

They Came From Scotland
Tracking Your Scots Emigrant Ancestor
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One of the key issues in tracking your Scottish ancestor often involves the gap between finding them in the Canadian records (BMD-Census) and being able to locate them in the Scottish records. While this may seem like a daunting task, it is often less of a challenge and more of a reward if you understand what brought them here in the first place. To do that, we need to understand a little bit of Scottish history. Not back to the beginning of time, just back to the beginning of emigration to the Americas.

Penal Transportation:

Following the Battle of Dunbar in 1650, over 4000 Scots had been captured and imprisoned. In fairly short order, 150 of the healthiest men were gathered, taken to London and then shipped on the ***Unity*** to New England, arriving in Massachusetts. For a list of Scottish Prisoners of War from the Battle of Dunbar and subsequent listing of men who were transported, this website is incredibly helpful:

<http://scottishprisonersofwar.com/unity-prisoners/>

Several weeks after the sailing of the *Unity*, another 270 were led aboard the "John & Sara" and set sail for Boston. The ship's list of the John & Sara has been transcribed and can be found at: <http://www.us-roots.org/colonialamerica/main/john&sara.html>

In 1773, the *Hector* made it's first trip to Canada, arriving in Pictou, Nova Scotia with Scots from Greenock and Lochbroom. The families were offered free passage, free provisions for a year, and a farm. A re-created ship's list for the *Hector* can be found at: http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~nspictou/pass_ships/hector.html

Covenanters:

Covenanters are a unique and important group in Scottish History. The Covenanters were a group that, in the simplest of terms, signed a "Covenant" (Oath) 1683 in Greyfriars Kirkyard in Edinburgh. This was known as the National Covenant and was a promise with God that He would remain as the head of the Church of Scotland (Presbyterian) rather than the reigning King. As a result of this belief, the Covenanters were subject to persecution and often imprisonment. In fact there is a Covenanters Prison in the Greyfriars Kirkyard. Here, the Covenanters were held until they were transported to the West Indies or other ports. Covenanters were also held on Bass Rock, 3 miles off the coast of North Berwick in the Firth of Forth. Of note is that these "prisons", unlike gaols for other malcontents and thieves, were open to the elements. The covenanters were rounded up and imprisoned out in the open until they either died of exposure, disease or starvation. Those who survived were extradited to the Colonies or the West Indies.

The first group of Covenanters banished from Great Britain arrived in America in the late 1600s, settling in South Carolina and New Jersey. Here they were able to live free of religious persecution and to retain their strong Scottish culture.

Some online databases to search for covenanter ancestors are:

<http://search.ancestry.ca/search/db.aspx?dbid=7021>

<http://www.covenanter.org.uk/>

<http://clanboyd.info/outsideusa/scotland/covenanters/index.htm>

Jacobites:

In 1689, King James VII of Scotland abandoned his kingdom and fled to France. This saw William of Orange become the King. Some Scots believed that being king of Scotland was a divine right given only to the descendants of King James. This group were known as Jacobites.

People were expected to swear allegiance to their King and his authority. Jacobites wouldn't swear allegiance since William was not a direct descendant of James, while Charles Stuart (Bonnie Prince Charlie) was. Hoping to reinstate the Stuart regime, the Jacobites rose in rebellion on a number of occasions, notably in 1715 and in 1745. Beginning in 1716, Jacobite Highlanders were rounded up, imprisoned and subsequently transported to the Americas. Approximately 1,500 Jacobite prisoners were exiled to the American Plantations. Many of their descendants subsequently made their way north as Loyalists, following the War of 1812.

The level of emigration from Scotland was, at one point, so strong that the government decided to compile what has become known as the "Register of Emigrants 1773-1774." This is the only comprehensive list of its kind compiled before the American Revolution. Unfortunately it only covers one year. However, a compiled list of the years 1773-1775 can be found at: <http://genealogytrails.com/ncar/emigrantsfromenglandandscotland.html>

Online databases for Jacobites are:

<http://immigrantships.net/jacobite/indexjacobite.html>

The Impact of the Scottish Enlightenment:

Sir Francis Hutcheson, Professor of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow University, is considered to be the father of the Scottish Enlightenment. He paved the way for a more moderate Church and more freedom of thought. The Scottish Enlightenment was centred on the Universities of Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen.

Many of the leading minds of the Scottish Enlightenment were colleagues and close friends. They regularly met to eat, drink and debate. They started clubs and societies where they could socialise, debate and exchange ideas. These debates opened the way for worldwide improvements through new ideas, discoveries and inventions.

This opening of the mind put a big emphasis on education and this led to a very large number of well educated Scots. Many at the University level. It was generally this group of educated Scots, who were accustomed to hard work and were aware of what was necessary to achieve their goals, that were the ones to emigrate, knowing that they could put their education and skills to good use in their new country.

Highland Clearances:

In the mid -1700s Highland life changed dramatically as the Lairds of the highland estates made a brisk move from agricultural farming to sheep farming. The Clearances, which lasted a full century, from 1785 when the Glengarry Estates were first forced into evacuation until 1886 when the Crofter's Act was passed, caused forced emigration of thousands of highlanders. These displaced and often destitute Highlanders were left to wander aimlessly, with nowhere to go and no possessions to speak of. Some were granted crofts on the rocky coastal shores. Yet others wandered into the larger cities in hopes of finding work in the factories there. Many of the highlanders ended up losing their loved ones in the process of migrating either through hunger, fatigue or disease.

List of those who were cleared:

<http://www.fernandocandido.com/scotland/clearances-a-b.html>

List of emigrant ships of those cleared:

<http://www.fernandocandido.com/scotland/clearanceships.html>

The Macleod Estate Papers:

<http://www.angusmacleodarchive.org.uk>

The Sutherland Estate Papers are not available online but are available for review at the National Library of Scotland in their Special Collections Department.

