fresh provisions -- fish & potatoes are the only reasonable articles here -- the latter at one shilling per bushel -- & note, a guinea here passes for £1:3:4. Fish is proportionably cheaper, & the market glutted with it every day in the year, that a boat can stand out fishing. Cod, Mackarel, Place, Smelts, Crabbs, Lobsters, Herrings, Salmon, Trout, Eels, Hollowbut, sometimes Sturgeon, & almost, in their proper season, every other species of fish you have in Europe & many other besides. Everything the West Indies produce we have here on reasonable terms. We bring these articles in return for our fish & lumber -- limes, a species of lemon, & lime juice are cheaper here than in Italy -- no coin to be seen here but Spanish silver -- a dollar rates at S5 of this currency. The miles & acres of this country are English computation -- it is 900 sea leagues, which are longer than the land ones from this town to London & not more than 750 to Cork or Waterford. . . .

# Father William Phelan: An Irish Trouble-Maker in Arichat

Phyllis C. Wagg

In the late summer of 1785 James Jones, a Capuchin, arrived in Halifax to take charge of ministering to the growing number of Roman Catholics in that city. The following spring he was joined by another Irish priest, William Phelan.

Phelan's history in his native Ireland is vague, but he was apparently educated in Rome, where he received the degrees of D.D. and Ph.D.; he then spent seventeen years in parishes in Ireland, where he was chancellor of the cathedral of Ossory before emigrating to North America.[1] He left London on 13 March 1786 on the brig *Mary* and arrived in Halifax on 17 May.[2] In Halifax he had at least one relative, a merchant named Edmund Phelan.[3] The reasons that Phelan left Ireland are not clear, but the implication was that he had found himself in financial difficulties. In his first letter to the Bishop of Quebec, who was in charge of the Maritime region, he gave as his reason for leaving Ireland a "redundancy of Clergymen & more than the poor Roman Catholics of the Country" were "enabled to support."[4]

In a letter to his former Bishop in Ireland, Phelan wrote shortly after his arrival in Halifax:

> I must inform you that several colonies of fishermen about Cape Canso and the Island of Cape Breton, some French, but mostly Irish R. Catholics have written here and elsewhere calling for a clergyman. It was proposed to me till our house should be in readiness about October next to take a trip to these quarters. I have agreed to go and sail the latter end of this or the beginning of next week.[5]

Although Phelan implied in the above letter that he intended to stay in Halifax, he remained only a short time in that city and may have shipped to Arichat on the Brig *Sally* which left Halifax in the first half of June.[6]

1 A.A. Johnston, *A History of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nova Scotia* (Antigonish, 1960), I, 112-117.

2 Transcript of an undated letter from William Phelan to Bishop John Troy, in E.B. [Edmund Burke?], "History of the Church in the Colony," Archives of the Archdiocese of Nova Scotia, Halifax.

3 Johnston, p. 116.

4 Phelan to D'Esglis, 13 June 1786, quoted in *ibid.*

5 Phelan to Troy, "History of the Church in the Colony."

6 *The Halifax Gazette*, 13 June 1786.

With him Phelan brought a letter of recommendation to Lieutenant-Governor J.F.W. DesBarres of Cape Breton, signed by James Kavanagh of Halifax; the letter stated in part:

> The Rev. Mr. Phealon [*sic*], bearer hereof, a Clergyman of the Church of Rome, I beg leave to present as a very worthy man and a good subject; his character and integrity to the King's Cause is unquestionable, being duly and very handsomely introduced to our Priest here, the Reverend Mr. Jones, by the Bishop of London, and the celebrated Mr. Hussey who attended Mr. Cumberland on his Embassy to the Court of Spain. . . .[7]

That this recommendation was not strictly accurate was revealed by Phelan himself when he wrote to the Bishop of Quebec, apologizing for not bringing with him the appropriate testimonials.[8]

The first hint that Phelan was not the most suitable person for the Arichat position, where his parishioners were mainly of French and Acadian origins, came in a letter he wrote to Bishop Thomas Troy of Ossory:

> I attended last Sunday of Rev. Mr. Jones's mass and exhortation. Before mass the Litanies of our B. Lady were sung by some old French settlers, the air or music a traditional imitation, I suppose of their French forefathers. There is a particular sameness in French music of every description which renders it disagreeable to those accustomed to more pleasing variety. . . .[9]

What Phelan found when he arrived in Arichat was that the people had been "without a Priest, without instruction, without sacraments better than two years, and for some years before, whenever a Clergyman called there, his stay for a few days only, was so short that he could be of little use to them." However, he also found that "Providence, in such circumstances has been singularly bountiful to them. Their Faith is strong & unattainted & their Morals much purer, from what I have as yet seen of them, than I did, or could well have expected. . . ."[10] In fact, Phelan was so favourably impressed that he decided to remain at Arichat, writing directly to the Bishop of Quebec for appointment to the mission, bypassing Father Joseph-

7 Ranna Cossit's Letter Book. MG100, Vol. 25, No. 25, Public Archives of Nova Scotia [hereafter PANS].

8 Johnston, pp. 116-117.

9 Phelan to Troy, "History of the Church in the Colony."

10 Phelan to D'Esglis, 13 June 1786, quoted in Johnston, p. 117.

Maturin Bourg who was stationed in New Brunswick, and who was responsible for the Nova Scotian missionaries.

In 1787 Father Jones was appointed Superior of Missions and was given authority over the English-speaking missionaries of Nova Scotia and the surrounding areas. However, he was instructed to regard Phelan in all matters as a man of merit, giving him more power than an ordinary missionary.[11]

By this time Phelan had had more opportunity to observe the situation at Arichat, and he was now far more critical of his parishioners and tended to judge them harshly:

> . . . in everything regarding church discipline or civil society they were extremely rude and ignorant, and appeared totally unacquainted with any sort of restraint or subordination. . . .Thus disposed and uninformed, each pretending to legislative authority in church and state.[12]

Phelan did not take into consideration the fact that the people had been without a priest, and for the most part without the interference of government, for many years; it was only to be expected that certain people within the community would therefore assume leadership roles in both temporal and spiritual affairs. It was not surprising that these leaders would not willingly relinquish their pivotal position in the community to an outsider even if he was a priest.[13]

There are strong indications that the people of Arichat did not take long to become dissatisfied with their new priest. Father Jean-Antoine LeDru, who visited in the autumn of 1786, wrote that ". . . I ministered to a group of the people there, when they asked me to do so because they had been refused the services of an unknown priest, who was there at the time without approval and had ministered to the rest of the people."[14] Both Father Jones and Father Phelan, however, portrayed LeDru as a rogue who, according to Jones, "Scoured the coasts down to Chaleur Bay, collecting what money

11 Gravé to Jones, 22 October 1787, Bishop Burke Papers, PANS. All references to the Bishop Burke Papers refer to transcripts of correspondence.

12 Phelan to D'Esglis, 18 May 1787, quoted in Johnston, p. 118.

13 Father Jones was having similar problems in Halifax. See Terrance Murphy, "James Jones and the Establishment of Roman Catholic Church Government in the Maritime Provinces," *CCHA Study Sessions*, 48 (1981), 26-42.

14 LeDru to D'Esglis, 1 June 1787, quoted in Johnston, p. 121.

he could."[15] Although LeDru's qualifications as a priest were suspect, subsequent events revealed that there was some justification to his claims against Phelan.

At this time, relations between Jones and Phelan were at least outwardly cordial, but Phelan's behaviour was nevertheless beginning to irritate the Superior of Missions. First of all, Jones and Phelan did not agree in their opinion of the people of Arichat. On 23 April 1787, Jones wrote to the Bishop of Quebec that the mission of Cape Breton was "composed of French and Indians" who were "accustomed to rule and order since the days of the immortal Maillard."[16] In another letter he wrote:

> There is a wide difference between this Mission and any other in your Lordship's Diocese. For instance, the French who inhabit Cumberland or Narishot [Arichat] make it a point to give what they call Dues to Mr. Phelan or Mr. LeRoux, but the Roman Catholics who came into these Provinces as Loyalists have no idea of such rules, nor in fact are they acquainted with them, and if they were, they have not the means.[17]

However, Jones did indicate that the situation at Arichat was not entirely without problems, because in a letter to the Bishop he referred to the "divided people of Arichat," when a dispute arose over "their building a church at both sides of the harbour, and each party insisted on Mr. Phelan attending them."[18]

Phelan, in his letter to the Bishop in May 1787, revealed that he was having further difficulties with his parishioners:

> I found it no easy task, when necessary to enforce the ordinances of the Church, or such points of peculiar diocesan discipline, etc., as I judged both practicable and salutary. A few of them still hold out refractory and obstinate. Perseverance and a little prudent management will also, I hope, shortly recall

15 Jones to D'Esglis, 23 May 1787, Bishop Burke Papers. In the same letter Jones questioned whether LeDru was actually a priest.

16 Jones to D'Esglis, 23 April 1787, quoted in Johnston, p. 118.

17 *Ibid.*

18 Jones to D'Esglis, 23 April 1787, Bishop Burke Papers.

> them to a sense of duty. An insignificant magistrate here, for private mercenary purposes, has clandestinely encouraged and abetted this refractory disposition. His efforts, however, have not been very successful.[19]

Phelan, however, was not content to limit his activities to the spiritual welfare of his parish, and this interference was partly responsible for his continuing problems.

Since no land grants had been given on Cape Breton Island, the resident population had evolved their own conventions regarding land use. This fact was brought up at the meeting of the Council at Sydney on 23 February 1787, and the Council agreed that such claims to land would be taken into consideration before any grants were made in areas of the island already settled. Nevertheless, the Sydney administration gave Phelan a "licence of occupation" for a piece of land on Arichat Harbour before any surveys or investigations had been completed.[20] Three months later, Maximum Foret of Arichat laid before the Council a complaint which stated in part:

> . . . that he and his Father had settled and improved a Lott of Land and carried on the Fishery during these twenty three years past and that the same Maximum Forrau [*sic*] had been in possession of and improved a Lott adjoining thereto for these fifteen years. That Wm Phelan in consequence of a Licence of Occupation which he applied for in the month of August and accordingly obtained had thrown down and destroyed the Fish Flakes which the said Maximum Forrau had prepared for curing the Fish to be caught by him during the ensuing Season . . .[21]

It is not surprising that such an action made Phelan unpopular with at least some of his parishioners. The initial advice of the Council had been that "Licences applied for and obtained could not be intended in any Degree whatsoever to obstruct the advantageous Business of the Fishery nor to lessen the encouragement promised to Individuals engaged therein."[22] Foret was required to support his claims by providing "Testimony of a majority of the Inhabitants and Fishermen of Arichat." On 11 February 1788 the initial

19 Phelan to D'Esglis, 18 May 1787, quoted in Johnston, p. 118.

20 Minutes of Council, 23 February 1787. RG1, Vol. 318, PANS.

21 *Ibid.*, 31 May 1787.

22 Loc. cit.

report of the justices of the area was presented to Council, but the papers were dismissed because of their "informality and apparent partiality."[23] The following day the Forets presented their case.

On 15 March Mr. Murphy, one of the justices appointed to examine the case, appeared before the Council with the minutes of examinations taken before himself and the other two individuals, Mr. Boyd and Mr. Robinson. A letter from Mr. Boyd was also laid before the Council, stating:

> his and Mr. Murphy's faithful discharge of their Duty in taking said Examinations, and that the same was done without the least partiality and declaring his regret at any want of formality in taking depositions sent which he hoped Council would attribute to his want of Experience, being young in office.[24]

The final decision of the Council was to award the front two acres to Foret and the remaining seventy-eight acres to Phelan.[25]

Meanwhile, other incidents had occurred which further irritated the Superior of Missions. Phelan continually bypassed Jones, as he had Bourg in 1786, appealing directly to the Bishop of Quebec.[26] There is also some indication that Phelan was interested in supplanting Jones in Halifax, since on 28 May 1788 he wrote to the Vicar-General of Quebec that "Mr. Jones. . . writes to Mr. Power that he has determined to quit Halifax and that the R. Catholics there have signed and sent me an address to succeed him."[27]

Early in his mission, Phelan set up a schedule of fees which he charged for his services; these included five to eight piastres for a marriage (a piastre was equal to about a dollar), two piastres for a high mass or a burial, and one piastre per person for holy communion. He also charged the Indians one beaver pelt for communion.[28] The fees for communion dumbfounded Father Jones, who wrote to Phelan on 6 January 1790: ". . . as to the adminis-

23 Minutes of Council, 11 February 1788. RG1, Vol. 319, PANS.

24 *Ibid.*, 15 March 1788.

25 *Ibid.*, 18 March 1788.

26 Johnston, p. 128.

27 Phelan to Gravé, 28 May 1788, quoted in Johnston, p. 130.

28 Jones to Gravé, 4 September 1789, Bishop Burke Papers.

tration of the sacraments nothing shall be asked, this method has something unfavourable to religion (except for marriage or rather for the publication of banns, etc.)."[29] Jones felt that if voluntary contributions were not sufficient to support the missionaries, then some general rule should be followed, such as placing a quota on each family.

Phelan also made a practice of going to areas beyond the bounds of his parish, on missionary forays where he apparently charged the same fees. He was so unpopular among the people of the St. Mary's Bay area of Nova Scotia that they did not want even to talk about having an Irish priest.[30]

By this time Phelan had been joined in Arichat by another priest, a relative of his named Thomas Power.[31] The fact that both Power and Phelan sometimes left their mission without Jones's permission or knowledge was another contentious issue. One such incident, when Power went to the United States to visit relatives, particularly irritated Jones, who wrote to Phelan: "If you or Mr. Power should think hard to receive any orders from me, you must remember it is not my seeking, it is necessary to have a head. I never kept a secret from you, I never gave you any command before the present. . . ."[32]

As early as 1789 there were hints in Jones's correspondence that Phelan was proving unsatisfactory. On 1 September, in a letter to Father Henri-François Gravé, the new Vicar-General, Jones stated that "Phelan has been at Cape Sable. It is a pity that he speaks so much of money."[33] Three weeks later, Jones wrote:

> Mr. Phelan is here now. I hope that he will confine himself to his mission, Cape Breton. I shall say no more on this subject than tell your Lordship that it will never answer till there is a missionary who will reside at St. John's Island, another at Arichat, a third at St. Mary's Bay. . . .[34]

29 Jones to Phelan, 6 January 1790, *ibid.*

30 Jones to Hubert, 24 March 1792, *ibid.*

31 Ranna Cossit's Letter Book. MG100, Vol. 25, No. 25, PANS.

32 Jones to Phelan, 6 January 1790, Bishop Burke Papers.

33 Jones to Gravé, 1 September 1789, quoted in Johnston, p. 131.

34 Jones to Hubert, 22 September 1789, quoted in *ibid.*

It was around this time that Phelan began a series of personal attacks against Jones. In his letter to Phelan on 6 January 1790, Jones wrote: ". . .you did wrong to write or speak against me, it argued weakness in you before our superiors, because, as I told you, I never mentioned your name at Quebec except to Mr. Burke. . . ."[35] Not only did Phelan refuse to recognize any authority Jones had over him, but he also used his contacts in Halifax to create problems in Jones's own parish. He apparently accused Jones of not paying Father Power for the time he had assisted him in Halifax, and he also accused him of owing Laurence Kavanagh the sum of £150, accusations that Jones firmly denied in the same letter of 6 January.

