

Lord Selkirk And His Settlers At Belfast

Skye Pioneers Add Epic Story To PEI History

In the year 1803, three ships were chartered by the Earl of Selkirk and about 800 passengers embarked from the Western Islands of Scotland to found a home for themselves on Selkirk's estate in Prince Edward Island. The "Polly" carried the greatest number, most of whom were from Skye. On her was Dr. Angus MacAulay, the proprietor's agent. She arrived in Orwell Bay, P.E.I., on Sunday, August 7, and disembarked her passengers near the present Hallyday's wharf. The "Dykes" arrived on August 9, and the "Oughton" with the Ust men on August 27.

Lord Selkirk, who was a passenger on the "Dykes", had planned to arrive before the others so that preparation might be made for their reception. But before he appeared on the scene the "Polly" had disembarked her complement. The settlement afterwards called Belfast, a corruption of the French "La Belle Face", was founded on the abandoned site of a French colony whose members were deported to France after the surrender of Louisbourg in 1758. It extended along the coves and creeks from the mouth of Charlottetown harbor to the Pinetown River. The clearing had grown up but various evidences of the former occupation—the shallow well, the ditch, and the cemetery with its pathetic reminders of the transitory career of man—still existed.



The first "tourist" to discover the charms of Prince Edward Island was Jacques Cartier, Intrepid St. Malo navigator, who visited here in July, 1534, on his first voyage to America. It is evident from the record which he left that he was greatly impressed with the island's climate and fertility.

"All the land," he wrote, "is low and plain, and the fairest that may be seen, and full of goodly meadows and trees. We discovered that there were cedars, yew trees, pines, white firs, ash trees, willows and others, many of them unknown to us"

"The soil where there are no trees is also very rich and is covered with peas, white and red gooseberry bushes, strawberries, raspberries and wild oats like rye, which one would say had been sowed and tilled."

"It is the best tempered region one can possibly see and the heat is considerable. There are turtles, doves, wood pigeon and other birds."

UNDER THE ACADIANS

Colonel Franquet, an officer of the French Government sent out to superintend the new fortifications at Louisbourg, visited here in 1751 and made an extensive tour of the settled parts. He travelled by barge from Port la Joie up the East River, where settlers were already establishing themselves along both banks.

The crops seen from the stream, were flourishing in the new soil. Opposite what is now Scotchfort, the tide falling, Franquet landed and was welcomed at the home of a leading Acadian, the Sieur Gauthier. He and another Acadian, the Sieur Bugeau, each occupied a farm of one hundred and sixty acres. They had been settled there for eighteen months.

Franquet walked round Gauthier's cleared lands and new fields bearing wheat, peas, oats and many kinds of vegetables, such as he "had not seen surpassed in the most fertile fields of France."

SPORTSMAN'S PARADISE

The island as a sportsman's paradise impressed itself upon Captain Samuel Holland, Surveyor General, who waxed so lyrical in his report of his survey of 1765.

"Here," he wrote, "are Bears, Otters, Martens, Foxes, Lynxes, Minks, and a few Cats, and a few, a kind of Deer; Hares extremely good. . . . Of Birds may be accounted the Eagles, Hawks, Partridges, a kind of Thrush called Robins, in great abundance, who sing very agreeably; of birds of passage, there are a great variety, as Doves, which come in July and August, Plover, Snipes, Curlews, and a large and fine sort of Wild Goose; the Brant Goose, a smaller sort but of excellent flavour; Ducks of many kinds. . . ."

"Both sea and river fish are in great abundance, and extremely good, viz.: Cod, Turbot, Hollybut, Thomback, Sturgeon, Plaice, Flounders, Mackerel and Gaspereaux. . . . In the rivers and lakes are also very fine Trout and Eels; Smelts; also in Morrell River are some Salmon; along the coasts and in the rivers are Lobsters, Oysters and Mussels, extremely good and in great plenty; besides shell-fish called Clams, and another named Razor Fish—in short, for beasts, birds and fish no place can wish to be more plentifully supplied."

