
CHAPTER V

THE PICTOU SETTLEMENTS

*Iron-welded, O my people! Saxon, Celt,
Victorious Northmen; strenuous, masterful!—
Not to be strangled in time's ocean flood,
Sucked down in vortex of old ruin dire;
But to remain, contend, depose and rule.*

I

THE SAILING OF THE *HOPE*

O valiant venturers on the deep!
Whence bound? Where steering?—
Toward life and hope beyond the sweep
Of old dead daring!

THE history of the most noted of the Scottish communities of Nova Scotia and the Maritime Provinces, that of Pictou, is an important chapter in the annals of the Scottish race in Canada.

It has two distinct periods. First, that dating from the earliest British settlement in 1765 to the arrival of the *Hector* in 1773; and the second, that of the direct Scottish settlements commencing

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with the arrival of that ship, and continuing until late in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Among the early pioneers of the province, and especially in this locality, were many persons of Scottish and Ulster-Scottish stock, who had much to do with the early settlement and development of the province. In the early half of the eighteenth century several persons had already secured and taken up large tracts of land. Among these ambitious landowners was the subsequently prominent American revolutionist, Benjamin Franklin, who was in truth one of the greatest and most covetous landgrabbers and absentee landlords that our continent has ever known.

In a letter from the Lieutenant-Governor to the Lord-Commissioner of Trades and Plantations, under date April 30, 1765, it is shown that several persons had arrived from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and other colonies with the object of settlement. Prominent among these was Alexander McNutt, who with his associates applied for very extensive grants. He is described by Haliburton as an enthusiastic adventurer from the north of Ireland, and had already helped to settle Truro, Onslow, and Londonderry. Two of McNutt's associates were William and Richard Caldwell, also north of Ireland Scotsmen. The amount of their grants reached hundreds of thousands of acres.

This grant was called the Irish (more properly the Ulster-Scottish) grant, or that given to Scots

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from Ayrshire and the other parts of Scotland who had settled in Ulster before removing to America.

The other important grant of lands was called the Philadelphia grant. It is dated October 31, 1765, and is granted to several persons, among them the Reverend James Lyon, Thomas Harris, and Robert Harris; the whole grant was for 180,000 acres. In connection with this grant, which is of special interest as being closely connected with the early history of Pictou, the real promoters were Lyon and the two Harrises, with Dr. John Harris. The Rev. James Lyon, as his name shows, was a Scotsman from Ulster. The Harrises, Mathew and John, says the chronicle, were of the Scotch-Irish race, their ancestors, Edward Harris and Flora Douglas, having left Ayrshire in Scotland in the reign of Charles the Second, losing a fine estate for their attachment to Presbyterian worship. They settled near Raphoe, in the county of Donegal, Ireland, where so many other Scotsmen had settled since the Scottish plantation in 1608. Thomas, grandson of Edward, and father of Mathew and John, and an elder son Robert, were members of the Philadelphia Company. Thomas was then of Maryland, and his son John a physician in Philadelphia. John, the younger son, had most to do with the Pictou settlement. He was born on July 16, 1739. He acted as attorney for the Company, recorded all the deeds in the vicinity, was the first magistrate, being appointed in 1769, and

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first registrar of deeds. He at first lived near Browns Point, but about 1778 removed to Onslow, became Clerk of the Peace, a Member of the Assembly for Truro, 1779 to 1785, and died in Truro April 9, 1802. His descendants are numerous in Colchester, Pictou County. His son John was Sheriff of Pictou. Mathew Harris was born in 1731 or 1735. His son Thomas was a surveyor of much land in Colchester, and Sheriff of Pictou. He had many children. One daughter married John Patterson and was ancestor of the Rev. George Patterson, the historian of Pictou County.