It was apparently before and during a visit that Jones made to Philadelphia in the spring of 1791 that Phelan's attacks against the Superior of Missions gathered strength. On the eve of his proposed trip, Jones wrote to the Bishop that he was mortified at the language and malice that Phelan had directed toward him.[36] The following spring, Jones found himself on the verge of being taken to court by an opponent of his in Halifax, John Maloney. Maloney demanded an accounting for £200 of church money, on the grounds that a letter from the Bishop, held by Phelan in Arichat, asked for such an accounting.[37]

Phelan also took exception to a letter Jones had sent to the various parishes, instructing them to agree among themselves as to a method for supporting their missionaries. Not only did he object to the letter, but he also continued to charge a piastre per person for communion.[38]

By the fall of 1791, Jones's criticism of Phelan was no longer veiled. On 7 October of that year he complained that Phelan was asking for the whole province of Nova Scotia as his mission and he decribed Phelan as a ploughman, merchant, lawyer, missionary, and trouble-maker.[39] By this time Jones had written to Ireland requesting two more priests and, since Phelan indicated that he wanted to leave the province, Jones believed that if they

35 Jones to Phelan, 6 January 1790, Bishop Burke Papers.

36 Jones to Hubert, 16 April 1791, *ibid.*

37 Jones to Hubert, 24 March 1791, *ibid.*

38 Jones to Hubert, 17 March 1791, *ibid.*

39 *Mémoire Sur les Missions de la Nouvelle-Ecosse du Cap Breton et de l'Isle du Prince-Edouard de 1760 à 1820* (Quebec, 1895), p. 62.

arrived by the following summer, Phelan could retire and "personne ne le pleurera."[40]

It would appear that Phelan's intention was to discredit Jones to the point where the Superior of Missions would either be removed from his posting or be forced to resign. However, Jones received strong support from the Bishop and he was able to withstand Phelan's attacks.

Meanwhile, in Arichat the people were no happier with Phelan than was Jones. Not only did they regard the charges for his services as being too high, but they did not agree with his other activities. According to Jones, the people of his parish had nicknamed Phelan the "prêtre bourgeois" because he was operating a store, which he claimed he was doing as a favour for a merchant of the town. His involvement in the commerce of the area had created resentment and jealousy between him and the Arichat merchants. Jones related one incident when Phelan bought a shallop and sold a load of salt at a hundred per cent profit.[41] He had also supposedly received a grant of land, on which seventeen French families already lived, through making false representations to the governor.

The situation deteriorated to such an extent that Jones went to Arichat in April 1792 to reason with Phelan, but the reception he received was not a welcome one and he found it necessary instead to remove the priest from his position. Phelan argued, among other things, that Jones had no authority over him, and that even the authority of the Bishop of Quebec did not apply to Cape Breton, since it was subject only to the laws and usage of England. He went on to argue that Jones was nothing more than a monk who had no dispensation from Rome. Jones, on the other hand, claimed that Phelan was a trouble-maker who had been forced to flee Ireland, and who could no longer show himself in that country.[42] While he was in Arichat, Jones sent a letter to the parishes served by Phelan, directing them to "act as if there was no priest, except in danger of death."[43] Jones finally had to return to Halifax, however, leaving Phelan still in Arichat.

Jones was on the point of leaving for a second trip to Arichat when he

40 Jones to Hubert, 7 October 1791, quoted in *ibid.* "No one will cry for him."

41 Jones to Hubert, 24 March 1792, Bishop Burke Papers.

42 Loc. cit.

43 Quoted in Johnston, pp. 150-151.

was joined in Halifax by a French priest, Father François LeJamtel, who had had to flee the island of St. Pierre for refusing to take an oath demanded by the French National Assembly. LeJamtel was granted the protection of the governor of Nova Scotia, who intended to write to the lieutenant-governor of Cape Breton on his behalf. On 27 September 1792 Jones arrived in Arichat with the French priest, and installed him in the parish.[44]

It was at this point that Phelan decided to take further action. He petitioned Lieutenant-Governor Macarmick in Sydney, seeking to enlist his aid:

> Mr. Phelan requests the Lieutenant-Governor would express his opinion of his conduct by certificate hoping he has evinced an arduous desire to inculcate into the mind of his flock the necessity of paying a ready and peaceful obedience to the Ordinances of the Island and a due respect and Regard for the British Constitution and he hopes to be excused for Declaring that he thinks a foreigner placed in his situation unacquainted with the Laws and unable to speake the English Language must be useless to a very considerable number of Irish Roman Catholics and a circumstance likely to disturb the tranquility which has been preserved for six years and to introduce prejudices into the minds of his Majesty's Acadian subjects inimical to the interests of the Crown.[45]

The Council was ready to support Phelan. They felt that Father Jones should have indicated his intention to Lieutenant-Governor Macarmick before he introduced an unknown priest into the latter's administrative jurisdiction. The Council also indicated that they had heard nothing to the detriment of Mr. Phelan's character.[46] In support of Phelan, Macarmick apparently next brought the matter to the attention of his superior, Lord Dorchester, who in turn contacted the Bishop of Quebec. The Bishop, in turn, wrote to his Superior of Missions, indicating that the governor of Cape Breton was displeased with the actions he, Jones, had taken against the Arichat priest.

Jones then wrote to Lord Dorchester outlining the reasons for his actions.[47]

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44 Johnston, p. 150.

45 Minutes of Council, 24 October 1792. RG1, Vol. 319, PANS.

46 Loc. cit.

47 Jones to Lord Dorchester, Bishop Burke Papers.

Firstly, he stated that he had received complaints from the merchants and inhabitants of Arichat, "respecting the secular pursuits and reprehensible transactions of Mr. Phelan in his mission." Secondly, the priest had taken up lands "contrary to all precedent in a mission," and in such a manner that "the people themselves openly revolted and multiplied charges against their Missionary, stating that as his life was bad his instructions could do them no good;" Phelan had also attempted to terrify them into silence from the altar itself, by stating "gardez-vous bien de moi, car je sais les loix, je peux faire paroitre à qui est blanc noir, ce qui est tortu [tordu?] droit, et le revers."[48] Thirdly, in his treatment of the Indians in his mission, Phelan had so far forgotten his obligations, that he had not only connived at impositions practiced on them, but also participated in them himself, stipulating his own share of the plunder. Lord Dorchester summed up the situation in a letter to Lieutenant-Governor Macarmick when he stated that Phelan had been replaced because of complaints of a very turbulent character.[49]

Meanwhile, Father LeJamtel had been placed in a difficult position between Father Phelan, on the one hand, and Father Jones, with the vast majority of the Arichat parishioners, on the other. To compound his problem, LeJamtel was regarded with suspicion by the Sydney administration, although he had presented his papers and taken the oaths required by that government. Not surprisingly, however, a petition was presented to the Council by one of the Forets, and signed by 111 Roman Catholic families of the Arichat district, supporting the action of Father Jones.[50]

Not to be easily outdone, Phelan now brought to the attention of the Council that he had a licence of occupation for the chapel lands at Arichat, that had been granted to him by the former lieutenant-governor. The Council took the stand that "as the British Laws are framed for the protection of the property of the subject he cannot be arbitrarily dispossessed of what he claims to be his property but is entitled to a legal and fair trial."[51] However,

48 "Look out for me, because I know the law, I can make what seems white black, what is twisted straight, and the reverse."

49 Minutes of Council. RG1, Vol. 320, p. 15, PANS.

50 Minutes of Council, 29 October 1792. RG1, Vol. 319, PANS.

51 Loc. cit.

the situation was becoming so serious that they requested that Phelan lay his licence of occupation before the Council to determine its validity.

During this time, with the agreement of the Council, Phelan had maintained the keys to the chapel and refused to give them up, although he agreed to leave the chapel open for the French priest. This arrangement did not satisfy the great majority of inhabitants and it appears that only nine families continued to attend mass under Phelan.[52] At this point the lieutenant-governor intervened and was "induced from motives of keeping peace in the settlement to use his friendly endeavours with Mr. Phelan to give way to so large a majority."[53] Macarmick's efforts were successful and the parishioners obtained both the key and full possession of the chapel.

If the residents of the parish thought their problems with Phelan were over, however, they were mistaken. When the dispute arose over the parish lands, Phelan wanted to make sure that the parsonage was on the property granted to him in 1788. Apparently, when applying for possession of the chapel lands, the people had neglected to lay claim to the house as a parsonage. Phelan, on the other hand, claimed the house as his own personal property and also argued that if it had not been included in the 1788 grant, it should have been. Thus he initiated proceedings to have that piece of land deeded to him.[54]

The residents of Arichat soon realized their oversight in not including the parsonage in their claim. Although Phelan had spent some of his own money on the house, the parishioners helped to construct it, and according to Phelan's own words in a letter to the Vicar-General of Quebec, he not only considered it as a parsonage but also the lands annexed to it as a glebe.[55] However, when the parishioners issued a claim to the parsonage, Macarmick hedged on taking any action.

According to the lieutenant-governor, the ownership of the glebe could only be determined "by a regular Trial at Law to be instituted on the part of the Crown, to whom the ground belonged, in case it was not included in his Grant, and that such a step would require very serious consider-

52 Jones to Hubert, 6 May 1792, Bishop Burke Papers.

53 Minutes of Council, 30 April 1794. RG1, Vol. 320, PANS.

54 Loc. cit.

55 Phelan to Gravé, 23 April 1792, quoted in Johnston, p. 150.

ation and inquiry before determined on."[56] Father LeJamtel wrote to the Council, claiming that there was a minor insurrection taking place in Arichat over the matter and that the inhabitants were requiring immediate possession of the house. Macarmick was prone to believe that LeJamtel was behind any disturbance at Arichat and expressed his opinion that "Mr. LeJamtel's restless disposition was not to be kept within any bounds, and that he had only to ask for property in order to warrant his immediately taking possession thereof."[57]

Macarmick, however, managed to delay action by writing to LeJamtel that nothing could be done concerning the parsonage until peace had been restored with France; he included in the letter a copy of an order from Governor John Wentworth of Nova Scotia, regarding the removal from Cape Breton of any individuals who had lived under contemporary French administration.[58] This veiled threat against LeJamtel, coupled with the fact that Phelan soon left the island, probably had the desired effect of subduing the local population.

By the spring of 1793, Phelan had ceased all his functions as a priest and had turned to fishing to support himself.[59] By the fall of 1793 he left Arichat, although he was expected back the following spring. He never returned, however, and on 17 March 1795 Jones reported to Bishop Hubert that William Phelan had died in Philadelphia.[60]

It is difficult to ascertain the effect Phelan had on the social history of this province, and particularly in the Arichat district. However, given his ability to cause trouble, Phelan may have been a major contributor to an antipathy which developed, and continued, between the Irish and the French Acadian population of Isle Madame.

56 Minutes of Council, 30 April 1794.

57 Loc. cit.

58 Loc. cit.

59 Jones in letters dated 27 July and 16 May 1793, Bishop Burke Papers.

60 Jones to Hubert, 17 March 1795, Bishop Burke Papers.

# "Poverty, wretchedness, and misery" : The Great Famine in Cape Breton, 1845-1851

R.J. Morgan

Cape Breton experienced dramatic political, economic and demographic changes during the first half of the nineteenth century. In 1820, the island was annexed to Nova Scotia; in 1826, the General Mining Association assumed ownership of the coal mines; and between 1802 and 1845, approximately 30,000 Scots immigrated to the island. This was a pioneer period, during which immigrants first came in contact with a new political environment, and carved out properties to begin a new life on the island. The second half of the century witnessed the consolidation of these developments, as Scottish immigration ended and the settlers adjusted to the demands of their new environment.

This evolution was hastened by the disastrous events which occurred between 1845 and 1851, when potato rot reduced the island to a state of near-starvation. Potato rot, or blight (*phytophthora infestans*), which flourishes in cool damp weather, is a fungus which attacks the leaves and tubers of potatoes. First, irregular dark green to purplish-black spots form on leaves. Infected areas quickly turn black, resembling frost injury. Secondary bacteria and fungi often invade tubers, producing a slimy, foul-smelling rot which spreads throughout storage areas, resulting in the total loss of stored potatoes. This situation continues as long as dampness prevails.[1] During these same years, though with less disastrous results, since it was not as widely cultivated, the island wheat crop was frequently infested with wheat fly. This is a small insect whose eggs burrow into the wheat stems and destroy the plant.[2] Neither the rot nor the fly was properly understood or properly treated during the period under discussion.

Potato rot struck other areas during the same period, including Ireland and Scotland, resulting in mass starvation and the emigration of thousands from those nations. Nova Scotia, with its damp climate, offered prime conditions for the spread of the disease. It is not certain when potato rot arrived in the province, though it may have reached parts of the mainland as early as 1843.[3] The blight reached its zenith when most of the province was affected during the last weeks of August and September, 1845, after

1 Agriculture Canada, *Diseases and Pests of Potatoes* (Ottawa, 1973), pp. 8-9.

2 Grant MacEwan, *Harvest of Bread* (Saskatoon, 1969), p. 132.

3 Thomas Leaver (Antigonish) to Caroline Leaver (Baddeck), 19 April 1843. Leaver Papers, MG 12/70, letter 16, Beaton Institute, University College of Cape Breton.

a spell of wet, hot weather with unusually warm nights.[4]

In Cape Breton, the disease spread from west to east. The stored tubers were destroyed at Lake Ainslie as early as the winter of 1844-45, leaving no seed for planting that spring.[5] By summer, Port Hood's crop had "suffered severely"; one third of the crop at the Gut of Canso had rotted; Margaree claimed a 75 per cent loss; and the Richmond County and Baddeck areas were affected. The Sydney region, however, reported only a small loss. It appears that, on the whole, the rot in 1845 was generally worse on mainland Nova Scotia. By 1846, however, it had taken a firm hold on the island.[6]

Cape Breton was particularly vulnerable to the disease and its effects. The island was still in a pioneer stage of development, which other parts of Nova Scotia had left behind in the 1820s. Hence, "the poor settlers, if in distress, are not surrounded by old and wealthy Townships, upon the good feeling and resources of which they can fall back; they are often isolated, and if their own slender resources fail, there is no succour at hand."[7] They were made even more vulnerable by their dependence on a single crop: as one group of settlers wrote, "it is a well known fact the potatoe [*sic*] is the only article on which a poor man and family have to live upon for years on new back land farms in the island of Cape Breton."[8]

The immigration of poor settlers into the island had continued long after it had ceased on the mainland. The first wave of Scottish immigration to Nova Scotia, heaviest between 1783 and 1803, was composed of people of varying occupations, who had left Scotland voluntarily and who had travelled unassisted. Cape Breton received a few of these. Between 1803 and 1815, as the Scottish clearances intensified, poor and more desperate crofters, labourers and small tenants arrived, many going to the best vacant lands in Cape Breton. However, in the years following Waterloo, the kelp industry, which had temporarily supported evicted Hebredean crofters,

4 *Journals of the Proceedings of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly* [hereafter *Journals*], 1846, Appendix 77, pp. 240-241.

5 RG 5, Series GP, Vol. 4, petition 32, 1 May 1845, Public Archives of Nova Scotia [hereafter PANS].

6 *Journals*, 1846, Appendix 77, pp. 235, 238-9, 258-9, 386, 388, 414, 415; *The Spirit of the Times* (Sydney), 28 January 1846.

7 *Novascotian* (Halifax), 11 December 1833.

