

12. *Glasgow Directory for 1890-1891* (Glasgow: William MacKenzie, 1890), 1163-64.
13. Henry William LeMessurier, "Report on the Foreign Trade and Commerce of Newfoundland 1906-1909" (London: Great Britain Board of Trade, 1909).
14. Robertson and Robertson, *Cast Iron Decoration*, p. 24, indicate finding MacFarlane trademarks as far away as India and Australia. Some of the ironwork in St. John's bears a definite similarity to examples found in Halifax, N.S., where much ironwork is thought to have originated at the MacFarlane foundry.
15. Dona Meilach, *Decorative and Sculptural Ironwork* (New York: Crown, 1976), p. 8.
16. Gertrude Jobes, *Dictionary of Mythology, Folklore and Symbols* (New York: Scarecrow, 1962), p. 1675.

Eighteenth-Century Immigrants to Nova Scotia: The Yorkshire Settlers

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The goal of this report is to begin to identify some of the artifacts of everyday life for one group of eighteenth-century immigrants to Nova Scotia, those from Yorkshire, England, and to gain insight as to the way these artifacts were used, the economy in which they existed and the social organization of a newly settled place. This is a necessary first step in a longer project to compare similar elements of ordinary people who were first-generation immigrants belonging to identifiable immigrant groups. This research report is limited in several ways. First, it tries to reconstruct the property of the group and its usage using only one type of document. Second, it is limited to the households of those people identified as first-generation immigrants. Third, it deals only with the members of a single group who settled in one geographic area and does not account for those other group members who went elsewhere or returned home. Nevertheless, certain conclusions may be drawn which challenge some popular historical assumptions about "pioneer life." The evidence here also suggests another series of questions which this research report can only note in passing, but which point the way to further work.

John Mannion in his exceptional study of eastern Canada's Irish settlements and John Demos in his work on Plymouth Colony adopt the use of a wide number of sources for their work. These included architecture, land and farm systems and the local official records such as deeds, marriage and death records and probate files.¹ Because these studies are based on records previously little used or overlooked by historians and other scholars, new knowledge and ways of thinking about those

particular groups have emerged. While this report cannot be so extensive in the examination of all the records available, it does hope to establish a foothold upon which to advance.

To do this, the probate court records were examined. The files vary in content, but a complete file contains the last will and testament, an order by the judge of probate or Justice of the Peace to certain people to produce a true and accurate account of the real and personal property of the deceased, lists of accounts owed to and owed by the deceased's estate, receipts for charges against the estate and documents supporting any questions or disputes. The most important of these for understanding the material history of a group are the wills and the inventories of the contents of the estates, and it is on these that this report relies. Use of probate records alone can give a misleading impression, but by recognizing from the first the restrictions inherent in these documents, conclusions can still be reached and new directions for research identified.

The method used to locate these documents was, first, to survey the probate records for Cumberland County, Nova Scotia, and Westmorland County, New Brunswick, the latter having once been part of the former, and an area where the study group of Yorkshire settlers concentrated. By using existing passenger lists as a guide to the court indexes, those files of people with Yorkshire surnames were extracted. Because the sample of documents written in the eighteenth century seemed small (fifteen documents), the records of Yorkshire settlers who died up to 1810 were included on the basis that cultural, political and economic activities remained essentially stable for those further eleven years. This

allowed the sample of probate files to nearly double to twenty-nine.

A cautionary remark about the use of probate records which is often repeated in the methodological literature is that inventories are more frequently found for the estates of wealthy people than for those of the poor.² Although it is difficult to support this conventional wisdom, it is equally difficult to refute it, as estates of both kinds can easily be found. Likewise the degree of attention given to the preparation of an inventory varies from case to case and discrepancies occur. From the files examined for this study, however, one can find general agreement with the comments of Nancy and Jeff Cox, who note that some critics suggest

... that the inventory was not always carefully taken, that sometimes obvious articles were omitted, that valuations were often ridiculously low and incorrectly totalled and most historians have accepted this verdict. It is true that most inventories are rarely the indented copies required by law and that they were often made before the administrators were empowered to act; it is also true either that the system was not universally applied or that many probate documents have not been preserved. It is our contention, however, that the whole process was more carefully carried out than has been supposed though the bizarre spelling and atrocious writing sometimes obscure this.³

Because of these considerations, a strictly quantitative analysis of probate records could arguably be as fraught with errors as the more impressionistic view this report will give.