The immediate result of this grant was the arrival of a small brig, the *Hope*, from Philadelphia, bringing the first little colony, consisting of only six families, including the Harrises, already described. Dr. Harris, being the agent, was of the number, and the night after they reached the harbour Mrs. Harris gave birth to a son on shipboard, Thomas Harris, afterwards Clerk of the Peace, who died in 1809, and was the first British settler born in Pictou. Among the others on the *Hope* was John Rogers, with a wife and four children. He was a native of Glasgow, Scotland, as was his wife, a Miss Richie. He emigrated to Maryland, and thence to Pictou. He left many descendants. He took up land and gave his name to Roger's Hill, and some of the apple-trees grown from seed he brought from Maryland were still standing in 1876. He helped to blaze the road to Truro, and also gave his name to Roger's

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Settlement. Another pioneer on the *Hope* was Robert Patterson, who came as the surveyor for the Company; he brought his wife and five children—the eldest nine years, the youngest three months old. He has been called the father of Pictou. He was a native of Renfrew, in Scotland, but had emigrated to Maryland, and had been a pedlar and sutler to the army previous to 1763. He was for many years a surveyor and a leading man in Pictou, and was made magistrate in 1774. He built the first frame house in the place, on land conveyed to him by Governor Patterson. He died in 1808. He was long an elder in the Presbyterian Church, and left many descendants, among them a daughter Margaret, afterwards wife of Capt. Pagan of the *Hector*, and the Rev. George Patterson, the county historian, already mentioned.

The *Hope* reached Pictou Harbour on June 10th. But a party from Truro, having come over to receive them, built a fire on the shore to guide them, which made those on the *Hope* think them savages. But the next day the ship stood in for the shore, where those on board saw the wild, unbroken forest and virgin country yet to be conquered, the famous white pines looming up conspicuously to the height of 150 or 200 feet "like masts of some huge admiral."

It was, indeed, a brave and indomitable stock which could, without misgivings regarding the future, become the pioneers in such a wilderness. But what of the wives of the settlers? Mrs. Patterson afterwards said that when they finally

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landed she leaned against one of those great trees and thought that if there was a broken-hearted creature on the face of the earth she was one. Indeed, so desolate did the place look, with the horror of savages in the minds of the newcomers, that the captain of the vessel, after landing their supplies, slipped out of the harbour in the night and left them to their fate.

Of the five or six young men who had set out from the sister settlement of Truro to welcome and aid the immigrants we will now speak. They aided in building huts and in laying a rude road to Truro. The leader was Thomas Archibald, of Scottish descent.

The Rev. James Lyon was already in Nova Scotia when the *Hope* arrived. He appears as one of the Philadelphia Company, being sent as their minister, but did not continue with the settlement. He was ordained in New Jersey and arrived in Nova Scotia late in 1764 or early in 1765, and was the first Presbyterian minister in the province of whom there is any account. He was residing in Pictou with his family since 1769, and gave his name to Lyon's Brook.

Of the other early settlers in Pictou, many had arrived by 1769. A return of inhabitants taken in this year shows a decided increase, and most of them of Scottish or Ulster-Scottish origin.

Of these were Thomas Skead, born in Scotland ; William Aiken, of Scottish descent ; James Fulton, an Ulster Scot ; Robert Stewart and William Kennedy, Ulster Scots. Kennedy erected the first

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sawmill in the country. Barnabas McGee was born in the north of Ireland. In this connection it may be interesting to state that the McGees are a sept who came from the Rhinns of Isla, and settled at Island McGee, in Antrim. They are a sept or branch of the great Scottish clan of Macdonald, who settled and owned Antrim for centuries.

James Davidson was another early settler of Pictou. He was born in Edinburgh, where he married, and where the first of his family was born. He came out with the Rev. Dr. Cook, of Truro, and was the first schoolmaster of Pictou.

Such was the stock of the first settlement of Pictou down to the coming of the good ship *Hector* in 1773.

II

THE ARRIVAL OF THE *HECTOR*, 1773

Unhappy Greenock,
Thou port of wailing!
Thou far-famed Burg!
From thee outsailing,
Hath Scotland poured
Her restless horde
Of master-men!
On every tide
Of ocean wide,
From mountain-side
And misty glen,
Her brood out-hurled,
Hath won the world.

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The sailing of the *Hector*, with her Highland emigrants, from the Port of Greenock, was an event of significant importance in the history of Western emigration, and especially in that of the settlement of the Maritime Provinces and of all Canada.

With the arrival of her passengers there began the really effective settlement, not only of Pictou, but of the whole province. She was the first emigrant ship from Scotland to Nova Scotia or New Brunswick since the days of Sir William Alexander. With her voyage began that vast but steady stream of Scottish immigration which, as the years went on, flowed into, and over, not only the county of Pictou alone, but over much of the eastern portion of the province, into Cape Breton, Prince Edward Island, and portions of New Brunswick, and even into what was afterwards Upper and Lower Canada.