8 RG 5, Series P, Vol. 83, petition 109, 30 December 1845; petition 67, 25 January 1847, PANS.

collapsed under European competition. As a result, over 19,000 of the poorest people left Scotland, mainly for Cape Breton; this emigration continued throughout the 1820s, peaking in 1828. Finally, during the 1830s and 1840s, thousands more joined family members already on the island.[9]

Since the last-mentioned were the poorest and last to arrive, they squatted on what was left for them -- the least desirable land in the remotest areas.[10] Abraham Gesner estimated that most of the 1,500 people who had arrived in Cape Breton in 1842 were squatters on private property. Often these people, after improving the land, would be ejected, only to wander elsewhere: "With a pig, a cow, and a few cakes of maple sugar, some are ready to migrate at an hour's notice."[11] Officials could not hope to keep track of these thousands who arrived at remote ports and who quickly disappeared into the woods.[12]

The new settlers had learned little in Scotland of scientific agricultural methods. They simply cleared the trees, burnt the wood for fertilizer, and with a *cas-chrom* -- a home-made hand plough -- planted their potatoes or some wheat among the stumps.[13] Fortunately, the virgin land bore abundantly. This poverty and overwhelming dependence on the potato proved dangerous. An extraordinarily cold season in 1832 greatly diminished the potato and grain crop. The following year witnessed serious crop failures at Baddeck, Middle River and St. Ann's. Though the government sent supplies, thus averting a calamity, circumstances inviting disaster in Cape Breton remained.[14]

It arrived in 1845. By 1846, potato blight affected virtually the whole island. This meant that lack of seed for the next crop made 1847 and 1848 probably the most disastrous years in human terms. In 1848, the rot was still bad and heavy rains after early August hurt other crops, especially

9 James Hunter, *The Making of the Crofting Community* (Edinburgh, 1978), pp. 34-39. Douglas Campbell and Raymond MacLean, *Beyond the Atlantic Roar: A Study of the Nova Scotia Scots* (Toronto, 1974), pp. 16-18.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 22.

11 Abraham Gesner, *The Industrial Resources of Nova Scotia* (Halifax, 1849), p. 72.

12 J.S. Martell, *Immigration to and Emigration from Nova Scotia 1815-1838* (Halifax, 1942), p.10.

13 Charles W. Dunn, *Highland Settler* (Toronto, 1953), pp. 28-29.

14 *Novascotian*, 1 August 1832; 30 October 1833; 11 December 1833; 9 April 1834.

hay. 1849 was a drier year and the rot was not as prevalent, but the wheat fly struck. Substitute crops, however, were then being cultivated, somewhat lessening the dependence on potatoes and wheat. The following year was moister, resulting in more rot which also affected tubers stored after harvest. In 1851, the fly once again devastated the wheat crop, and even in 1852, both parasites remained, though increasing crop diversity lessened the threat. Generally, after 1851, improved agricultural methods and a diversity of planting eliminated the danger of famine, though the two pests continued to be a problem.[15]

Throughout the period 1845 to 1851, generally speaking, the most recently settled areas suffered the greatest, since they had fewer resources to fall back on. Due to the nature of the disease, some potato fields might be destroyed, while nearby holdings were spared. The Mira River area was badly affected, particularly in 1847-48. The areas of worst infestation extended from there westward to the newly-settled regions around Loch Lomond and Red Islands, especially in 1848. Isle Madame's worst year was 1847, when the fishery also failed.[16] The interior lands at the Strait of Canso suffered in 1845, 1847 and 1848. The territory extending from Little Narrows to Lake Ainslie was very hard hit, the latter area in particular suffering successive failures from 1845 to 1848. Nearby Broad Cove lost its crop in 1845 and 1847, Mabou lost half its crop in 1846, and the 1847 planting was a total failure. Baddeck was hit early, in 1845, but in 1848 the entire area from the village to St. Ann's, and northward to Middle River and Margaree, was badly affected. The latter two areas were also attacked in 1845 and 1847. The Sydney area suffered most in 1847 and 1848.

The threat of starvation hung over the island throughout this period. When the blight first struck in 1845, farmers in Margaree hoped their cattle could be fed the infected potatoes, only to discover that the animals died. Instead, livestock was exported; in 1845 alone, Margaree shipped 440 head of cattle and 500 sheep to Newfoundland.[17] In such a way, cash could be

15 Data is a summary of following sources: *Novascotian*, 15 September 1845; *Journals*, 1846, Appendix 77, pp. 240-241; *ibid.*, 1847, Appendix 70, p. 277; *ibid.*, Appendix 39, pp. 189, 193, 195, 197; *ibid.*, 1848, Appendix 39, pp. 154-5; *ibid.*, 1849, Appendix 100, pp. 578-584; *ibid.*, 1850, Appendix 45, pp. 163-171; *ibid.*, 1851, Appendix 42, p. 172; *Cape Breton News* (Sydney), 24 November 1852; J.S. Martell, *From Central Board to Secretary of Agriculture, 1826-1885*, (Halifax, 1940), pp. 7-11.

16 RG 5, Series P, Vol. 83, petition 176, 14 December 1847, PANS.

17 *Journals*, 1846, Appendix 77, p. 238.

obtained for the purchase of food and seed. Newly-settled areas could not fall back on this expedient; in 1847 at South Lake Ainslie and Whycocomagh, for example, when the cattle and sheep had eaten all the grain, they had to be slaughtered, so that seed grain could be saved for the next season. These people had given up on the potato, and should their next grain crop fail, they faced starvation. The same applied to Arichat, but as a seaport, oats and barley could be imported there from Prince Edward Island.[18]

Like Arichat, Sydney could easily bring in food, but the great demand for supplies led to serious shortages there. In June 1847, for example, there was not a barrel of flour to be found in the town, and a girl died of starvation at nearby Mira.[19] The danger of starvation was serious for the needy and the Indians, as well as for the newer settlers. A poor man starved to death at Cow Bay (Port Morien) in the spring of 1849, and a short while later, a coroner's inquest found that a Micmac had died "from the effects of cold and want of food."[20]

No records were kept of those who perished from debilitation or diseases which developed in bodies weakened by hunger, but between 1845 and 1851, many reports indicated that people were in a "state of starvation," and that the situation in places was "fearful."[21] Conditions in Broad Cove in 1847 were described as "deplorable."[22] Such statements were commonly made in the House of Assembly. A Committee on Relief to the Poor Settlers reported in the spring of 1848 that "Poverty, wretchedness, and misery, have spread through the island of Cape Breton."[23] The island was also described as the "Ireland of Nova Scotia."[24] People from the back and new settlements filtered into the principal towns in groups of twenty or more,

18 RG 5, Series P, Vol. 83, petition 138, 3 May 1847; petition 144, 29 May 1847, PANS.

19 *Novascotian*, 7 June 1847.

20 *The Times and Cape Breton Spectator* (Sydney), 17 March 1849; *Novascotian*, 9 April 1849.

21 RG 5, Series P, Vol. 83, petition 135, 21 April 1847, PANS; *Cape Breton Spectator*, 6 May 1848.

22 *Journals*, 1847, Appendix 70, p. 195.

23 *Novascotian*, 1 May 1848.

24 *The Times and Cape Breton Spectator*, 17 March 1849.

some walking forty to fifty miles, begging for a bit of flour or meal.[25] A Loch Lomond woman later recalled:

> A group of men and women started for L'Ardoise by foot over blazed roads, following the lake and river down as far as Grand River then taking a blazed trail over L'Ardoise Highlands, for some of us were over thirty miles from our homes. The poor women were barefooted [*sic*] and each woman took her knitting along with her and knitted away as they walked over and around the hills, by windfalls and swamps until they reached the shore, hungry and tired. Each man and woman was supplied with a half a barrel of Indian meal, then they cried for something to eat. Mr. Bremner rolled out a barrel of meal and they rolled it to a brook, opened it and poured the water from the brook into the barrel and made raw cakes and passed it around to each person. All ate heartily then each man and woman took their half-barrel on their backs and sang "Ben Dorian" as they left for their homes over the blazed roads.[26]

Other food-seeking expeditions were less peaceful. At times, panic broke out and force had to be used to prevent supplies being seized.[27] All over the island, starving settlers were begging for food. As the Reverend Norman MacLeod so graphically described it, "the general destitution has made it impossible for the most saving to shut their ears and eyes from the alarming claims and craving of those around them, running continually from door to door, with the ghastly features of death on their very faces."[28]

The province had never faced destitution of such scale and duration. Incredulity greeted the first alarming reports from Cape Breton; the *Novascotian* speculated that stories of the loss of the potato crop in Cape Breton had been circulated to drive up prices. As late as 1847, the newspaper felt that reports of the disease were exaggerated.[29] The Central Board of Agriculture calmly reported that "no real distress, it is believed, will be

25 RG 5, Series P, Vol. 83, petition 135, 21 April 1847, PANS.

26 "Katy Mary," unpublished manuscript, Florence R. MacLeod Papers; MG 12/194, Beaton Institute. Mr. Bremner probably refers to Arthur Brymer (1777-1847), M.L.A. for Richmond County, 1846-47.

27 RG 5, Series P, Vol. 83, petition 144, 20 May 1847, PANS.

28 Norman MacLeod to John Gordon, 1 June 1848, in *Letters of the Reverend Norman MacLeod 1835-1851*, D.C. Harvey ed., *Bulletin* of the Public Archives of Nova Scotia, II (1), 1939, p. 22.

29 *Novascotian*, 1 December 1845; 18 October 1847.

produced by [the potato rot] except, perhaps, among a part of the inhabitants of Cape Breton. . . ."[30]

The situation was made all the more uncertain since no one understood the causes of the disease. Some felt it to be "atmospheric; others that it is insectile. Some able chemists suppose it to arise from an excess of moisture, or from excessive cultivation. The Indians are of the opinion that 'Kesoult,' or the Great Spirit, has got angry with the earth for the wickedness of its inhabitants."[31]

The latter notion was shared by some Cape Bretoners who saw continual crop failures as a "Heavenly Visitation." The belief was particularly strong among Presbyterians, who saw the rot as "a judgement from the hand of the all-wise Disposer."[32] *The Presbyterian Witness* sermonized:

> It is, we believe, now generally admitted that the failure in the potato crop is to be traced to the direct interference of the Almighty, and is to be regarded as a punishment inflicted upon man for his presumption in attempting to introduce disorder into the economy of Nature by giving undue prominence to the Potato, to the supplanting of other productions of the vegetable kingdom. . . . We say nothing as to the ease with which the Potato was cultivated and the indolent habits thereby induced. Therefore in punishment for this abuse of his gifts the Giver of all Good has sent this disease of the Potato.[33]

The Reverend Norman MacLeod saw the blight as a holy retribution for his neighbours' "unthriftiness, and offensive indolence; who can well feed and flutter, dress and dandle, and carelessly chafe away with toddy and tobacco."[34]

This disparaging view of the Scots in Cape Breton was contradicted by numerous descriptions, but none more simply eloquent than the plea for assistance, from a group at Mira who wrote: "Your petitioners in the Country which gave many of them birth [Scotland] were taught to prefer industry

30 *Journals*, 1847, Appendix 39, p. 197.

31 Gesner, *Industrial Resources* (Halifax, 1849), p. 200.

32 RG 5, Series P, Vol. 53, petition 85, 26 February 1847, PANS; MG 1, Vol. 711, No. 27, PANS; copied from *Presbyterian Witness* (Halifax), 14 September 1850.

33 *Presbyterian Witness*, 15 August 1851.

34 RG 5, Series P, Vol. 84, petition 68, 1848, PANS.

with Poverty rather than idleness with luxury at the cost of others." Only extreme want brought them to the "humiliating circumstances" of asking for assistance.[35] Petitioners were commonly willing to repay for help, as the sixty families at East Lake Ainslie, who were willing to go on bond to settle for any seed or provisions, or the settlers in the Loch Lomond-Red Islands region, who promised to perform their own labour, if money were forthcoming for a bridge, so that they could bring oats to a mill across the otherwise impassable Grand River.[36] At Mira too, they asked for aid in erecting an oat mill, rather than requesting handouts.[37]

The immediate dissemination of food was essential in such an emergency. Early in 1846, the House of Assembly passed a resolution allowing the lieutenant-governor to allocate £3667, largely from road money, toward the purchase of food for all of Nova Scotia. It was decided that commissioners would be appointed in each county to take charge of the distribution of supplies. They would take repayment notes from those receiving aid, which notes would be repayable to county treasurers. Reimbursement was to be in cash or road work, the amount to be decided by justices of the sessions.[38] The amount designated proved inadequate for Cape Breton; in 1847, the House Committee appointed for Relief for Poor Settlers declared that they could give aid only where need was "almost universal." £600 extra was thus voted for Cape Breton County, £350 for Inverness, and £300 for Richmond.[39] It was intended that this money would be repaid by road work, but it was still inadequate.

The magistrates of Cape Breton County met in special session during the early winter of 1847, and four hundred family heads came begging for supplies, draining all local resources. When seed potato was distributed the following spring, the need was so great that it was eaten, and that which was planted, largely rotted.[40] Consequently, in 1848, one observer declared

35 *Ibid.*, petition 55, 29 February 1848.

36 RG 5, Series GP, Vol. 7, petition 35, 1 May 1845; Vol. 9, petition 8, 1848, PANS.

37 RG 5, Series P, Vol. 53, No. 74, 27 January 1847, PANS.

38 *Journals*, 1846, p. 388; *Novascotian*, 19 January 1846.

39 *Journals*, 1847, Appendix 73, pp. 280-281.

40 RG 5, Series P, Vol. 83, petition 106, 10 February 1847; petition 138, 3 May 1847, PANS.

that "not one person in every five hundred has seed of any kind to put in the ground."[41] When the hay crop failed and grain and seed were gone, people slaughtered cows and working animals, averting immediate death, but decimating herds. The summers of both 1847 and 1848 were wet and stormy, encouraging the rot and ruining the hay crop. Rust even appeared on the wheat in 1848.[42]

Many people did not even receive seed. Some living in remote areas of Cape Breton were not aware that it was being distributed. Others heard about the government programme, but when they reached the distribution points, they were told that they had been forgotten and that there was neither seed nor supplies left.[43] The Relief Committee finally had to admit that "the expectations of the farmer have been blighted."[44]

Starvation would certainly have been rife had people not foraged berries, hunted wildlife, shared food, or fished. Fishing was particularly helpful, especially in coastal areas, but unfortunately, the places hardest hit were a distance inland.[45] Moreover, the important fishery on the south coast of the island failed during the peak of the famine, in 1847 and early 1848.[46]

The idea of road work for seed proved unsatisfactory. Those most in need lived in remote areas where there were no roads.[47] Where there were roads, it was also soon apparent that the wretched settlers were not performing the required work. By May 1848, no road labour had been performed in Cape Breton or Richmond counties, prompting the Committee for Relief for Poor Settlers to observe that "the liberality of the Legislature has not met with corresponding gratitude on the part of the people -- who have been willing to receive the benefit, but have made little return . . ."[48]

41 N. MacLeod to John Gordon, 22 August 1848, in Harvey, *Letters*, p. 23.

42 *Cape Breton Spectator*, 6 May 1848.

43 RG 5, Series P, Vol. 83, petition 109, 30 December 1846; Vol. 84, petition 24, 5 February 1848, PANS.

44 *Journals*, 1848, Appendix 67.

45 Norman MacLeod to John Gordon, 1 June 1848, in Harvey, *Letters*, p. 21; RG 5, Series P, Vol. 84, petition 24, 5 February 1848, PANS.

46 *Ibid.*, Vol. 83, petition 176, 14 December 1847, PANS.

47 *Journals*, 1848, Appendix 67.

