

## Ulster Scots in Nova Scotia

Census records show that in 1748 there were 142 French Acadian families living in the Cobequid district of Nova Scotia. In 1755 these people came under sustained pressure from the British authorities and faced with 'Hobson's Choice' they fled from their settlements rather than wait to be forcibly deported. Thereafter their villages were burned to the ground to dissuade the Acadians from ever returning to the region. Subsequently many of these people moved to Louisiana where their name was mispronounced to become 'Cajun' – the nickname which has remained theirs until the present day.

When this process of forced eviction was complete the British authorities published a proclamation in order to attract loyal subjects. The idea was that they would settle this empty space and thus secure the region on behalf of the Crown. Inevitably, as they had in the past, the authorities turned to the Ulster Scots to perform the role that Rory Fitzpatrick has described as 'God's Frontiersmen'. The agent who took on the job of recruiting suitable Ulster Scots settlers for this task was one of their own ilk – Captain Alexander McNutt. This 30 year old son of Londonderry looked first for such people not in his native Ulster (that would happen shortly afterwards) but rather in the areas that the Ulster Scots had settled and made their own 30-40 years earlier – particularly around Londonderry New Hampshire. McNutt himself had lived initially for some time amongst the Scots Irish in Staunton Virginia. Between April and November 1760 McNutt served as a Massachusetts Province Captain at Fort Cumberland near the present day border between Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. This may be how he came to know the area although it is likely that McNutt may have become involved in the 'Nova Scotia Ulster Scots' colonization process because he initially worked for Thomas Hancock who was the Boston agent of Charles Lawrence – the Governor of Nova Scotia. Whatever his motivation McNutt recruited an initial band of 50 'second generation' Scots Irish settlers from New Hampshire who arrived in the Cobequid/Truro area in the Spring of 1761.

McNutt had big plans. He proposed to settle 7-8 thousand 'Protestant Irish' in Nova Scotia. The London Board of Trade accepted the concept but the Privy Council of the day balked at the scheme as they felt that such a haemorrhage would harm British interests in Ireland. Not completely deterred by this restriction McNutt returned to his native Ulster seeking emigrants. In the Spring of 1761 he advertised throughout Ulster for "industrious farmers and useful mechanics". He offered 200 acres of land to the head of the family and 50 additional acres to each member of the family. This campaign resulted in 300 Ulster colonists on board the 'Hopewell' and the 'Nancy' arriving in Halifax from Londonderry in October of that same year. The original plan was that these people should be set down on the lands which had been afforded for 'planting' on the Northern shores' of the Minas Basin. However it was October – late in the year and they were kept in Halifax to spend the winter where they were supported by both Government and private charity. These immigrants were viewed as being less 'advanced' than the earlier New Hampshire second generation Ulster Scots and were described as being "indigent people".

In the Spring of 1762 the Council of Nova Scotia supplied the settlers with provisions such as seed corn, tools, building materials and a vessel to take them to the Cobequid area. Here they founded Londonderry on the Great Village River in present day Colchester County.

On August 4<sup>th</sup> 1960 the Mayor of Londonderry Nova Scotia – Senator J.G. Colhoun unveiled a cairn commemorating these settlers who build the township of Londonderry, Onslow and Truro.

In autumn 1762 some 170 more Ulster settlers came into Halifax on the same two ships and a significant section of this group settled in the New Dublin area of present day Lunenburg County.

In the Spring of 1763 McNutt returned to London in order to attempt to revive his fortunes but to no avail. In 1764 he was operating in Pennsylvania but this didn't work out either and shortly afterwards in 1765 he and his brother Benjamin received a grant of land in the Shelburne area where they established themselves on McNutt's Island. For the next thirty years Alexander McNutt split his time between this home and Truro.