It might be said that all the subsequent Scottish settlements originated in the coming of this one ship, because those who then came out wrote back to their relatives and friends in Scotland. These pioneers, after enduring great hardships and sufferings, not only achieved a position of independence, but also acquired an appreciation of the real value of the country and gave a good report of the land ; so that those at home likewise ventured their all and followed, to greater or less success, according to their ability and fortune.

There is no one element in the population of Canada upon which its social, moral, and religious

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development has depended more than upon its Scottish inhabitants ; and of this great element for good to the whole Dominion, the members of that little band in the *Hector* were the pioneers and vanguard. What the arrival of the *Don de Dieu* was to French Canada, that of the *Hector* might be said to represent to the Scottish element of our country. History records that this was her last voyage ; that on her return to Scotland she was condemned as unseaworthy and went to sea no more. It is a pity that there is nowhere preserved, so far as is known, a picture of this historic ship, which, in her last sailing, made so remarkable and epoch-making a voyage.

The Scot in America has ever seemed to have had to endure special hardships ; and it is said that no Nova Scotia settlement had such obstacles to encounter as that of Pictou. They came out, unbosomed by any Government grant, and unprovided for, to a country covered with heavy forest ; and were, from the first, thrown altogether on their own resources. One cannot but admire the heroism which faced such odds in winning a foothold in the New World.

So far, the few settlers had struggled against great difficulties, until in 1773 the ship *Hector* arrived with her Highland emigrants ; and a new era in the history of the settlement began.

John Pagan was a merchant of the town of Greenock, who purchased several shares of the stock of the Philadelphia Company. He had been engaged in the undertaking to settle the colonies

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of the South—and this was not the first voyage of the *Hector*, which was owned by Pagan, in carrying emigrants to American shores. Pagan's partner was a Dr. Witherspoon, presumably of Philadelphia, who also had an interest in the Company.

Their Scottish agent was one John Ross, who was an earlier example of our present-day emigrant agent in the Highlands. He pictured in glowing colours the New World and its advantages as over the Old, and hundreds of poor souls, who knew nothing of the other side of the shield, and attracted by the prospect of owning a farm, without payment, accepted his terms, and, gathering together their all, prepared to seek their fortune across the ocean. The *Hector* (John Spear, master ; James Orr, first mate ; and John Anderson, second mate) was the vessel fated to bear these pioneers to their destination.

She sailed from Greenock, where three families and five young men embarked, and went north to Lochbroom, Ross-shire, where 33 families and 25 unmarried men were added to her quota of passengers. One account gives 189, and another 179, as being the number of souls on her list. Legge, the Governor, in his dispatch, refers to them as 200 on their arrival.

She sailed from Lochbroom early in July (probably the 1st), and was eleven weeks making the passage across the Atlantic.

On her departure a piper went on board, and was ordered ashore ; but the emigrants interceded,

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and he was allowed to sail. They were all new to the wide ocean, even the ship's officers—only one sailor having crossed before—and hope beat in every bosom, in spite of the fact that their native hills soon faded from view.

But the Atlantic soon had them in its rolling trough, and their merriment was changed to tears and sea-sickness ; and home-sickness seized their dismayed bodies and souls. The ship was an old Dutch hulk, and a slow, lubberly sailor ; so that she made but a poor headway against contrary winds that smote and buffeted her dingy rotten hull and veered her sails ; and ere many days many an eye was scanning anxiously the grey sweep of desolate waters and skyline for the longed-for glimpse of solid land.

But the brave Scottish hearts bore up with the lion-souls within, and the leaders encouraged the weak and the young by all sorts of amusements to overcome the tedious hours and days of waiting. At last, when they arrived off Newfoundland, a severe storm beat them once more out into the bleak ocean. All this time the accommodations, never good, were becoming unendurable ; and their food, not over-well-provided, began to fail. Had it not been for the fantastic thrift of one of the emigrants, Hugh McLeod, who had gathered in a bag all the food cast away by the others, they would have starved to death at the last. Then smallpox and dysentery broke out, so that most of the poor children that had embarked died, cooped up in that rotten hulk ; and many a poor mother

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must have landed mournful and sad on the shores of the New World, who had left the Old hopeful, with her all in her infant shawled in her arms.