48 *Novascotian*, 1 May 1848.

In Inverness County, road work was performed in the fall, after rains had prevented earlier labour. However, people resented such work and it was poorly done, while the official records were in such a state of confusion that work debits could not be properly computed. Politicians furthermore complained that they were under great pressure to give assistance to whoever asked and were loath to exact repayment.[49]

The Relief Committee soon realized that "the benevolent intentions of the Legislature have been frustrated. . . ." Not only was the road work poorly done, but the burden of paying for relief was also removed from those who could afford it. Though it would have been impossible for the local population to pay, the Committee was appalled that poor rates had been assessed in Cape Breton County only in Sydney Township. To the Committee this meant that people did not intend to repay, indicating a clear "relaxation of moral principle," which could lead only to "idleness and want of self-reliance and self-respect which elevates a people and enables them to overcome the difficulties and misfortunes of life."[50]

The question arose, however, should the poor settlers have to pay at all? The *Novascotian* wondered why the citizens of Richmond, Inverness and nearby counties should be penalized with poor roads to avoid starvation.[51] James McKeagney, M.L.A. for Inverness County (1843-1847), carried the argument further by wondering why Cape Bretoners should pay for assistance for all when the government had given £1,000 in emergency aid to both Barbados and Quebec without asking for repayment.[52] This point was sharpened when the lieutenant-governor, Sir John Harvey, placed £100 at the disposal of the Indian Commissioners for aid to Indians suffering from famine, again with no obligation of repayment.[53] The government never collected payment and reluctantly committed itself to large-scale financial aid to the socially destitute, setting a precedent that would be difficult to break in the future.

Besides government, merchants were called upon to give assistance. Great

49 *Novascotian*, 1 May 1848; *Journals*, 1848, Appendix 67.

50 *Journals*, 1848, Appendix 67.

51 *Novascotian*, 1 May 1848.

52 *Novascotian*, 26 January 1846.

53 *Novascotian*, 30 November 1846.

quantities of food were thus distributed. The managers of Gammel and Christie, merchants in the Bras d'Or area, recalled that during the famine they sold between 2,000 and 3,000 barrels of flour, but by 1853, as crops improved, they disposed of only six hundred barrels.[54] Either cash or credit was always demanded. An observer wrote:

> Any person possessing the common feelings of humanity, and standing for an hour or two on one of the wharves at North Bar [North Sydney], would really feel sick to witness the number of men walking about these wharves -- running after the merchant whenever he appears at the road, as if he (the merchant) must have, and must give them *Food*. They see Indian Meal and Flour discharging from the vessels, and selling at a very reasonable price; but if a single dollar would buy a barrel, many of them could not raise even that sum. There is food to be had, it is true; but the means to purchase it is wanting.[55]

This shortage of cash forced settlers, particularly those in remote areas, to rely on credit with the few merchants who could afford to carry their debt.[56] Such merchants as William Kidston in Baddeck, Peter Smyth at Port Hood, and William McKeen at Mabou imported large quantities of food for the starving settlers. McKeen, who was the chief merchant of Inverness County, had dealings from Cape North to Judique. The Reverend D. MacDonald in *Cape North and Vicinity* described the arrival of McKeen's ship during the famine.

> At last McKeen's vessel with provisions arrived at Mabou, and word got quickly around. People gathered from North, South, East and West with empty bags and no money. A few had horses to carry sacks; the rest would carry loads home on their backs. McKeen hesitated to open the hatches. He told the people he could not afford to give away the cargo without pay. His credit would be gone. One Gaelic man asked what McKeen had said. He was told, and then came the exclamation in Gaelic, 'Oh Lord, how can we go home empty and our families starving?' Mr. McKeen asked what the man had said, and when told, he called to his men, 'Off the hatches, boys; we are not going to let people starve.'[57]

54 *Presbyterian Witness*, 16 July 1853.

55 *Cape Breton Advocate*, 13 May 1848.

56 Campbell, *Atlantic Roar*, p. 73.

57 D. MacDonald, *Cape North and Vicinity* (Port Hastings, 1933), p. 21.

Though the settlers went deeply in debt to these merchants, they all but worshipped them. Peter Smyth was later lauded, since he "never at any time refused an applicant for goods on credit, no matter how poor he was, or how impossible the prospect of payment. The calls on him in the hard cold year of 1848 were many."[58] The most valuable commodity the settlers could exchange was their land. In 1849 alone, McKeen received, for nominal sums, 1,100 acres and continued accumulating settlers' properties until 1855. An example of this sort of transaction is seen in the case of a settler named John McKinnon who wrote an I.O.U. to McKeen for goods valued at £11, on 27 August 1849. Less than two months later, MacKinnon sold his 200 acres of land to McKeen for £15.9s.[59]

Most of these merchants spoke only English and came from outside Cape Breton. Peter Smyth was an Irishman who had immigrated to Nova Scotia in 1817; William McKeen had been born in Truro, and had made his money in lumbering before coming to Cape Breton; William Kidston was from Halifax; William Gammel, the chief merchant in North Sydney, was from Lowland Scotland, as was his partner, John Christie; at Grand Narrows, William Murray was from Halifax. Smyth was elected M.L.A. for Inverness in 1847, the same year that McKeen was appointed Inverness County's first member of the Legislative Council. These accomplishments not only indicated these men's popularity and influence, but also their control over food distribution and road work allocation. The famine re-enforced their economic power over the Gaelic-speaking Scot, and helped to make them his role-models.[60]

Those who lost their land, or who were destitute, were often forced to leave the island. Emigration had already begun around 1840, as the best land was settled and the young were lured away by the opportunities in Boston or the Canadas. One observer complained that "the sons of our farmers, as soon as they are capable of entertaining three ideas, become restless and wish to leave the farm and paternal roof, and rush into some

58 John L. MacDougall, *History of Inverness County* (Port Hastings, 1922), p. 91.

59 William McKeen Papers, MG 12/109, documents 1424-1435, 1377(a), Beaton Institute.

60 This could help to account for the increasing use of English in nineteenth-century Cape Breton. One researcher has found that people failed to teach their children Gaelic in later years because "they felt English was more useful." Amy L. Varen, "Two Linguistic Revival Movements: Gaelic in Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, and in Brittany," unpublished B.A. thesis, Harvard, 1975, p. 8.

city or town, there, as they fondly imagine, to become rich and happy."[61]

The rate of emigration increased dramatically during the famine. Official records were not kept, but Abraham Gesner estimated that 1,000 young people left Nova Scotia in 1847; another 8,000 emigrated in 1848. A large number of these were Cape Bretoners; in 1851 alone, five hundred passengers left Sydney for Quebec City.[62] Large numbers of emigrants vacated the hard-hit Broad Cove-Margaree area for the nearest vacant fertile land, in the Codroy Valley of Newfoundland. Cape Bretoners had begun moving there as early as 1841, but their numbers then were "almost negligible." However, several hundred people left as the famine's grip tightened; the numbers declined during the 1850s, as times improved.[63]

Far more dramatic was the famous emigration of nearly nine hundred people from the St. Ann's area of Cape Breton in the early 1850s, bound for Australia and New Zealand.[64] In 1820, the Reverend Norman MacLeod had led a group of Scots to St. Ann's, where he organized a settlement which he ruled with an iron hand. His community flourished until the potato blight struck and struck again. His son Donald had previously left for Australia and wrote glowing accounts of that colony to his father.[65] As the destitution increased, MacLeod's fellow settlers became restless to leave, perhaps for Upper Canada.[66] MacLeod, as leader of his people, began to feel the pressure to emigrate from this now "desperate and dreary place" to be with his son in Australia, "a kind of comparative Paradise."[67] The final

61 *Cape Breton Advocate*, 9 September 1840.

62 Abraham Gesner, *Industrial Resources*, p. 12; M.L. Hansen, *The Mingling of the Canadian and American Peoples* (New Haven, 1939), p. 122; Mrs. R.G. Flewelling, "Immigration to and Emigration from Nova Scotia 1839-1851," in *Collections* of the Nova Scotia Historical Society, XXVIII (1949), 104.

63 Rev. Michael Brosnan, *Pioneer History of the Parish of St. George's, Newfoundland* (Toronto, 1848), p. 13, cited in Margaret B. Knight, "Some Aspects of the Scottish Gaelic Traditions of the Codroy Valley, Newfoundland," unpublished M.A. thesis, Memorial University, 1975, p. 58; Rosemary Ommer, "Scots Kinship, Migration and Early Settlement in South East Newfoundland," unpublished M.A. thesis, Memorial University, 1973, pp. 16, 28, 65.

64 Flewelling, *Immigration and Emigration*, p. 104. For a full account of Norman MacLeod's career in Cape Breton, see Laurie Stanley, *The Well-Watered Garden* (Sydney, 1983).

65 Norman MacLeod to John Gordon, 1 June 1848, in Harvey, *Letters*, p. 22.

66 RG 5, Series GP, Vol. 6, petition 24, 6 February 1849, PANS.

67 Stanley, *The Well-Watered Garden*, p. 168; Harvey, *Letters*, p. 26.

blow came in 1850 when his potato crop was destroyed, "as black on the whole as any field could be during the worst years of that disease."[68] MacLeod must have seen this as a sign from the Almighty, especially as one traveller claimed, "I examined other potatoe [*sic*] fields... and I could see no sign of the appearance of the disease...."[69] The following year, MacLeod led the largest single migration to leave Cape Breton.

The years of famine also marked the end of large-scale immigration to Cape Breton. As the best land disappeared in the early 1840s, immigration had begun to slow, although in 1841 alone, 1500 of "these paupers from the Highlands" arrived on the island; in the fall of 1843, another "large group" went to Inverness County.[70] There were signs, however, that the flow of immigrants from the Scottish Highlands and islands was beginning to dry up. Emigration from Scottish ports, which had averaged 6,258 in the decade from 1833 to 1843, suddenly fell to 2,939 in 1844, 3,399 in 1845, and to a low of 2,679 in 1846.[71] There are indications that a combination of extensive emigration and reliance upon the potato as a source of food were finally leading to population stability there.[72] The result was that large-scale emigration had ceased by 1844. However, in 1845, potato rot attacked the Scottish crop, and continued to do so until 1851, with disastrous results. Reliance upon the potato had "allowed the population to build up to the point at which the sheer weight of numbers finally broke the dam, releasing the flood-waters of renewed emigration."[73] The number of those departing rose to 5,320 in 1847, 19,474 by 1852, and continued to soar upwards.[74]

Yet Cape Breton failed to attract a substantial percentage of these people. The distress accompanying the potato rot, beginning in 1845 on the island, was a prime reason for this. When the extent of the destruction to the

68 *Novascotian*, 9 September 1850.

69 *Ibid.*

70 Flewelling, *Immigration and Emigration*, pp. 85-86; *Novascotian*, 2 October 1841.

71 Michael Flinn et al., *Scottish Population History* (Cambridge, 1977), p. 446.

72 *Ibid.*, pp. 421-438.

73 *Ibid.*, p. 438.

74 *Ibid.*, pp. 466-467.

1846 seed potatoes became known, Sir John Harvey, the lieutenant-governor, wrote to Earl Grey, the colonial secretary, outlining the failure of the potato and grain crops and pleading that "pauper emigration" from Scotland be discouraged, especially to Cape Breton, "where distress is greater than elsewhere;" Harvey also warned that if there were another bad harvest, the situation would be as "appalling as that which now prevails in Ireland."[75]

This warning had immediate effects. Grey quickly instructed the Colonial Law and Emigration Commissioners to have mass-produced copies of the despatch distributed to all emigrant agents at ports of emigration, and to customs officers where no emigrant agents were stationed. The despatch was also published in newspapers, while the Emigration Commissioners personally instructed their agents "to discourage any emigration of labouring people to Nova Scotia."[76] In 1848, five boatloads of Scots arrived, but significantly avoided Cape Breton, heading instead for Pictou, where conditions caused some to re-embark for Prince Edward Island and the United States.[77] A clear sign of Cape Breton's reputation as a place to be avoided can be seen in the fact that the contemporary Irish immigration stemming from the potato rot there totally avoided the island, though 1,200 Irish arrived in Halifax in 1847 alone.[78] Cape Breton was to remain the home of the Scottish, not the Irish Celt.

Though the blight continued through the early 1850s, its effects were lessened after 1850, largely because Cape Breton's almost total dependence on potatoes and wheat came to an end. As previously noted, the crisis of the famine years stemmed partially from the fact that new settlers had been ignorant of agricultural methods and the potential of crop diversification in Cape Breton. The Central Board of Agriculture had fostered the development of Agricultural Societies since the 1820s, the first beginning in Sydney, with others growing up later in Mabou, Margaree, Baddeck and Middle River. These associations attempted to disseminate new agricultural methods, but before the blight, "not more than one farmer in ten has been induced to enrol himself;" instead, Abraham Gesner complained,

75 Sir John Harvey to Earl Grey, 1 April 1847, in *Journals*, 1848, pp. 42-43.

76 Grey to Harvey, 29 April 1847, *ibid.*, pp. 42, 44.

77 Flewelling, *Immigration and Emigration*, p. 94; Campbell, *Atlantic Roar*, p. 23.

78 Flewelling, *Immigration and Emigration*, p. 87.

"they choose to tread the old beaten track of their fathers, rather than avail themselves of modern discoveries."[79] As a result, these societies had difficulties in becoming established: for example, groups formed in Mabou and Arichat in 1821, and in Judique and Port Hood in 1823, folded or became moribund until the 1840s when Mabou, Margaree, Broad Cove and Middle River began new societies.[80] Once established, these groups worked to enhance local growing conditions and techniques.

In 1846, the Legislative Committee on Agriculture decided to encourage people to grow oats by granting up to £15 per person to help with the erection of oat mills.[81] This fitted in nicely with the desires of some immigrants who 'had grown oats in Scotland, and who were now seeking assistance in building such mills to supplement potato crops.[82] The policy was successful, so in 1847, £30 was given to each county to aid in the erection of oak kilns and mills.[83]

Though the potato crop was a complete failure in 1848, the Central Board of Agriculture reported that imported turnip seed had been distributed and that the crop was flourishing at Canso and Sydney, where barley was "half a crop." Other crops included carrots, mangel-wurtzel, Indian corn, rye, buckwheat, beans and peas, which were slowly taking the place of wheat and potatoes.[84] In 1849, rot was not as bad as previously, so in 1850 farmers once again planted large quantities of potatoes.[85] Yet the crop was again attacked, and disaster was averted only by the unusual abundance of the island's oat harvest. Also on the positive side, the wheat fly's effects were finally mitigated by the late sowing of early wheat.[86] Even though the potato was blighted in some places in 1851 and 1852, harvests then

79 *Journals*, 1847, Appendix 70, pp. 208-209.

80 *Ibid.*

81 *Ibid.*, p. 277.

82 RG 5, Series P, Vol. 53, petition 74, 27 January 1847, PANS.

83 *Journals*, 1848, Appendix 86.

84 *Journals*, 1849, Appendix 100, pp. 578-9, 584.

85 *Ibid.*, 1850, Appendix 45, p. 171.