Emigration Schemes:

A number of highland Scots were assisted in emigrating to PEI by Lord Selkirk. He provided assisted passage and a grant of land to those who travelled with him in 1803.

Passenger List reconstruction for ship Polly:

http://www.islandregister.com/selkirk_settlers.html

Passenger List reconstruction for ship Dykes:

<http://www.islandregister.com/dykes.html>

Passenger List reconstruction for ship Oughton:

<http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~pictou/oughton.htm>

Passenger List reconstruction for ship Spencer:

<http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~pictou/spencer.htm>

Following the success of the Selkirk Settlement in PEI, Selkirk received a land grant of 1,200 acres in Southern Ontario in 1804. This land was in the area now known as Wallaceburg. At the time, the area was named Baldoon, after Selkirk's home in Scotland.

A list of the individual land grants can be found at:

<http://www.windsorscottish.com/docs/doc-baldoonlandtable.pdf>

Much of the success of Selkirk's scheme was that he allowed entire families to travel together, and gave them permission to bring their highland culture with them. This was an intriguing draw given that the English government had essentially outlawed the highland way of life, forbidding the wearing of tartan and the speaking of Gaelic.

Other databases to try for finding your Scots ancestor from the highlands are:

University of Aberdeen Emigration Database:
<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/emigration/search.html>
Highland and Island Emigration Society
<http://www.scan.org.uk/researchrtools/emigration.htm>

For offline resources, the books by historian Lucille Campey are excellent and provide a treasure trove of information and a depth of understanding into how and why the Scots settled where they did. They are available through Global Genealogy.

PASSENGER VESSELS ACT 1803, 1842 & 1849:

Other than assigned prison ships, most people who left Scotland did so on merchant ships. Merchants would charge steerage for people wanting to make their way to the colonies from the late 1600s until the end of the 1700s. In **1803**, the **Passenger Vessel Act** was passed which detailed minimal requirements for passengers aboard ships going between the UK and either the colonies or the Caribbean. In essence, all this did was raise the cost of steerage from £3 to £10 - a cost the ship's masters felt necessary to meet the standards imposed by the act. Essentially nothing else changed. It wasn't until the **Passenger Act of 1842** that ships were required to keep a record of the people sailing with them. The act reads:

"The masters are to keep a list of passengers according to a given form, to be countersigned by the officers of Customs at the port of clearance, and deposited with the officers of Customs or Consul at the port of discharge....A like list is to be kept of additional passengers who may be taken on board during the voyage"

Prior to this time frame, ships passenger lists were not kept. However, there are a number of re-created passenger lists (created from other documents) for ships bringing immigrants to Canada.

The **1842 Act** also detailed the need for "three quarts of water" per passenger per day as well as seven pounds of bread stuff per passenger per week. This could include up to five pounds of potatoes. As well, each passenger (a limit of one passenger per two tons of steerage) was to be assigned a minimum of 10 clear feet of space.

The Passenger Act of 1849 imposed far more restrictions and requirements including a designated sick bay, fires to be lit by kitchen staff at 7 every morning and left on until at least 10pm every evening. Decks, the hospital and roundhouse were to be swept daily. This chore was assigned to the passengers on a rotational basis.

In the days of these sailing vessels, the average trip to the colonies was 10 weeks. The time to cross the Atlantic was significantly reduced in 1870 when steam ships were put into use. Trips across the Atlantic leaving from Glasgow/Greenock took 20 less than ships leaving from either Liverpool or London, making Glasgow/Greenock the major departure point for our ancestors in the years after steam ships began transporting passengers to the Americas.

Colonial Societies

As a way to assist with the transition of emigrants going to the colonies, a number of local **Colonial Societies** were founded. And a number of assisted emigration schemes were formed. Regardless of where they were located, these Societies were similar in that they provided assisted passage for families willing to emigrate to the colonies. Here is an example of their objectives regarding the people they would provide assistance to:

- Entire families would be together.
- If they were able-bodied men or women of good character
- They could not exceed a specified age or have families exceeding a specified number of children.
- The potential emigrants must possess a specified quantity and description of clothing.
- Families were required to pay a deposit of from 1 pound to 2 pounds, for adults, and 10 shillings for children.
- People exceeding a certain age would pay more.
- Only after all means of meeting the expenses was made would a family be allowed "aid". (they needed to prove they had attempted to raise the full funds themselves and had not been successful in doing so)
- The trustees or owners of the properties from which the emigrants departed would be expected to pay one third of the sum given.
- Any sum advanced to emigrants would have to be repaid.

Here are some online databases that may help you in tracking your emigrant ancestor if they took advantage of assisted emigration schemes:

- Toronto/Kingston Emigration Office
http://www.archives.gov.on.ca/en/microfilm/i_immigration_t.aspx
- St Andrew's Society of Montreal
<http://www.standrews.qc.ca/sas/archives.htm>

Better Job Prospects:

By 1870, steamships were bringing large numbers of immigrants from Scotland. Many of these steamships were, in fact, built on the Clyde. These immigrants were often skilled workers or tradesmen: jewellers, miners, weavers, shopkeepers, printers, bakers, butchers, cooks, barbers, stonemasons.

Craftsmen from Aberdeen, "The Granite City" had established an international reputation in stonemasonry. This meant that a large number of quarrymen migrated to California and other states to work. It was Scottish stonemasons who cut the granite for the Mormon Temple in Salt Lake City. Scots also flourished in ranching and sheep farming. In 1873, George Grant took four of his Aberdeen Angus bulls to Kansas. This was the introduction of Angus beef in the US. Scots herders also dominated the sheep industry. Likely the most well known was Andrew Little of Idaho whose herd numbered over 100,000.