Such is the tragic side of the making of new lands. Many must suffer that in after-days others may reap the glory.

However, nothing lasts for ever, not even sorrow ; and on September 15th this pioneer ship-load of Scottish immigrants dropped anchor in the harbour of Pictou.

In spite of their sad voyage, the Highlanders adorned themselves in their kilts and plaids for the disembarking ; and the Indians, who had threatened to be troublesome, on hearing the weird sound of the pipes, and seeing what they thought to be the dreaded petticoated soldiers who had captured Quebec, fled in terror to the forest, and from that day ceased to be a menace to the pioneers.

But the poor travellers were fated yet to endure hardship and suffering. Though the sick were cared for, several died, and only landed in the New World to be borne to their graves. So that it might be said that the first city established was that of the dead. Disease and death had lowered their spirits, and a sight of the bleak, unbroken forest and lonesome, desolate coast-line added to their despondency. But worse was yet to come.

A free farm and plenty in the New World they had been promised, but the reality was a rude awakening from their dream of the Far West. Landing without provisions or shelter, the lateness of the season made their situation even more

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desperate, as no planting could be done until the land was cleared during the following year. They also found that they would have to go inland for their farms, all these facing the shore being pre-empted. Many of them were fishermen, and had counted on the sea for a portion of their substance. The result was hunger, hardship, and misery ; with much heartburnings, even open rebellion, when some of the leaders of the party in desperation raided the Company's stores and took what they needed for the requirements of the suffering. That first winter was one of hardship and misery never to be forgotten. Many moved to Truro and Londonderry, some even to Halifax, Windsor, and Cornwallis, and hired themselves out, men, women, and children. The majority returned afterwards, but none forgot that dread winter, with its deep snow and its want of food and clothing, where a little flour and a few potatoes, often frozen, were all that, sometimes carried miles on a man's back, kept life in the community.

Patterson, in his History, gives numerous incidents which illustrate the great privations endured not only that winter, but in some instances afterwards. But they struggled on with the Scottish pertinacity and belief in the future ; and, in spite of all, made themselves successful, and the land, if a land not of great plenty, a place of dignified and frugal comfort in which to cradle a God-fearing and ambitious race.

There is a list given in Patterson's History, which was drawn up about 1837, by William

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McKenzie of Lochbroom, containing the names of the passengers in the *Hector*, with short accounts of their personal and family history and of the record of their places of settlement.

As one of the objects of this work is to give as much information as possible regarding the real people themselves, the rank and file of the Scots who have made our country, I quote this important list in full as it is given, though omitting many notes and remarks, which will be found by the student in Patterson's "History of Pictou."

1. Those shipped at Glasgow.

Mr. Scott and family, history unknown. George Morrison and family from Banff; settled west side of Barney's River; gave his name to Morrison's Island, left one daughter—Mrs. David Ballantyne of Cape George. John Patterson, mentioned in Patterson's "Pictou." George McConnell, settled at East River; descendants numerous. Andrew Man and family, of Dunfermline, settled at Noel; descendants. Andrew Wesley, history unknown. Charles Fraser, a Highlander, settled at Cornwallis. Fisher Grant, married, has descendants. John Stewart, history unknown.

2. Those from Inverness-shire.

William Mackay and family, afterward Squire Mackay, settled at East River; died in 1828, aged ninety-seven, a leading man, left three sons—Donald, Alexander, and James; had a daughter Sarah, married Wm. Fraser. Roderick McKay and family of Beaulieu, Inverness-shire; came with three brothers, William, Colin, and Donald, to Pictou, was a blacksmith; a man of great character; placed the chain across Halifax Harbour to prevent the entrance of hostile vessels during the Revolutionary war. He died at East River. One daughter married Dr. McGregor. Another was mother of J. D. B. Fraser, Esq., and one son was Robert McKay, Esq. Colin McKay and family, in Fraser Highlanders at Quebec and Louisburg; settled at East River. McKay