86 *Novascotian*, 28 October 1850; *Journals*, 1851, Appendix 42, p. 172.

were the best since 1844.[87] After 1852, crop diversification, better methods of planting, the use of machinery and chemical manures, the gradual decline of the blight, and the introduction of rutabaga or Swedish turnip as cattle and sheep feed to supplement uncertain hay crops, put agriculture on a more solid footing.[88]

By 1852, the *Cape Breton News* could finally report that though there was poverty on the island due to past crop failures, "there is. . . no probability of any suffering from want of food this winter even amongst the poorest of our farmers."[89] The Presbytery of Cape Breton appointed 28 October as a day of thanksgiving for the abundant harvest at Sydney, Sydney Forks, Mira, Catalone and Port Morien.[90]

Though the famine had ended, it had deeply affected Cape Breton. It increased the wealth and power of the island's chief merchants, devastated the new settlers, impoverished established farmers, put a fifty-year halt to immigration to the island, hastened emigration--and forced the diversification of agriculture, which ensured that such a famine would never again occur on Cape Breton Island.

87 Martell, *Immigration and Emigration*, pp. 10-11.

88 Gesner, *Industrial Resources*, p. 200.

89 *Cape Breton News*, 24 November 1852.

90 *Ibid.*, 20 October 1852.

# A Scottish Baronet's Petition of 1790 for His Ancestral Lands in Cape Breton

F.K. Donnelly

By a charter of 1625, King Charles I granted lands in New Scotland and the title of "baronet" in an effort to foster the colonization of North America. The scheme was a failure, the land grants ceased in 1638, but the hereditary titles continued to have a legitimate existence. Occasionally, as in the 1830s, persons with the title of baronet laid claim to lands in Nova Scotia under the terms of their charters.

The petition reprinted below dates from 1790 and the original is in the Public Record Office, Kew, London, England. It was found in a miscellaneous bundle of Scottish correspondence in the Home Office papers (HO 102/60). The claimant, Sir Benjamin Sinclair, was the fourth baronet Sinclair of Dunbeath and he died in 1796. His petition shows a man of title, fallen on bad times, who is desperate to gain some economic advantage from his old charter. The original spelling and punctuation have been retained.[1]

Anno Domino 1790
TO THE KINGS MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY

The Humble Petition of Sir Benjamin Sinclair. That by Charter from KING CHALES the FIRST dated at Dalkeath, In Scotland the fourth of June 1638. His MAJESTY, did grant & Dispose to John Sinclair of Dunbeath & his Heirs Male, and assignies whatsomever, That whole and Entyre, Portion of Land, In the Region & Lordship of Nova Scotia in America, Bounded on the West; By the lands & Barroney of Greenhead; and lying on the Northside of the River called the great Shevan in Cape Britton; extending towards the West; from the said Barrony, Three miles up the River, and keeping the River all along, as it Limits towards the South; & extending thence, for the space of Six Miles towards the North; Being every where; Three Miles broad; And six long; And having the said Barrony as its bounding towards the East. With the Castle, Houses, Buildings, and Salmond Fishings, & all other fishings, whether in the Salt or Fresh water.

His MAJESTY By said Charter did unite, Erect and Incorporate, the Premesise, With all Its priveledges into one Entire and free Barrony, & Regality; Than & forever, To be called the Barrony of Dunbeath. And

1 This introduction, and the following petition, have been provided through the kind courtesy of Dr. F.K. Donnelly, Associate Professor of History, University of New Brunswick at Saint John.

to be Held of his MAJESTY & Successors, as a free Barrony without Revocation; Contradiction, Impediment, or Obstacle whatsomever, Paying Yearly to His MAJESTY & Successors One Penny Scots money at Christmas, on the said Lands; If demanded; And moreover, In consideration of the Laudable, and Virtuouse, Resolutions, of the said Sir John Sinclair in Concuring to Promote the Colonization of said Region of Nova Scotia and in reward of his services His MAJESTY Created & Ordained the said John Sinclair a Knight Barronet; and wild that said John, His Heirs & Assignies should enjoy in all time to come, all libertys, Priveledgties Honours, Dignitys, Preeminces Due to any Knight Barronet & Children. When the Civil Wares in England begun, The French possest Nova Scotia, But by the last Peace, It was restored back to your MAJESTY.

Your Petitioner has a young Familie, And no Paternal Estate to support them, Except the Lands of Nova Scotia; As I was before I left Scotland upon a Transaction of selling them; I begg your MAJESTY will give orders to let me have the Possession, when convenient; And you shall have the Blessings of all my Familie; wrote & sign'd

Benjamin Sinclair.

P.S.

Your MAJESTY May see the Original Charter, in my Custody. I cannot help mentioning that I am Connected to thee Royall Family of Scotland. And in my Younger days a Captain in Lord Sutherlands Regiment of Militia, We were promised, to be Rewarded/But forgot/I should be still happy, as long as I live, If your MAJESTY would give me the Command of a Company in any of your Garrisons in Brittain, B.S.

My two Daughers, I had them Instructed in the Thread making; And how soon, I can get a little Cash; They shall wait of her MAJESTY with a small Sample of the Best of their White Thread.

# The Effect of the Catholic Missionaries on the Micmac Indians of Nova Scotia, 1610-1986

Katherine J. Brooks

The Micmacs of Nova Scotia have long been a people of profound spirituality. So deeply-rooted were their beliefs, in fact, that attempts by early missionaries to convert them to Christianity met with little success. Gradually, however, contact with missionaries, in particular those of the Roman Catholic religion, brought about certain changes in Micmac spirituality which have significantly altered their culture. In order to recognize the gradual change in their spirituality from the early seventeenth century to the present day, it is necessary to examine the culture of the Nova Scotian Micmacs as it existed before the Catholic missionaries began to exert their influence in the province.

Micmac spirituality can best be described as respect for and harmony with nature.[1] As opposed to Christianity, in which spirituality manifests itself as a result of various rituals performed at more or less specific times, Micmac spirituality is conveyed in all actions, in all functions of everyday life. Some historians describe Christianity in terms of a straight line: all actions performed in this life are aimed at the ultimate, terminal goal of attaining the Kingdom of Heaven. The Micmac religion is described as circular: the meaning of existence is to maintain the equilibrium inherent in nature.[2]

The Micmacs believed that nature had been created by a Great Spirit, Gitchi-Manitou. Although Gitchi-Manitou was thought to be the supreme being, there were also many other spirits in the universe. In fact, all things animate or inanimate were thought to have their own manitous, or spirits, which were capable of bestowing favours, playing pranks, or even changing shape. Instead of perceiving man as superior to nature, the Micmacs considered themselves to be only a link in the ecosystem, and thus took great care not to upset the environmental balance.

Belief in the Source Animal also developed from Micmac perceptions of nature. It was believed that Source Animals offered themselves to the Indians for service and nourishment, and thus were treated with great respect. When an animal or plant was taken for food, thanks was given to that animal or plant for its services. Animal bones were handled carefully

The author would like to thank Mary Copage, a teacher-aide at Shubenacadie Elementary School, and the Native Council of Nova Scotia, for their assistance in finding sources.

1 Brian J. Hannington, *Every Popish Person* (Halifax, 1984), p. 17.

2 John W. Grant, *Moon of Wintertime* (Toronto, 1984), p. 24.

and protected from wild animals, for it was thought that bones, once dishonoured, would speak of their mistreatment to other animals of that species. The offending band would then be in danger of starvation.[3]

Other spirits and deities were also part of the Micmac religion. Most important of these was Glooscap, the mighty giant-spirit who lived on Blomidon and was the god of the Micmac people. According to legend, Glooscap had an evil twin against whom the great giant was constantly fighting. This god, while paternalistic, was not the punishing, angry god often portrayed in Christian teachings. Glooscap was most often described as noble and generous, but he also possessed a playful nature and was by no means infallible. Micmac legend says that although Glooscap has returned to his native land "across the great waters," he will someday return to the land of the Micmacs to bring happiness to his people.

Besides Glooscap, there were various other spirits, mostly of a mischievous nature, who could be called upon for aid by those who were powerful enough. Young boys nearing maturity were encouraged to spend a week fasting alone in the woods in order that, through the visions caused by starvation, they might contact their own spirit-helpers and learn the secrets of manhood.

While ordinary band members were sometimes able to make contact with the spirit world, the person in charge of communicating with the spirits was the shaman, also known as the *buoin*. The most powerful shamans were thought to be men; however, old women often held the position and were respected for their skill as midwives and for their knowledge of healing herbs, love charms, spells and potions. Shamans were in charge of the spiritual, mental and physical health of the community. Injuries or illnesses were often thought to be manifestations of evil spirits, or the result of a curse placed on the afflicted person. The shaman used incantations and a ritual of licking or blowing on the affected part of the body to oust the evil spirit from the sick person. Occasionally, a band member would become depressed. Through a series of incantations and gestures, the shaman pulled the "evil" out of the afflicted person's body and transferred it into a nearby object. This action had the effect of releasing the depressed patient's anxiety and "curing" him of his depression. Because of the tremendous amounts of energy expended by the *buoin*, the Micmacs believed it was necessary

3 Harold McGee and Ruth Whitehead, *The Micmacs: How Their Ancestors Lived Five Hundred Years Ago* (Halifax, 1983), p. 8.

for him to renew his power in a yearly ceremony, in which the shaman entered a wigwam and meditated in seclusion. According to Micmac beliefs, the wigwam often shook with the great power absorbed by its inhabitant.[4]

Not only was Micmac spirituality evident in medicine, but it was also apparent in the three major events of human life: birth, marriage and death. All of these events occurred in an atmosphere designed to preserve the harmony of nature; rituals and taboos were strictly adhered to. When a child was born, the infant was immediately immersed in cold water, apparently to test the strength of its spirit, an important characteristic in a world where survival of the fittest was the rule. The birth of a boy was hailed as a great blessing; the birth of a girl, while welcomed, was not as great an occasion. The mother herself had to follow a set of taboos which included abstaining from sexual relations and eating alone out of separate dishes for about two months after the birth. Children were nursed for up to three years, and any pregnancy which occurred during that time was terminated.[5]

When children reached puberty, sexual experimentation was permitted. However, once a young man declared his intention to wed a woman, all sexual contact between the two was prohibited. In order to determine whether the match was likely to be a good one, the suitor lived with his betrothed's family for a trial period of about two years, during which time the couple remained celibate. A man's first marriage was always celebrated with a great feast of thanksgiving, while a man's second marriage was less elaborate and did not require a trial period. Polygamy was acceptable, as was marriage between close relations. In case a marriage did not work out, the Micmacs also permitted divorce in certain circumstances. If a child had not been produced within the first three years of marriage, the man could divorce his wife. Divorce on the grounds of mutual incompatibility was permitted at any time, and either partner could take this action. The divorce was then recognized by the shaman.[6]

Occasionally, a band member would contract an illness which the shaman could not cure. Once the shaman pronounced a person mortally ill, that person stopped eating, put on his best clothes, and began to prepare himself

4 Franklin Arbuckle and Selwyn Dewdney, *They Shared To Survive* (Toronto, 1975), pp. 54-55. McGee and Whitehead, p. 54. Grant, p. 19.

5 L.F.S. Upton, *Micmacs and Colonists* (Vancouver, 1979) p. 6.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

for death. As the afflicted person sang a death chant, friends and relatives gathered nearby to support and comfort him with descriptions of the afterlife. If the afflicted person did not die quickly, it was assumed that an evil spirit had inhabited the body in order to prevent its spirit from going to the spirit world. In that case, cold water was poured on the person to chase out the intruding spirit and hasten the dying person's demise. When death finally came, the body was wrapped in skins and birch-bark and placed in a grave, along with many of its former possessions, for it was thought that the souls of these possessions accompanied the soul of their owner to serve him in the afterlife.[7]

Thus, when the first Catholic missionaries arrived at Port Royal in 1610, they found a people whose entire existence exuded spirituality. Certain aspects of this spirituality encouraged the missionaries. In fact, similarities to Christianity were inherent in Micmac beliefs. The Micmac emphasis on sharing, peace, love and respect was similar to the fundamental tenets of Christianity, and their basically non-materialistic nature was parallelled by the Catholic religious orders.[8] Certain Micmac beliefs, although separate from those of Christianity, were of a similar nature, a fact often utilized by the missionaries in their attempts at conversion. For example, the Micmac belief in Gitchi-Manitou, Glooscap and other spirits could eventually be transformed into a belief in God, Jesus and the community of saints. The Micmac idea that men had souls, and their use of the father/child and feast/fast concepts in their worship translated easily into Christian versions of these beliefs. Finally, the spiritual role of the shaman, along with his various talismans and ceremonies, closely resembled the role of the priest and the objects he used in his worship.

However, the Micmacs also held certain beliefs and practices which were contrary to Catholic or Christian teachings and which, the missionaries believed, demanded immediate attention. Belief in spirits, shamans and the Source Animal was often thought by early missionaries to be a notion implanted by the Devil, and the idea that man had three souls was also thought to be an obstacle to Christian teaching. However, these beliefs, because they were so similar to Christian tenets, were less of a problem

7 Arbuckle and Dewdney, p. 55. Upton, pp. 14-15.

8 Grant, pp. 63-64.

than some of the Micmac cultural practices involving birth, marriage and death.[9]

Contrary to Christian (and European) belief, wherein the birth of a child out of wedlock was considered to be a great sin, Micmac children born "illegitimately" were considered a sign of a woman's fertility. Abortion of unwanted children, a fairly common practice among the Micmacs, was also a sin according to Catholic doctrines.

The Catholic missionaries also voiced disapproval of the Micmac customs of pre-marital sexual experimentation (a practice viewed by the Micmacs as a healthy sign of development), marriage between closely-related family members, and polygamy. Perhaps the greatest "sin" committed by the Micmacs, according to the missionaries, was the practice of divorce; divorce was viewed by the priests as a violation of a sacred union and a great sin against God.[10]

Finally, the custom of pouring cold water on a dying person to hasten his demise, performed by the Micmacs as an ultimate act of kindness to a dying soul trapped by an evil spirit, was considered by the missionaries to approach euthanasia, if not murder.

The Micmac Indians of Nova Scotia were first exposed to Christianity in 1606 when Marc Lescarbot, a lawyer/historian at Port Royal, attempted to introduce them to the Catholic catechism.[11] However, it is doubtful that the Micmacs had grasped the complete meaning of Christianity by the time Père Jessé Fléché arrived at the settlement in 1610 and performed the famous baptism of Chief Membertou and others of his band. In fact, most of the attempts by seventeenth-century Catholic missionaries to convert the Micmacs to Christianity were met with polite attentiveness, but little success. The Jesuit fathers Pierre Biard and Enemond Massé, who came to Nova Scotia in 1611, made some headway in learning the Micmac language and fostering trust between themselves and the Indians amongst whom they worked.[12] However, their small settlement on Mount Desert Island was destroyed by the Virginian pirate, Samuel Argall, and the two men taken

9 *Ibid.*, p. 54.

10 Upton, p. 24.

11 Hannington, p. 19.

12 *Ibid.*

captive. Although they finally arrived safely in France, neither Biard nor Massé returned to continue their work among the Micmacs.