"GARDEN OF AMERICA"

Walter Patterson, the island's first Governor, writing to Lord Selkirk, wrote that he had been down about two hundred and fifty to three hundred. Only a few miles distant from them to the north, a settlement of Loyalists from the American colonies had been founded along Vernon River in 1792. They preferred to endure the hardships incident to founding a new home in the virgin forest under the flag they loved, than live under a government they regarded as alien to the political principles they espoused. The Selkirk colonists, after a general amnesty, ceased to look upon themselves as a separate institution, and merged their lives in the larger life of the little Province in which they lived.

Yet they never wholly forgot the land of their forefathers. In song and story, to this day, one finds constant evidences of the strong spiritual bond uniting the two islands, and the intense loyalty of the early settlers to the Skye tradition burns in the breast of the present generation with a flame as steady as it did in any that has gone before. All are haunted by the same dream:

"From the lone stieling of the misty Island
Mountains divide us and the waste of seas;
Yet still the blood is strong,
The heart is Highland,
And we in dreams behold the Hebrides."

—From "Skye Pioneers and The Island," by Malcolm A. MacQueen, K.C., 1928.

The Belfast Colony

Nal, so the Selkirk colony on Prince Edward Island. Three years before they arrived the total population of the island was about six thousand; that of Charlotte-

Hillsboro, Colonial Secretary, in 1771, declared that "both in husbandry and gardening, my expectations are fully answered, and in many cases surpassed." Indian corn, oats and barley grew here magnificently. He had "never met with or heard of such an increase in potatoes, and he had every reason to believe that wheat would flourish too."

"As to garden stuffs, there is no country produces better in so short, my Lord," he added, "if only the proprietors will exert themselves, this island will, in a short time, be the Garden of America."

FANNING'S IMPRESSIONS

Lieutenant Governor Fanning, who made a complete tour of the island following his appointment in 1797, reported enthusiastically to Lord Nepean, Under Secretary of State:

"Having been absent four weeks, in which time I neither ate, drank or slept in a house, but devoted my whole time to going up and down the different creeks, rivers, bays and harbours, and exploring the coast, I can, therefore, speak with greater certainty respecting this circuit of the island than perhaps any man on it," he wrote. "And confident I am that, had it been open to be granted by the Crown by patents from ever Government in the same manner as lands in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick were, it would not, at this date, be equalled by any part of His Majesty's Dominion in America, in proportion to the same extent of territory."

WONDER-WORKING CLIMATE

A great booster of the island's healthful climate was John Stewart, Esq., who in his "Account of Prince Edward Island," 1808, wrote as follows:

"I may venture to assert that it will be very difficult to mention another spot on the face of the earth where the inhabitants enjoy more uninterrupted health. The fevers and other diseases of the United States are entirely unknown here; no person ever has an intermittent fever produced on the island, nor will that complaint which brought here, ever stand a few days against the influence of the climate."

"A large proportion of the people live to old age, and then die of no acute disease, but by the general decay of nature. . . . Large families are very common. Six or seven children in as many years seems to be the common rule, and few leave off without doubling that number. We seldom find a pair without a third, where they have come together under such circumstances as to give them a reasonable ground of hope on that subject, and instances have sometimes occurred where people who had given up every idea of the kind, by removing to this island, have had large families."

"Many people grow here to a large size; perhaps in no other country will the proportion of men of six feet high be found greater. The countenances as well as the stature of the people, whose families came from the highlands of Scotland often exhibit a remarkable contrast to the hard features and low stature of their parents; plenty of wholesome food, as well as salubrity of air, no doubt contributes to this difference. Industry will always secure a comfortable existence, which encourages early marriage; the women are grandmothers at forty, and the mother and daughter may frequently be seen with each a child at the breast at the same time."

ISLAND HOSPITALITY

Stewart's statements are corroborated by Walter Johnstone, an English lay preacher who wrote an account of his visit to the island in 1820-21. "The settlers generally," he says, "live long and are exceedingly healthy." He noted also another admirable trait: "The people," he found, "are hospitable in the extreme. Any man may travel from one end of the island to the other, if he keeps out of taverns, without being at one half-penny expense. If his entertainer's portion be scanty, still it may be said he gives it with a good will."

A HAVEN FOR SETTLERS

In his "Brief Account of Prince Edward Island," 1830, an English visitor, J. L. Llewellyn, notes that "all a farmer will produce in England for the farmers' table may be produced here, and of excellent quality."

He adds that "there is amongst the settlers a great deal of that spirit of hospitality, which is pleasing in every country, but more particularly so in a new and needful in a young one. . . ."

