

# Emmigration of Scotch-Irish Montgomeries

Many of the early Montgomery families immigrating to America were from Ulster and termed Scotch-Irish. Many of us in CMSI heard from our parents that we were Scotch-Irish without knowing what that meant. It is a wonderful history and while the following needs to be brief, CMSI members may want to research further.

Many thousands of Scotch-Irish immigrants came prior to 1776, with large-scale immigration beginning in 1718. Immigration to America was at a standstill during the American Revolution (1775-1783), but following the Revolution many Scotch-Irish continued to come to the United States.

Scotch-Irish immigrants came from the historic province of Ulster (in the north of Ireland). Scottish settlers began to come in large numbers to Ulster in the early decades of the 1600s. James I, the English monarch, sought to solidify control by transferring land ownership to Protestants and by settling their lands with Protestant tenants (English and Scottish). Scottish settlers continued to come to Ireland throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Scotch-Irish immigrants settled in the American colonies from the 1600s. However, the first major migration of Scotch-Irish to America was a group that came with Rev. James McGregor from County Londonderry to New England in 1718. They arrived at Boston, and many of them moved to New Hampshire, establishing the town of Londonderry.

Many of these early immigrants (of the 1720s and 1730s) first settled in Pennsylvania. Many then moved down from Pennsylvania into Virginia and the Carolinas. From there immigrants and their descendants went on to populate the states of Georgia, Kentucky, and Tennessee in the 1780s and 1790s. Nonetheless, there was significant Scotch-Irish settlement in each of the thirteen American colonies.

There are myriad possible reasons for the immigration of so many of the Scotch-Irish to America in the 1700s. High rents and religious persecution have often been blamed. Most came freely to the American colonies, although there were also some who were deported as prisoners or came as indentured servants. Others came with British Army regiments and remained in the American colonies.

It is important to keep in mind that just because an ancestor came from Ireland to America during the colonial period does not mean that he/she was necessarily Scotch-Irish. Many Anglicans, Catholics, and Quakers also came from Ireland during this time period. An ancestor from Ireland can often be identified as Scotch-Irish from: family tradition, the surname, the given names in the family, association with other Scotch-Irish, or identification as a Presbyterian.

## *Group/Congregational Migrations*

The Scotch-Irish largely came to colonial America in family groups, often such that members of an extended family settled near one another, whether they immigrated together or separately. Some came to America as part of larger group or in congregational migrations, meaning that an entire group or congregation of Presbyterians together moved from one locality in Ireland to one locality in America. It is thus very important to trace persons that immigrated with a Scotch-Irish ancestor or were associated with the ancestor in America.

In some cases, the immigrating group was led by a minister. In such instances, the minister may be traced back to the church he served in Ireland. Most of the immigrants who accompanied him would be from the same area. However, a group or congregational migration may have drawn from a larger area than just one town or parish in Ireland.

The first recorded permanent settlement west of the Allegheny divide and on a stream that drained eventually into the Gulf of Mexico was located at Draper's Meadows near the present Blacksburg, Virginia in 1748. The settlers were a group of Scotch-Irish who were the first of many to settle in the river valleys. Over the next several years the frontier was to take on a distinctly Scotch-Irish flavor with whiskey (replacing rum and peach brandy that had been so popular on the sea coast colonies) becoming the choice for drink.

*Keith Ott, CMSI # 605*