Cardinal Richelieu later sent Capuchins, Jesuits and Récollect friars to Nova Scotia in an attempt to advance the spread of Christianity, but the anti-Catholic Test Act passed by the British in 1673 partially hindered their efforts. The Capuchins made progress with a school for French and Indian children, but this project was limited to Port Royal. The only major success of the Catholic missionaries in seventeenth-century Nova Scotia came about through the efforts of Chrestian Leclercq, a Récollect who, around 1675, developed a written language of hieroglyphics which could be understood by the Micmacs. Leclercq's hieroglyphics, in a revised form, opened up an entire realm of Christian literature to the Micmacs and gave later missionaries a new medium through which to communicate the message of the Church.[13]

The Abbé Pierre Maillard, who came to Louisbourg from France in 1735, was one of the most influential Catholic missionaries to work with the Micmacs in the eighteenth century. This active priest is credited with having revised Leclercq's hieroglyphic system and converting the majority of Nova Scotian Micmacs to Catholicism. In terms of numbers of Micmacs baptized into the Catholic faith, the eighteenth century was the most successful missionary period, a success due partially to Maillard's efforts and partially to the political climate of the time.[14]

Politically, the eighteenth century was a time of great turmoil. In 1713, the Treaty of Utrecht granted Acadie, which included most of Nova Scotia, to the British. With the province now under British control, it became increasingly difficult for the Catholic missionaries to work amongst the Micmacs. However, the political disruption, rather than creating a rift between the missionaries and the Micmacs, served to forge an even closer bond between the two groups, not because of any great religious loyalty on the part of the Micmacs, but because of the long tradition of trust and friendship between the Indians and the Catholic priests. Certain members of the militaristic Jesuit order, especially Jean-Louis Le Loutre, took advantage of this loyalty and used the Micmacs to conduct raids on English settlements. Increased Indian reliance on European goods and a decrease in the Micmac

13 Upton, pp. 22-24. Hannington, p. 29.

14 Grant, p. 68.

population due to European diseases also served to draw the Micmacs to the Catholic faith. Young Indians especially questioned their own beliefs in the face of these disasters, and many found Christianity an appealing alternative.

By the end of the eighteenth century, virtually all Nova Scotian Micmacs had been baptized in the Catholic faith. Although their traditional beliefs were still dominant, certain elements of Christianity had been incorporated into the Micmac concepts of spirituality. For example, Micmacs began to believe in an afterlife which was bliss for the good and agony for the evil, and started to equate evil spirits with "sin." Jesus, the sun and Glooscap became almost interchangeable for a time, and guardian spirits and tricksters took on the characteristics of saints or devils.

Perhaps one of the most interesting blends of Micmac spirituality and Catholicism involved the religious objects and rituals of the Catholic priests. Shamans and other band members began to replace their traditional objects of power with Christian religious medals, small statues of saints, and similar symbols of the Catholic faith. In fact, it is generally agreed that the missionaries realized this opportunity and took advantage of the chance to expose the Micmacs to these Christian symbols. The Catholic traditions of using holy water and holding confession were also incorporated into Micmac ceremonies. Shamans began to use a bowl of water to foretell the future; if the surface of the water was obscured, the shaman demanded that all present reveal to him their deepest secrets, so that his vision might not be shrouded by the evil present within them.[15]

Obviously, the eighteenth century had a visible impact on the beliefs of the Micmac Indians of Nova Scotia. However, the work begun in this century was not thoroughly continued in the nineteenth century. By the early 1800s the British, who were now firmly established in Nova Scotia, were encouraging missionaries from the Church of England to work among the Micmacs. Catholic missionaries were discouraged from spreading their beliefs. An increasing need for missionaries in Quebec meant that the supply of priests in Nova Scotia was limited, and few of those who did attempt to minister to the Micmacs during this time could speak the language. Another obstacle to obtaining priests, from the Micmac point of view, was the fact that the non-agrarian Indians did not have the means to pay the

15 Bernard G. Hoffman, *The Historical Ethnography of the Micmac of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (California, 1946), p. 454.

tithe demanded by the Church. Therefore, the Micmacs were forced to maintain their new-found faith largely on their own.[16]

Christianity and Catholicism must have been, for the most part, accepted and understood by the Nova Scotian Micmacs in the mid-nineteenth century, for they did much to preserve their Catholic belief during the long periods spent without a priest. Their main concern seems to have been that, without a priest to perform the sacraments, they would die unabsolved from sin and subject to agony in the afterlife. However, some Micmacs solved the problem by appointing leaders to perform provisional marriages and baptisms until such time that a priest could be found to meet their needs. The Micmacs also relied heavily on copies of Maillard's hieroglyphic catechisms. These works became almost symbolic of Micmac loyalty to Catholicism; a very staunch devotion, considering that the lack of priests must have seemed like abandonment to the new converts. Historians have suggested that one reason for the incredible loyalty of the Indians to Catholicism is that the Roman Catholic religion provided the Micmacs with an identity distinguishable from that of the English.[17] In a time when English settlers were taking over former Micmac hunting grounds and European influences were stifling Micmac culture, Catholicism became, perhaps, a means by which the Indians could avoid assimilation.

The relationship between the Micmac Indians of Nova Scotia and the Roman Catholic Church after Confederation is difficult to assess. Immediately after Confederation, the federal government placed great emphasis on developing the West, and the Catholic Church sent many priests there to minister to the needs of the new settlers. Undoubtedly, the Micmacs now enjoyed even less attention from the Church than they previously had.

However, it seems apparent that in the twentieth century, most Micmacs have retained an attachment to the Catholic religion, although the American Indian Movement of the 1960s did much to dispel the notion of the Roman Catholic Church as the supreme benefactor. Since 1958, when the Catholic Oblate Commission admitted to paternalism and initiated a drive to encourage an increase in native clergy, the Micmacs and other Canadian Indians have been better able to participate in Catholicism, not as followers, but as partners and leaders. Today, the trend among the Micmac people

16 Upton, pp. 153-158.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 160.

seems to encourage a return to original values of Micmac spirituality, and a blending of that spirituality with Christian beliefs.[18] Locally, Noel Knockwood has led this return to traditional values.

The Catholic Church itself has recognized that many of its early missionary efforts, while well-intentioned, did not take into account their effect on Micmac culture. Many missionaries used their position not only to introduce religious beliefs, but also to impose political beliefs and cultural practices. Realizing that its missionaries may have played a significant part in the loss of Micmac culture, the Roman Catholic Church has been active in supporting native land claims and setting up programs through which Micmacs can retain and relearn their heritage.

It is clear that the contact between the Micmac Indians of Nova Scotia and the Roman Catholic missionaries has changed the nature of Micmac spirituality and significantly altered their culture.

18 *Ibid.*, pp. 176-177.

# Book Reviews

*Newlight Baptist Journals of James Manning and James Innis*, edited by David G. Bell. ISBN 0-88899-251-7. Lancelot Press, Hantsport, 1985, for Baptist Heritage in Atlantic Canada series. XVIII + 375 pages, $14.95 (paper), $30.00 (hardcover). Available from the publisher, P.O. Box 425, Hantsport, Nova Scotia, B0P 1P0.

The *Newlight Baptist Journals* is the sixth in a series meant to acquaint Maritimers and scholars with the early written records of Baptist history and contemporary sects. D.G. Bell points out that his aim "...is to help rescue evangelical Protestantism from condescension and disdain that has denied it a place in the writing of general Maritime history." His three essays and carefully footnoted journals adhere to this principle.

The two journals date from 1801 and 1805-1811. Though both are mainly about New Brunswick preaching tours, Innis's account includes an 1805 description of a visit to the Annapolis Valley. James Manning of Falmouth, Nova Scotia, represents a movement within Newlight Congregationalism that led to a strict, close communion Baptist polity. Innis, on the other hand, was indifferent to rigid denominationalism, though he did preach believer's baptism. Bell contrasts these two men to show the struggle among Baptists either to reject or to retain partially the Newlight legacy of Nova Scotia's great eighteenth-century evangelical, Henry Alline (1748-1784).

Four Protestant groups are discussed in Bell's essays, which show a range of beliefs that included extreme antinomianism, liberal Allinitism (or "orthodox" Newlightism), emergent Baptists and more formal Wesleyan Methodism. This raises the book above introspective denominational history to a commendable inclusive study.

An overwhelming amount of detail has unfortunately prevented the journals (thirty pages each) from standing out to the extent implied by the title. Nor are distinctive features and special jurisdictional/hierarchical problems of Methodism adequately explored. Also, one should be aware of the manner in which the evangelical sects are portrayed as excessively fragmented.

One would be justified in calling the *Newlight Baptist Journals* an account of Protestant sectarianism in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, with two journals included for illustration. However, these journals are the earliest of their type pertaining to Baptists in Canada (with the exception of Joseph Dimock's diary; see review in *NSHR*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1982). They present a wealth of material, much of it for the first time, and they are enhanced by Bell's often insightful observations. Together, these factors combine to

make this book a valuable addition to the rapidly growing historiography of religious heritage in the Maritimes. Allen B. Robertson

*Intimate Fragments: An Irreverent Chronicle of Early Halifax*, by Robert E. Kroll. ISBN 0-920852-42-4. Nimbus Publishing Ltd., Halifax, 1985. 135 pages, softcover, illustrated, $12.95.

Upon reading Robert Kroll's *Intimate Fragments*, the average reader may be forgiven if he or she believes that the book is a factual chronicle of early Halifax. It is not clearly labelled as fiction, and in his introduction, Kroll describes in vivid detail the "discovery" of the papers upon which the book is purportedly based. These papers -- letters supposedly written from 1776 to 1835 by a Halifax judge named Fetch to his friend Trebor Ellork, a Boston merchant -- are claimed to have been found by Kroll after a long search, buried within the "Jamieson Collection" at Yale University.

The letters, written in modern language, are presented chronologically. They describe in colourful detail various criminal cases heard by Fetch, as well as social and some political events witnessed by him in Halifax in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Faced with countless murderers, rapists, thieves and other ruffians, Fetch tends to have a dark view of humanity. He believes that a month on the bench would convince the most ardent Christian of the depravity of human nature. The town of Halifax is depicted as a "virtual rum keg," with soldiers and sailors running riot in the streets, and drunkenness and debauchery everywhere. Even some of Fetch's more prominent peers such as Francis Green, R.J. Uniacke, Mather Byles and William Almon are portrayed as men of too much ambition, too little skill and/or principles. Fetch even considers himself typical of men in his position at the time who paid lip service to virtue, then "plot, scheme, and connive for political plums shamelessly."

In essence, the book is a highly entertaining and readable account of life in early Halifax. The criminal cases are based on actual court proceedings and trials, using real names and crimes. Only a few details are embellished, for dramatic effect. Nonetheless, the discerning eye will detect certain discrepancies that betray the book as fiction. For one, the use of an eighteenth-century vernacular in Fetch's letters would have been more appropriate and more realistic. As well, certain of the judge's philosophies do not seem typical of those of a man in his position at the time, particularly his liberal views on crime, capital punishment and the poor (e.g. "when will they learn that they cannot sweep the town clear of miscreants until

they change the circumstances which make men poor"). Moreover, the illustrations that Kroll has included in the book -- ink drawings, etchings, sketches and newspaper excerpts -- can be detected, upon a close examination, as clever fabrications.

Also, some readers might object to the emphasis on sex and violence in the book. Perhaps for that reason it will attract a greater general readership than a scholarly social history that is technical and scientific, with footnotes and indices. It must be pointed out, however, that *Intimate Fragments* approaches history in a very imaginative way, and its author, who is a playwright and television producer, maintains a sense of humour throughout. The alert reader will note that Trebor Ellork, Fetch's Boston friend, is Kroll's name spelled backwards, and that Kroll, with tongue in cheek, states that his book was initiated and completed entirely *without* the aid and assistance of the Canada Council. Wendy L. Thorpe

*The Craft Transformed: an essay on the Carpenters of Halifax, 1885-1985*, by Ian McKay. ISBN 0-9692117-0-8. Holdfast Press, Halifax, 1985. 148 pages, softcover, $9.95. Distributed by Formac Publishing Co. Ltd., 5359 Inglis Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3J 2A1.

This book was written to mark the centenary of the Halifax local (Local 83) of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America. Local 83 was fortunate in acquiring the services of one of the Atlantic region's most respected labour and social historians. In Ian McKay, the carpenters have found an objective but sympathetic chronicler who, moreover, has produced a work which is not only soundly researched and well-written but also very accessible to a non-academic public.

The book does not concentrate on changes in the technology of carpentry work, but on the changing relationships between the people who work and the people they work for. "I hope," says the author in his preface, "that my essay will prompt reflection on the broad theme of the place of work in our society" (p. vii). Readers who are seeking an understanding of the roots of trade unionism in this region, as well as those who want to know what the "new social history" is about would do well to spend some time with this book.

A commendable feature of *The Craft Transformed* is its judicious use of footnotes. These useful but intimidating bits of scholarly construction can overwhelm the casual reader; they are often used to excess by professional scholars or timidly neglected by amateurs. The citation of appropriate source

material and the insertion of useful "asides" is handled well here; budding historians should take note.

Local 83 of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America is to be congratulated for its role in the production of this excellent, accessible and thought-provoking study. Mary Ellen Wright

*Leading the Way: An Unauthorized Guide to the Sobey Empire*, by Eleanor O'Donnell MacLean. ISBN 0-9692082-0-0. GATT-Fly Atlantic, Halifax, 1985. 85 pages, softcover, illustrated, $4.95. Available from the publisher, P.O. Box 3460, Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3J 3G5.

This is a thought-provoking, entertaining, broadly-conceived essay in the tradition of investigative journalism -- a tradition that has been only too weak in Nova Scotia. Unable, like most other independent journalists, to break the cone of silence that hangs around the Sobeys and their empire, MacLean has relied on corporate reports, newspapers, interviews, and a fascinating range of secondary sources to demonstrate that Sobeys, for all the chain's image as the "home store," is now a multinational enterprise with tentacles reaching into many aspects of our daily lives. Perhaps the finest section -- caustically titled "Friendly, That's Us" -- deals with the fierce anti-unionism that has characterized the corporation and the deeply alienating conditions of labour within the stores.

While at times her discussion of such topics as the miserable conditions of agricultural workers in the Third World or the pervasiveness of media bias carries MacLean rather far afield, the cumulative impact of these details is to raise profound and troubling questions about the contemporary political economy of Nova Scotia. MacLean's study, based on publicly-available sources and carried out in a spirit of integrity and independence, contributes far more than have the standard-issue potted business biographies to our understanding of modern Nova Scotian history. Ian McKay

*The Proceedings of the Joseph Howe Symposium, Mount Allison University*, edited by Wayne A. Hunt. ISBN 0-920852-36-X. Nimbus Publishing Ltd., Halifax, 1984, for the Centre for Canadian Studies, Mount Allison University. 136 pages, softcover, $6.95. Available from the Centre for Canadian Studies, 110 York St., Sackville, New Brunswick, E0A 3C0.

This collection of essays comes out of the proceedings of one of a series of symposia on Maritime writers sponsored by Mount Allison University's Centre for Canadian Studies. The introductory essay (Hunt) provides the

theme for this collection: "The Life and Times of Joseph Howe." With the exception of an article by J. Murray Beck, the collection is not strictly biographical in nature. Rather, the majority of the essays use Howe as a lens through which to focus examinations of various aspects of his society: education and religious sectarianism (Hamilton, Moody); popular culture and the press (Parks, Parker); and the kind of provincial boosterism exemplified in literature by Sam Slick and, it is argued, in real life by Joseph Howe (Sutherland).

Perhaps the most stimulating essay in the collection is George Rawlyk's examination of "J.M. Beck's, *Joseph Howe*", which is at once a review of Beck's two-volume biography of Howe (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1982-83) and a discussion of the nature of historical biography as a field of scholarship. Rawlyk's affectionate and respectful portrait of Dr. Beck will strike a responsive chord in anyone who has had occasion to deal with this great Canadian scholar as a colleague, teacher or friend. Beck's extensive work on the political past of Nova Scotia, and particularly his work on Joseph Howe, has reshaped our understanding of a Nova Scotian hero and the times in which he lived. Mary Ellen Wright

*St. Margaret's Bay: A History*, co-ordinated by Alfreda Withrow. ISBN 0-920427-03-0. Four East Publications Ltd., Tantallon, N.S. 111 pages, illustrated, maps, softcover, $9.95.