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Bros., of Liverpool, England, were his grandsons. Hugh Fraser and family; was a weaver of Kiltarlity, Scotland; had three children in the *Hector*—Donald, Jane, (Mrs. Cameron), and Mary (Mrs. John Fraser); another son was John. The Rev. Wm. Fraser, Bondhead, Ont., was a grandson. Donald Cameron and family—the only Roman Catholic on the *Hector*; served at Quebec, settled at East River, drowned; family removed to Antigonish. Donald McDonald and family, settled at Middle River; his daughter Marion married Alex. Fraser; his niece Mary Forbes, married Wm. McLeod. Colin Douglas and family, settled at Middle River; his daughter married Peter Fraser. Hugh Fraser and family, settled at West River; descendants numerous. Alexander Fraser and family, settled at Middle River; descendants numerous; said to be connected with Lord Lovat. His family involved in the "forty-fives." Had three brothers fighting for the Pretender at Culloden, two killed; was witness, though too young to fight, of the scene of the day; married Marion Campbell, youngest daughter of Laird of Skriegh in Inverness, also a Jacobite at Culloden. Fraser had six children in the *Hector*—Alexander, Simon, Catherine (married Alex. Ross, afterward to John Fraser), Isabella (married David McLean, Esq., of East River, Hugh at Middle River), Donald and Hugh James Grant and family, went to King's County; sons, Alexander, Robert; grandfather of Dr. W. R. Grant of Pennsylvania Med. Coll. Family afterwards claimed connection with President Grant. Donald Munro, went to Halifax; one son, Henry; descendants numerous. Donald Mc—, name illegible and history unknown.

3. *Those from Lochbroom.*

John Ross, agent, history unknown. Alex. Cameron and family, was seventeen years old in 1745. His brother followed the Prince; was a herder; gave the name of Lochbroom, his native parish, to the place where he settled. Children, several, among them Alexander and Christiana, born in the *Hector*; the latter married Alex. McKay of New Glasgow, died 1831, aged 104. Alex. Ross and family, advanced in life, parents of Alex. Ross and family; settled at Middle River. The children went to Ohio; Alexander, had daughters married to Arch. Chisholm and — Blair. Colin McKenzie and family, settled as East River, said

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to have died aged 104; one son, Duncan, died 1871, in his 100th year. John Munro and family, history unknown. Kenneth McRitchie and family, probably on lists as Kenneth McClutchcon. William McKenzie, engaged as schoolmaster of the party, settled at Lochbroom; descendants there. John McGregor, history unknown. John McLellan, settled at New Glasgow, gave his name to McLellan's Mount. William McLellan, relative of John, settled at West River; descendants there. Alexander McLean, settled at East River, one son; descendants there. Alexander Falconer, settled near Hopewell. Donald McKay, brother of Roderick, settled at East River; a grandson, Duncan, living there. His brother Hugh died without a family. Archibald Chisholm, in 84th Regt., said to have settled at East River. Charles Matheson, history unknown. Robert Sim, settled at Pictou, then went to New Brunswick, never married. Alexander McKenzie, history unknown. Thomas Fraser, history unknown.

4. Those from Sutherlandshire.

Kenneth Fraser and family, settled at Londonderry, then Middle River; Pictou descendants numerous. William Fraser and family, history unknown. James Murray and family, at Londonderry; descendants there. Walter Murray and family, in Mengounish; descendants there. David Urquhart and family, at Londonderry; one daughter, Mrs. Thos. Davidson. James McLeod and family, at North River; had no children; his farm descended to his relative, Geo. McLeod. Hugh McLeod and family, at Middle River; one son, David, three daughters—one Mrs. Donald Ross, another Mrs. Shiels. Alexander McLeod and family; three sons, one Donald of West River; left descendants. John McKay and family, history unknown. Philip McLeod and family, uncertain. Donald McKenzie and family, probably at Schubencadie. Alex McKenzie and family, history unknown. John Sutherland and family, history unknown. William Matheson and family, at Londonderry, afterwards at Roger's Hill, where his descendant, John S., resided in 1876. Donald Grant, history unknown. Donald Graham, history unknown. John McKay, piper, history unknown. William McKay, went to work with McCabe and took the latter's name; descendants still known as McCabe. John Sutherland, went to Windsor, then settled at

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Sutherland River. Angus McKenzie, sixteen years old on the *Hector*, finally settled at Green Hill ; descendants there.

This is, in brief, the history of the Pictou Scottish settlements, which also included many Ulster Scotsmen. These were the pioneer settlements for the Dominion. From here many families at a later date removed into Upper Canada, and helped to form Scottish communities in what is now Ontario.