The Yorkshire settlers arrived in Nova Scotia between 1772 and 1776, just prior to the American Revolution. In those years about 800 people from that part of England arrived and of those eighty different families established themselves in northern Nova Scotia.⁴ The circumstances regarding the arrival and settlement of this group have been discussed by others but bear recounting here in order to place this present work in a historical context.⁵

The area most settled by the Yorkshire group was Cumberland County. At the time of their arrival, this county comprised most of what is known today as Cumberland as well as much of present-day New Brunswick. The immigrants as individuals spread widely to other regions, but most of the group chose the area around the Chignecto Isthmus. Though they arrived only twenty-five years after the founding of Halifax, they did not come to virgin territory. For centuries the Micmac and Malecite had known the isthmus as prime bird-hunting territory, as the extensive marshlands

provided excellent nesting and feeding grounds. European settlement came about a hundred years before the Yorkshire immigrants, as the expanding Acadian population sought new village sites on the Bay of Fundy. The settlement of Beaubassin and its satellites successfully cultivated the marshes on the Chignecto from 1672 to the expulsion of the Acadians in 1755.

European activity on the isthmus increased in 1750 when two opposing forts, Beauséjour and Lawrence, were erected that year on either side of the disputed boundary of Acadia. These forts played out their imperial roles until the defeat of Beauséjour and the resultant expulsion order of 1755. The British garrison consolidated in Fort Cumberland (the renamed Beauséjour), and for the next thirteen years provided an important market for farm produce grown by New Englanders. These people had arrived in response to Governor Lawrence's offer of Acadian lands to those who would settle. The New Englanders, however, did not stay in as great a number as they arrived, largely because the work force needed to maintain the marshlands at their highest level of production was not available. The labouring class was too small to meet the demand of farming, and this discouraged the New Englanders.⁶ Unlike the Acadians who farmed co-operatively, the cultural attitudes of the New England farmers prevented this solution to their economic problems, and they chose emigration instead.

With fertile lands vacant a second time, Lt.-Gov. Michael Francklin visited Yorkshire in 1772. He brought news of the good, cheap land available in Nova Scotia. At work were other forces that provided an impetus for immigration to the alluring new country. These are identified by Mildred Campbell in her article "English Emigration on the Eve of the American Revolution." Campbell notes that the trend to enclose land, that is, rearranging farms and fences to create larger farms, was strongest in Yorkshire. That county had "inclosed the largest acreage of any county in England, and, in the years covered by this emigration and immediately before, the greater part of this inclosing was taking place in the North and East Ridings."⁷ These two ridings were the origin of most of the Yorkshire immigrants to Nova Scotia.

By enclosing land, land holders were able to increase the productivity of their holdings, or at least they were convinced that they could do so. Subsequently the rents rose, by almost a hundred percent in some cases. Up until then

farms, though rented, remained in families for generations. In addition, there were poor taxes calculated on the rising rents, and an irksome system of tithes.⁸

The combination of the effects of enclosure and general dissatisfaction with existing rewards for work led many to Hull, a major port of departure for emigrants. Just before boarding ship, emigrants were asked about their decision to leave and in the surviving documents for the group headed to Nova Scotia two phrases stand out: "To seek a better livelihood," and "On account of their rents being raised."⁹

In her study, Campbell notes that between December 1773 and April 1776, roughly the same period the Yorkshire settlers arrived in Nova Scotia, 12,000 people left Britain. Of these, probably 6,000 were actually emigrating. In her analysis of occupations, based on the total number of British emigrants, Campbell concludes eleven percent were labourers; sixty-three percent crafts and trades people; and sixteen percent people involved in agriculture.¹⁰ By reviewing the surviving passenger lists of those ships headed to Nova Scotia, a different occupational configuration appears. That is, sixty-five percent of the Yorkshire group were associated with agriculture, while most of the remainder could be classified as artisans. Few servants and labourers were listed. Of the artisans, the crafts practiced were largely rural and agrarian, namely tanning, blacksmithing, milling, coopering, tailoring, butchering and brewing. Also identified were a house carpenter, a joiner and a shoemaker. Servants and labourers do appear on the lists but in very small numbers, thus confirming Campbell's belief that Francklin purposely sought "people who would stick" to the lands earlier abandoned, and therefore sought "farmers and tradesmen with some substance, enterprise and ambition" rather than the "six hundred starving poor in Leeds."¹¹