The St. Margaret's Bay area is one of the few large, long-settled and well-populated regions of Nova Scotia not to have yet been examined in any historical detail. This deficiency has now been partly remedied by the St. Margaret's Bay Business and Tourism Association, which sponsored the publication of *St. Margaret's Bay: A History* as part of the area's bicentenary celebrations in 1985.

Co-ordinated by Alfreda Withrow, the project involved research and writing by several local individuals, and was aimed at both a general-interest audience and the tourist trade. Beginning at Peggy's Cove and ending at Blandford, the book presents a counter-clockwise tour of the Bay, encompassing 21 communities and one island, Croucher's. Within each chapter, topics such as early settlement, local industries, and the development of churches and schools are presented in an easy and interesting style.

The book's main strength lies in its reminiscences and anecdotes, presumably supplied through interviews with older residents. The sections describing old-time logging operations, turn-of-the-century tourism, and

local figures and families are particularly interesting. These recollections bring the past into focus, and remind us that these modern commuter communities are deeply rooted in the traditional values of hard work, religion and basic education.

*St. Margaret's Bay: A History* was intended as a general introduction, rather than a detailed history, and for what it aims to do, this book is a success. Four East is to be congratulated for a polished and well-presented design package: the spectacular summer sunset on the wrap-around cover should sell quite a few copies on appearance alone. Other readers will be charmed by the superb black-and-white period photographs; the selections are numerous, having been culled from privately-held collections, and reflect the love and care which have gone into this book. Except for the annoying use of "it's" for "its," the book is relatively free of typos and editorial gremlins. The emphasis placed on modern business involvement and tourist facilities is somewhat jarring, but understandable, given that the book was sponsored by a trade association. The two maps are interesting, but insufficient; the inclusion of several more would have been most useful.

For the serious reader, however, there is not enough in-depth examination of the available historical material: events are too often glossed over, or not mentioned. The failure of the Bay fishery in the 1860s, for example, and the widespread poverty and misery which resulted, are not discussed at all. Nor is it mentioned that in addition to travelling to Lunenburg for religious observances (p. 38), the French Village folk were served from the 1790s to the 1830s by a circuit rider from St. Paul's Anglican in Halifax. (As a result, all the "Butlers" listed in the St. Paul's registers during the 1790s as residents of St. Margaret's Bay were, in reality, Boutiliers.) Also, the dating of events and individuals throughout the book is sometimes vague and confusing. Those interested in further pursuing the history of the area will also regret the lack of any kind of annotation: no footnotes, no bibliography, no interview credits -- and no index.

All in all, however, *St. Margaret's Bay: A History* is a successful local effort. It is as good a spot as any to begin examining the rich and complex history surrounding one of the last unexplored regions of Nova Scotia. Now that the waters of the Bay have been tested, perhaps others will be challenged to jump in.

Lois Kernaghan

*Autobiography of Oliver Goldsmith, A Chapter in Canada's Literary History*, edited by Rev. Wilfred E. Myatt, C.J.M. ISBN 0-88999-277-0. Lancelot Press, Hantsport, 1985. 174 pages, softcover, $6.95.

In 1939 Dr. Lorne Pierce, chief editor of Ryerson Press, received a request from a graduate student, Wilfred Myatt, C.J.M., for suggestions for subject matter for his thesis. Dr. Pierce recommended a study of one of English Canada's first poets, Oliver Goldsmith, whose poem, *The Rising Village*, published in 1825, was modelled on his better-known great-uncle's work, *The Deserted Village*. The senior Goldsmith had written of an Irish village, deserted in favour of newly-industrialized cities, while his nephew chose to chronicle the growth of a Loyalist village, created in the new land after the American Revolution.

Father Myatt, then studying at the Graduate School of Arts and Science at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., had received permission to use a Canadian topic for his thesis. Fortunately his next teaching assignment was at St. Anne's College, Church Point, Nova Scotia, because nearby in the surrounding countryside lived several members of the Goldsmith family. Father Myatt, after researching James Prior's *Life of Oliver Goldsmith* at the library of Fort Anne Museum, met and interviewed two Goldsmith descendants. Neither Dr. Pierce nor Father Myatt could have foreseen the extraordinary discovery that resulted from these meetings.

Mr. Elizabeth Tufts (née Goldsmith) lent Father Myatt a green morocco notebook--the *"Autobiography of Oliver Goldsmith."* It was a fortunate happening indeed, and Father Myatt, in using it as the basis for his thesis, added greatly to Canada's literary heritage. Verifying names, dates, places and quotations with accurate research that took him to libraries in Halifax, Washington and Cambridge, Massachusetts, Father Myatt's notes explained and expanded the modest little autobiography. In addition to the handwritten manuscript, Mrs. Tuft's family papers included a genealogical chart, covering the period 1718 to 1880. This chart, updated by Father Myatt, has been included in his book.

Needless to say, Father Myatt received his Master's degree, and Dr. Pierce was so pleased with his thesis that he wrote, "I am in the midst of trying to organize a Canadian Bibliographical Society and I should like to see this thesis as its first publication. . . I heartily congratulate you. It is a spendid piece of work." In 1943, with a foreword by Lorne Pierce, the *Autobiography of Oliver Goldsmith* was published by Ryerson Press. This first edition has

been out of print for many years, and used copies (which are difficult to find) sell for as much as fifty dollars.

Oliver Goldsmith's autobiography is not simply the story of a poor poet living in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia in the early 1800s. Goldsmith was a much-travelled civil servant with the Commissariat of the British Army. His work took him to Halifax, Hong Kong, Newfoundland and Corfu, with intervals in London, Liverpool and other places in the British Isles. His descriptions of his youth, education, travels, working conditions and contemporaries make fascinating reading, much enhanced by the editor's annotations.

Fortunately, a second edition of the *Autobiography of Oliver Goldsmith* was published by Lancelot Press in 1985, with a foreword by Dr. Phyllis Blakeley, CM, then Provincial Archivist for Nova Scotia. In this new edition, a section called "The Last Word" has been added by Father Myatt, telling of his further research during a trip to England in 1962 and his hope that Goldsmith's works will be taken "out of the literary closet. . .and set on the mantlepiece of Canadian literature where they deserve more room."

A new edition of Goldsmith's *Rising Village*, along with the *Autobiography of Oliver Goldsmith* should, in this reviewer's opinion, be part of the English curriculum of every Canadian high school because of both their literary and historical value. Joan M. Payzant

*"Mud Creek": the Story of the Town of Wolfville, Nova Scotia*, edited by James Doyle Davison. ISBN 0-9691719-0-0. Wolfville Historical Society, Wolfville, N.S., 1985. 268 pages, illustrated, paperback, $12.50.

Until 1980 the town of Wolfville, one of the most picturesque and historically significant communities in Nova Scotia, had no major written history. In 1980, however, as the town celebrated its 150th anniversary, the Wolfville Historical Society gave impetus to such a project and promptly obtained grants from both the town and federal government (under the New Horizons Program). Over the next few years the history became a co-operative endeavour, with input from everyone from school students and Acadia University staff and faculty, to local residents' stories. Editor James D. Davison, a Wolfville Historical Society member, has assembled the resultant research and writings into a very entertaining and colourful account of the history of the town (which was called Mud Creek in its early days).

The book covers the period from "before history" to the end of 1980. The first six chapters chronicle the town's development from prehistoric times to the early settlement of the area by Micmacs, Acadians, and New England Planters, and describe the subsequent influence on the town's growth of such prominent families as the DeWolfs (after whom Wolfville is believed to have been named in 1830). The remaining thirteen chapters touch on all aspects of life in the town, such as transportation, the economy, religion, education, health and welfare, public utilities, recreation, culture and sports, organizations, historic buildings, and notable personalities. From this material one obtains myriad interesting facts -- for example, Wolfville was probably the smallest registered port in the world; in 1936, Wolfville became the first town in Nova Scotia to have 100 per cent pasteurized milk; and in 1955, the first community-based clinic of its kind in Nova Scotia, the Fundy Mental Health Clinic, was established.

To a certain extent the book runs the risk of being cluttered by too much detail -- it is a great challenge to a writer of local history to maintain perspective and hold a balance between the major themes and the multitudinous details. *"Mud Creek"* aims to entertain rather than to educate, and is not academic research as such, but seems to have been produced primarily for the enlightenment and entertainment of general readers, particularly the residents of Wolfville. This is evident in the absence of footnotes and a bibliography, which unfortunately detracts from the permanent value of the book. Genealogists might also be disappointed that there is no separate section on genealogy, but the book does mention numerous families and individuals, and also has a complete index to names at the back.

All in all, *"Mud Creek"* is an attractive volume, with an appropriate cover illustration of a painting by Helen Beals, a local artist, as well as dozens of black and white photographs of scenery, buildings and people, well-placed throughout the text. The book is thus worthy of note as a comprehensive story of one of Nova Scotia's most interesting communities, one that has always been a focal point in the Annapolis Valley. As the book points out, Wolfville and the surrounding area contain much of the province's most memorable history and legend. Wendy L. Thorpe

*The Man from Halifax: Sir John Thompson, Prime Minister*, by P.B. Waite. ISBN 0-8020-5659-8. University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1985. 547 pages, illustrated, hardcover, $37.50.

Professor Waite's magisterial biography of Canada's first Nova Scotian

prime minister was ten years in the making. It is only the second attempt at such a work, the first having been a piece of hero-worshipping journalism rushed into print in 1895 to slake the Canadian public's thirst for information about their late and still largely unknown prime minister. Despite its having been vetted by Thompson's widow, Castell Hopkins's book probably did more harm than good to the posthumous reputation of its subject. Professor Waite describes its language as "flat, even flatulent" (page 528), and the very existence of such a book may have deterred would-be scholarly biographers of Thompson. It was not until 1949 that the basic materials for such a biography, the Thompson Papers, became available. In that year they were deposited in the Public Archives of Canada (a microfilm copy is at PANS) by the only surviving member of Thompson's immediate family. Hitherto they had been jealously guarded, first by Lady Annie Thompson, and then by the elder son, Colonel John T.C. Thompson, as head of the family. Thompson's documents are a collection unique among known prime ministerial papers, and Professor Waite has made both extensive and judicious use of them.

John Sparrow David Thompson was born in Halifax in 1845, the youngest son of an immigrant Irishman, also called John Sparrow, who was an intellectually ambitious and fairly self-made man. Young John had a modest education and in 1865 was admitted to the Nova Scotian bar. In 1870 he married Annie Affleck (theirs was a true love-match), and the next year became a convert from Methodism to Roman Catholicism. This event is the crux of Thompson's life and career. Though it surprised, if not dismayed, his friends, family and colleagues, there is no reason to suppose that it proceeded from anything other than purely personal motives. Of course, his more extreme political opponents later on made the most of it. Though he was falsely accused of being a creation of the Catholic hierarchy, it is nevertheless hard to see how Thompson would have succeeded politically without their support. Two Nova Scotian bishops in particular were his mentors: first, old Archbishop Thomas Connolly of Halifax (after whom Thompson named his elder son), and then Bishop John Cameron of Antigonish.

Having served as a Halifax alderman, John S.D. Thompson entered provincial politics in a by-election in 1877. He was attorney-general in the Conservative government of Simon Hugh Holmes, and became premier briefly in 1882. When the Liberals were returned to power at the general election, Thompson, through the influence of Sir Charles Tupper, got himself

appointed a puisne judge of the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia. The monument to his three years on the bench was the Judicature Act, which Thompson drafted and which stood, more or less unchanged, for almost seventy years. In 1883 Judge Thompson was one of the founders of the Dalhousie Law School.

In 1885 Thompson finally accepted the offer, which had been pressed on him more than once, of becoming minister of justice in the dominion cabinet. His baptism of fire in Ottawa was the Riel affair, the government's role in which, it fell to him to defend. With the exception only of Sir John A. Macdonald himself, Thompson was the hardest working and most able member of the government. He gradually began to be recognized as the heir presumptive, if not the heir apparent to the prime ministership. But when old Sir John died, young Sir John (Thompson had been knighted in 1888) could not marshal quite enough support in the party and the cabinet to enable him to become prime minister. Macdonald's successor was Senator John Abbot, likewise old and ill, a caretaker who lasted for about two years. It was obviously just a matter of time before Thompson formed a government of his own.

When Sir John Thompson became prime minister in November 1892, he retained the post of minister of justice. He had been able to produce the first Criminal Code, but much of the time remaining to him was taken up with intractable domestic problems such as Manitoba schools. In 1893 he was a judge at the Bering Sea arbitration in Paris. By the summer of 1894 Thompson, overworked and overweight, was in poor health. He went overseas again in the autumn of that year, travelled on the continent and in England, and on 12 December went to Windsor Castle to be sworn a member of H.M. Privy Council. It was there, while at lunch, that he suffered a fatal heart attack. He was scarcely one month into his fiftieth year.

Thompson's body was brought back to Halifax in a Royal Navy cruiser. His funeral, on 3 January 1895, was the grandest the city has ever seen. His epitaph in Holy Cross Cemetery is eloquent enough to be quoted, though Professor Waite has not done so:

> Dead at the crest, the crown
> And blossom of his fortunes,
> This strong son
> Of our great realm sank down
> Beneath the load of honours
> Scarcely won.

It is no exaggeration to claim that Thompson's untimely (and, one cannot help but think, unnecessary) death changed the course of Canadian history. Without him the Conservative Party was doomed to years of opposition, a fate which overtook them within two years of Thompson's death, at the 1896 election. Thompson's departure from the scene made Laurier's triumph inevitable.

Professor Waite has written elsewhere on this subject: on Thompson's Halifax boyhood in Volume 40 (1982) of the *Collections* of the Nova Scotia Historical Society; and on his four years as attorney-general of Nova Scotia in the symposium *Law in a Colonial Society*. We can also look forward to reading his article on Thompson in Volume XII of the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*. Though long and in some respects difficult for the non-specialist, *The Man from Halifax* is a compelling book. Professor Waite treats his subject with considerable grace and wit, and his own immense scholarship is unobtrusive. Reading the book made this reviewer want to sit down with the Thompson Papers and read them from beginning to end.

Barry Cahill

*Researching a Building in Nova Scotia*, by Julie M. Ross *et al.* ISBN 0-920523-00-5. Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia, Halifax, 1984. 41 pages, illustrated, soft-cover, $4.00.

The Heritage Trust has produced a very timely and informative booklet on a subject which, to judge from the number of junior high school students who are assigned the task of researching their own homes, must appear to be less difficult than it really is. The work sets out to explain to the prospective researcher which sources are available, and where, and how to make the best use of them. As most of the source materials can be found in the original or on microfilm at the Public Archives of Nova Scotia, it is appropriate that nine out of the fourteen contributors are current and former members of the Archives staff. All fourteen in any case have written lucidly and knowledgeably on their area of special interest or expertise. I venture to say that among the twenty short sections into which the booklet has been conveniently divided, no source of information pertinent to the topic has been overlooked. The researcher will find information on everything from the different types of nails used through two centuries of constructing Nova Scotian houses, to the provisions of the recently proclaimed Heritage Property Act. The booklet is imaginatively illustrated, moreover,

and concludes with a substantial bibliography. The architectural illustrations by Gillian McCulloch are specially to be commended.