"Here we may pause and exclaim, Verily, this is a good poor man's country. Here a settler may begin farming without a shilling in his pocket, and obtain employment at such wages as will not only enable him to live, but also

Historic Sites Marked

The following list of the historic sites already marked in Prince Edward Island has been supplied for this issue by Hon. Thane A. Campbell, LL.D., Chief Justice, and member of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada.

It is expected that tablets to be unveiled during August in memory of Sir Louis Davies, Sir Joseph Pope, and Robert Harris, C.M.G., R.C.A.

The Board has also approved tablets to be unveiled at a later time in memory of James C. Pope and Jacob Gould Schurman.

Alberton—Alberton-Elmsdale Highway—Cut-stone monument to commemorate the work of Robert T. Oulton and Charles Dalton, pioneers in breeding and raising silver-black foxes in captivity; and of James Gordon and Robert Tuplin, who, later assisted in developing the industry.

Brudenell Point

—Cut-stone monument to mark the site where Jean Pierre Roma founded a base for control of the Gulf fisheries and for trade with France, Quebec and the West Indies, 1732.

Charlottetown—Provincial Legislature grounds—Cut-stone monument to commemorate the four-hundredth anniversary of the landing of Jacques Cartier on the island, 1534; also a cut-stone monument to commemorate the distinguished service to navigation of Admiral Henry Wolsey Bayfield, 1795-1885.

POPULATION FORECAST

Perhaps the most striking tribute to the island, however, was the forecast made in an article published by William Evans, secretary of the Montreal Agricultural Society, in 1838.

"The soil," he added, "is naturally and generally of so good a quality that almost every acre may be rendered productive. It is entirely free from fogs to which these Provinces are subjected. . . ."

"As regards the salubrity of the island, it is agreed by all who have lived in it for any time that there are few places where health is enjoyed with less interruption."

UNIQUE IN OUTLINE

"In figure Prince Edward Island Centuries Old

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the manufacture of ice cream, chocolate milk, Kraft cheese, and as a stabilizer for beer as well as for other purposes. Therefore, great care has to be exercised in keeping other seaweeds and silt out of the Irish Moss. The Department has now employed qualified inspectors to test the quality of moss and see that it put up in a highly satisfactory manner.

Previous to the outbreak of the war we knew little or nothing about doubling the quality of our production. It was discovered on Prince Edward Island as mostly all moss used in the United States and Canada was produced along the Mediterranean coast of France and off the coast of Ireland but, when shipping space became scarce, chemists in the United States and Canada, who were manufacturing the product had to look elsewhere for their supply.

Inquiries were made in Prince Edward Island and our fishermen and people around the shore were of the opinion that very little Irish Moss grew around our coast. But our patrol boats, in their discovery of the abundance of Irish Moss grew on almost every rock ledge around our Province and this new discovery is now bringing in a revenue of almost a hundred thousand dollars a year to our fishermen and families.

The quantity of fish landed, together with the marketed value for 1948 was as follows:

Kind of Fish	Quantity Marketed	Value
Cod, cwt.	61,852	\$ 318,247
Haddock, cwt.	1,191	8,527
Hake, cwt.	46,608	249,906
Winter Flounder	832	1,984
Herring, in cwt.	69,027	167,382
Mackerel	16,717	121,231
Salmon	17	680
Alewives	4,901	13,143
Smelts	11,899	205,663
Tomcod	722	3,237
Silverides	363	1,683
Sea bream	635	8,731
Lobsters	62,251	1,579,987
Crabs	384	1,909
Clams, bar	274	1,140
Clams, soft shell	4,821	21,239
Quahaugs	515	1,514
Oysters	33,738	174,739
Scallops	137	5,185
Irish Moss	29,206	74,388
Total landed quantity	336,031 cwt.	
Total marketed value	\$2,568,438.	

Exhibitions Popular

(Continued from Page 17)

at the Exhibition in Charlottetown was limited to residents of the Province. In that year it was decided to open it to competitors from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Subsequently when Dominion exhibitions were held in the Maritime Provinces, a grant was obtained from the Department of Agriculture at Ottawa, and the Exhibition in Charlottetown was opened to the breeders and other competitors in Ontario and Quebec.

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