It is seven years since the first edition of Terrence M. Punch's superb handbook, *Genealogical Research in Nova Scotia*, appeared. Thanks to the combined efforts of members of the Heritage Trust, there is now a companion volume: slimmer, no doubt, but just as informative and helpful. Researching a building has not yet caught the public interest like tracing one's ancestors, but it is an equally rewarding and significant exercise, if only because there is a definite link between the two. "We make buildings," Winston Churchill is supposed to have remarked on viewing the ruins of the British House of Commons in May 1941, "and buildings make us." The Heritage Trust has given us a salutary reminder of the importance of researching buildings by producing an eminently useful and useable guide for researchers.

Barry Cahill

*The MacKenzies' History of Christmas Island Parish*, by Archibald A. MacKenzie. ISBN 0-9691643-0-0. MacKenzie Rothe Publishing Partnership, Sudbury, Ontario, 1984. 268 pages, illustrated, softcover, $29.95.

This book is an excellent example of folk history. While basically dealing with the area served by the Christmas Island parish, the book is of value to anyone interested in the history of Cape Breton because it refers to events of general interest such as the difficulties faced by the first settlers, the famines of various years, and disasters such as the August Gale of 1873. Although mainly covering the period from 1802, when the first settlers came into the district, to 1984, there are many references to the traditions of the families before they came from Scotland to this country.

The original volume, written in the 1920s while oral folklore was still a strong part of local culture, has preseved traditions which would otherwise probably have been lost. As with all histories based almost entirely on oral sources errors are numerous. Many of the anecdotes describing the feats of strength and endurance of earlier generations stretch the bonds of credibility, but these are an integral part of folk culture and as such deserve to be preserved. Not only are they entertaining but also they provide insights into the values, beliefs, attitudes and prejudices of past generations.

One of the major faults of any history written from oral traditions is the scarcity of dates. Especially confusing in this edition is the addition of material written in the present tense in the 1980s to material written in the present tense in the 1920s. This makes it very confusing for anyone

trying to use the genealogies as a framework for further research. On the other hand, the short introductory essay by Marion Rothe is a valuable aid to placing the founding and development of the community as a whole within its historical perspective.

Apart from the lists of names in the genealogies, which can be easily skipped over by those not interested in them, this book provides entertaining reading. Archibald J. MacKenzie is to be applauded for making his father's work available to a new generation of readers.

Phyllis Wagg

*Thomas McCulloch: His Life and Times*, by Marjory Whitelaw. ISBN 0-919680-28-3. Nova Scotia Museum, Halifax, 1985. 38 pages, illustrated, softcover, $3.95.

Regrettably, there is no modern full biography of Thomas McCulloch, certainly the most inspired teacher in nineteenth century Nova Scotia, if not in all British North America. Marjory Whitelaw's thirty-eight page pamphlet is the first attempt in many years to capture the spirit of this man of many parts. As a product of the Scottish Enlightenment, McCulloch sought with indefatigable zeal to recreate its spirit in the Highland Scots settlement of Pictou in the then almost complete wilderness of eastern Nova Scotia. When McCulloch, as a Presbyterian minister, first arrived in 1803 there was no school in Pictou. The community, however, had prospered sufficiently that at least a few saw the need to educate their children, and for the next thirty-five years, McCulloch laboured to create a liberal, non-sectarian university. In the end he was defeated by sectarianism and the politics of the day. Yet he achieved much. Perhaps his finest moment was in 1824, when four graduates of his Pictou Academy achieved their Masters of Arts degrees from Glasgow University (his own Alma Mater).

McCulloch's many accomplishments have their own lessons for the contemporary world. For him there was no sense of the separateness of knowledge, no division in spirit between humanism and science; on the contrary, there was only unity of thought and spirit embracing all knowledge. McCulloch could, as easily as breathe, preach sound Calvinism, teach science by theory and experimentation, collect specimens of insects to create the first museum in the province and author works such as the *Stepsure Letters*, that are still read with pleasure. An ebullient, brilliant personality, McCulloch could never suffer those he thought fools. He made his enemies, but the Pictou Academy was no petty quarrel; it was always, for McCulloch, a dis-

pute over the whole principle of liberal education, about which he felt passionately.

Marjory Whitelaw has undertaken, above all, to give her readers a vivid sense of the spirit of the man. She is at her best when describing his teaching and his writing; she is much less sure when dealing with the politics of the day. There are, unfortunately, a number of factual errors that should be corrected before any reprinting. The most serious are those which speak of legislative and executive councils, when the council was not divided until 1838, and those which refer to the Liberal and Tory parties, when neither can be said to have existed until after McCulloch's death in 1844.

*Thomas McCulloch: His Life and Times* is one of the PEEPER series of books now being published by the Nova Scotia Museum as part of the Education Resource Services programme of the provincial Department of Education. Marjory Whitelaw's brief, but finely written biography of Thomas McCulloch, sets a high standard for this series. B.C. Cuthbertson

*The Man and the Empire: Frank Sobey*, by Harry Bruce. ISBN 0-7715-9834-3. MacMillan of Canada, Toronto, 1985. 443 pages, illustrated, hardcover, $34.95.

Back a quarter century ago, when men were men, and beer came in quart bottles, Frank Sobey and Alan Thompson would tee off No. 1 tee at the Abercrombie Golf and Country Club. We caddies knew that the friendly rivalry which existed between the two, couldn't mask the fact that neither liked to lose. The prize, it was rumoured, was a single quart of beer, purchased by the loser, shared by the contestants, but with the winner getting that extra bit of brew which the initial pouring had not exhausted. That little extra edge for the victor.

Harry Bruce's *The Man and the Empire: Frank Sobey* is a well-written, proofread and illustrated production. The author notes more than seventy interviews, local, national and international, and these do not include time spent with the Sobeys. There emerges a frugal and generous, a thoughtful but tough (see pp. 371-380 and the battle for Halifax Developments Ltd.) business tycoon.

The early portion of the work is an evocative stroll through historic Pictou County -- the stories, the characters, the firsts and the loyalties which Pictonians delight in relating, and which sometimes produce nausea among non-Pictonians. The begining of the Sobey empire, nurtured through

Depression, war, strikes, mining disasters and hostile wholesalers, is told in an entertaining and interesting fashion.

Most readers, however, will no doubt find Chapters 9 and 10 to be the core of the work. They will be amazed at the phenomenal success of Empire Company Limited (consolidated revenue in 1984 of $755 million; owners of virtually downtown Halifax). These chapters are politics and bare knuckle business and it is here that the Bluenoser will naturally turn with interest. Persistence, patience, long hours, thorough knowledge of company, staff, clientele and competitors, but, above all, timing characterize the Sobey work ethic. Chapter 10, on the "takeover wars," is as fast paced and dramatic a piece of writing as will be found in any corporate history.

Others will prowl through Chapter 9 (Industrial Estates Limited story) for some political tidbits, particularly for any additional nuances concerning the Clairtone saga. They will journey in frustration. Six decades of being very close-mouthed, loyal to one's friends, and adverse to washing any dirty linen in public, can't be overcome. Frank Sobey, in the end, remains an expert at obtaining and retaining information. Who finally did authorize Clairtone to move into production of colour televisions? Too much politics and not sufficient business input? Perhaps. But a finger is not pointed, directly, publicly. Even years after the fact, as Sobey is wont to repeat, "You have to get along with people."

We need more works such as Bruce has done on Sobey. Our Maritime business firms and their leaders merit more recognition. It is perhaps ironic that as this work appears, Sobey's arch-rival Dominion Stores, is disappearing. One can almost envision the sage of "Crombie" in the boardroom of Empire Company Limited, gleefully pounding the table and saying, "You see! It's not mainly because of the meat. It's mainly because of the men that a food chain succeeds." Sorry, ladies. Allan C. Dunlop

*The Nova Scotia Post: Its Offices, Masters and Marks*, by J.J. MacDonald. ISBN 0-919801-23-4. Unitrade Press, Toronto, 1985. 295 pages, illustrated, hardcover, $29.95.

Although of prime importance to specialists in the postal history of our province, this long-awaited book, particularly the first five chapters, will also be of considerable interest to the general reader. As the sub-title indicates, it is about the post offices, postmasters and postmarks of pre-Confederation Nova Scotia. It encompasses both the colonial period until 1851, and the subsequent time of Responsible Government, up to 1867.

To many it may come as a surprise to learn of the early existence of an organized postal system (albeit, at first, mostly for the convenience of government and the military) and its development as an efficient public service in the nineteenth century. The extent of this system, and the relative rapidity with which letters -- the only means of remote communication for most of that period -- travelled within the province, throughout the continent, and across the ocean is a matter of some nostalgia and considerable contrast.

*The Nova Scotia Post* is as complete a treatment of the postal history of this period as has yet appeared and it is not likely to be bettered for a long time. Much in it is based on the author's own research amongst archival sources in Canada and Britain; most has not previously been published. It is a scholarly and original work. Dr. MacDonald has the fortunate gift of writing in a lucid and highly readable style, his basic information being nicely interspersed with anecdotal material.

It is no trite phrase to say that this volume is profusely illustrated. Facsimilies of all 256 pre-Confederation postmarks of Nova Scotia are reproduced to exact size, as well as an additional 156 cancels, rate marks and information marks. There are some 50 maps and tables. Finally, to round off this illustration summary, 78 three-quarter sized photographs of whole pieces of mail (covers) show items not previously recorded in the philatelic literature. It is these details that make this such an invaluable reference book for postal historians. Also of great interest to collectors will be the section on the relative scarcity of Nova Scotian postal markings, thus for the first time giving some expert, comparative guidance to a prospective buyer.

It is difficult to make any profitable, obligatory criticism of this well-designed, informative and useful book. The typography is clean, misprints are few in number, and any seeming errors are perhaps a matter of interpretation. This reviewer would have preferred to have seen all of the postmarks page-indexed by post town name but, if sometimes hard to find, all of the known information is there. L.B. Macpherson

*Halifax Cornerstone of Canada*, by Joan M. Payzant. Picture research by David MacLaren. Partners in Progress by John P. Mason. ISBN 0-89781-149-6. Windsor Publications (Canada) Ltd., 1985. 222 pages, hardcover, $27.95.

*Halifax* is the latest in a series of pictorial coffee-table books on North American cities published by this California-based firm. Its format is very

similar to turn-of-the-century "booster books" on Halifax and other cities, with an historical introduction and chapters on "Faith and Literacy," "Trade and Commerce," "The Finer Arts," "Bluenose Sports," et cetera. Joan Payzant's text is lively and readable and stresses the social and more colourful aspects of Halifax's history. It serves as a useful introduction to those not familiar with the city, as well as providing interesting information to the initiated. For instance, how many Haligonians know that in 1936 the local newspapers reported a proposal afoot to raze Citadel Hill and subdivide it into building lots? A relief project was organized instead, with unemployed men living in the Citadel and doing maintenance work on its walls.

The final section of the book (over 50 pages) is occupied by historical sketches by John P. Mason on a number of Halifax businesses who contributed to financing the publication. While these sketches are well illustrated and not without interest, the average reader may be disappointed to find such a large section of the book devoted to a subject of less than general interest, although perhaps this was necessary to ensure the financial success of the project.

*Halifax* is essentially a pictorial book and this reviewer found a number of problems with the visual presentation. The pictures are not always well chosen and integrated into the text. The first chapter, which discusses Halifax's founding as a British counterweight to the French fortress at Louisbourg, contains an imbalance of illustrations of the latter. This could easily have been remedied by moving one or two of the excellent colour illustrations of early Halifax from the centre of the book. In the second chapter, "Privateers and Loyalists," a lifeless modern photograph of the entrance to the Citadel could have been replaced with a lively nineteenth-century photo showing drummers or soldiers guarding the gate. The photographic section on World War II is weak: there is no excuse for using photos of the Henry House and Barrington Street in 1905 when there are such riches of historic photos from the World War II era. The final chapter, "Notable Visitors to Halifax," should have included more pictures of the visits described, rather than so many photos of current pop stars. The text describes a "clever Notman composite photograph" of the swearing-in of the Marquis of Lorne as Governor-General at Province House in 1878; it is most surprising to find this information accompanied by a recent photo of Owen Woodman at the Atlantic Winter Fair with his prize-winning pumpkin. On the whole the use of modern black and white photography tends to be unimaginative.

There are a number of errors in the captions as well, most of them minor,

but one really glaring misidentification of Halifax Harbour as the Gulf of St. Lawrence almost seems to have wandered in from another book by mistake. On the plus side, the colour photography is attractive and the captions, on the whole, are well-written and evoke the information provided by the photographs.

The overall tone and appearance of the book certainly present Halifax in its most positive aspects; however, as a "booster book" it can scarcely be expected to do otherwise. Despite its shortcomings it will no doubt be of interest to many Haligonians and to tourists wishing a souvenir of their visit to the city. Margaret Campbell

*The History of the Dartmouth Quakers*, by Douglas William Trider. ISBN 0-88999-284-3. Lancelot Press, Hantsport, N.S., 1985. 156 pages, maps, softcover, $5.95.

Although Dartmouth was founded in 1750, few books have been written on its history. The most recent publication is Mr. Trider's book, which examines the Quakers and their contribution to the community. The study begins with an explanation of the origin of this religious denomination in Britain and its eventual establishment in New England, particularly on Nantucket Island.

The Quakers suffered many hardships during the American Revolution, being harassed by both the British and Americans. In 1785, a group of Quakers moved from Nantucket to Dartmouth. The following year they were joined by fellow Quakers who swelled their numbers to forty families (164 individuals) and an additional 150 whalemen. The group brought furniture and livestock and some individuals had prefabricated sections of frame houses.

The book describes the Quakers' daily life, education and society; whaling technology and nautical terms; and whaling vessels operating from Dartmouth. Although the community was successful initially, many members moved to Milford Haven, Wales, in 1792 and others eventually returned to Nantucket. The remaining Quakers were assimilated through marriage into other denominations in the Dartmouth area.

Although Mr. Trider has provided the reader with detailed information on the Quakers and Dartmouth, it is unfortunate that the manuscript did not receive closer editorial attention to correct grammatical and typographical errors. Also, the book does not have footnotes, a bibliography, or an index. It does, however, contain six maps of the Dartmouth town

plot, division of lots, roads, and Seth Coleman's map of Sable Island. The author, who spent considerable time searching through original sources at the Public Archives of Nova Scotia, has amassed extensive material, not only on the Quakers, but also on Dartmouth in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, which he has incorporated into his publication.

Philip L. Hartling

Nova Scotia
Department of
Culture, Recreation
& Fitness

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**Festival of St. Patrick.**

# ANNUAL DINNER

OF

# The Charitable Irish Society,

MARCH 18TH, 1889.

Queen Hotel, Halifax, N. S.

## TOAST LIST.

1. *Pious Memory of St. Patrick.*
2. *The Queen.*
3. *Ireland — Ever cherished by her Children as the Fairest Spot on Earth.*
4. *Nova Scotia — The Land of our Adoption; The Home of our Children.*
5. *Governor General and Lieutenant Governor.*
6. *The Archbishop, Bishop, and Clergy of all Denominations.*
7. *C. S. Parnell and the Irish Parliamentary Party.*
8. *Dominion, Local, and Civic Governments.*
9. *Memory of Daniel O'Connell.*
10. *The Learned Professions.*
11. *The Memory of the Founders and Benefactors.*
12. *Army, Navy, and Local Forces.*
13. *The Fair Daughters of Erin and Acadia.*
14. *The Press.*
15. *Our Sister Societies.*
16. *Our Guests.*
17. *Our next Merry Meeting.*