On arrival in Cumberland County the task of finding a farm must have been paramount. The few property records examined indicate that the economic depression that had caused havoc among the New Englanders the previous decade continued into the 1770s, as land prices remained below the pre-1770 average of £1 per acre.¹² For example, in July 1777 D. Hawkins sold to Thomas Bowser 1100 acres in Sackville Township for £125, and Joshua Mauger sold to William Trueman 500 acres in Bay Verte, Cumberland Township, for £90. Marshlands, though, remained relatively high:

John Barns sold six acres to Gideon Smith for £6 in 1775. Smith had earlier, in 1773, purchased four acres of marsh for £5 from Samuel Ballau. Regularly we see the purchasing of farms by the Yorkshire immigrants, further evidence that Francklin was able to attract the people of substance he wanted.

The records of probate, and in particular the inventories of estates made after death, reveal some insights into the manner of life in this period. The specific questions regarding material history and its interpretation are numerous, but only a few will be tackled here.¹³

One of these questions regards literacy. Of seventeen wills on hand, twelve were signed by the testator, leaving five to be signed with a mark. At first glance this would seem to indicate a high level of literacy, but we should keep in mind that a signature could be the extent of one's writing ability. What then is further evidence of the level of literacy in the Yorkshire community? A search for books among inventoried estates (three of which had corresponding wills) revealed nine properties holding books. Two estates, Stephen Read (d. 1801) and William Pipes (d. 1805), had wills signed with a mark. Read owned "one large Bible," while Pipes, who is described as a trader, had books valued at £5.15.0. Read's Bible, it can be argued, was a common book to find in a home and a large Bible, valued at 35s. as this one was, may have been more for show than for use. However, the will of Read's wife, Mary, bears her signature. Perhaps it was she who read the book in the household. Pipes, on the other hand, was a merchant and his books were clearly for sale.

Of the other properties indicating books, only one has a will extant, and that is signed by the testator. Even so, books existed in a quantity to suggest their owners were literate. One library, that of George Forster (d. 1800) contained in excess of thirty-three books and gives a good example of the literary taste of the period. In his library the religious element is strongest. The collection contains three testaments, three prayerbooks, two hymnbooks, a thirteen-volume *Christian Library*, *Harvey's Meditations* and other instructive titles. Forster also had two books on medicine and a number of schoolbooks. Other collections contained unidentified books worth only a few shillings. Four estates had books valued between £1.0.0 and £5.15.0. Given that the library of George Forster was valued at £3.7.0 and contained at least thirty-three books, there was considerable reading material for a few

people. Also, each of the two traders listed here, William Pipes and James Fenwick (d. 1802), had large numbers of books among his stores, suggesting that literacy was not an uncommon trait of this group of settlers.

One basic activity associated with early settlers is the spinning and weaving of cloth. Two sorts of cloth can be made: woollen or homespun, or linen (woven from spun flax). Inventories were thus examined for the tools of production, namely wheels (large for wool and small for flax), reels for winding yarn or thread, and looms for weaving. Of the estates surveyed, six large wheels and two small were listed. A reel was identified, but looms were non-existent. Spinning and weaving did not seem to be usual activities among this group, yet there were four estates with large amounts of cloth, although none of these had wheels. For example, John Jolly (d. 1776) had five yards of cloth, and George Dobson (d. 1791) had 31 yards. In addition, estate inventories list an abundance of sheep. Fourteen estates held a combined 329 sheep, individuals having as few as two and as many as eighty-five.

Because no looms appear is not to say definitely there were none among the Yorkshire settlers. Nancy and Jeff Cox have shown that some elements attached to a house or building would not appear in an inventory, such as wainscoting, doors, window glass and cheese presses—all things adding value to an estate but which were arguably part of the fabric of a building, and therefore not separately listed.¹⁴ Looms have been known to be built into houses, and in some traditions special buildings were constructed for the loom. The small number of wheels found indicates that spinning, a primary step to cloth production, was an activity in only a few households. The eight wheels occurred in only five estates. Yet the existence of so many sheep would suggest some cloth production in the community.

We can now turn to two other pieces of evidence. The estate of David Forrest (d. 1797) was initially appraised by his wife. This appraisal was challenged by his heirs and a new inventory taken. In the estate papers exists an "unprised" listing of Forrest's property, probably part of the argument by the heirs for a new appraisal. What this unvalued list does give, however, are the amounts of three lots of cloth and the names of the weavers, who are united by their ethnic origin—"40 yds Wollen cloth wove by Mrs Fulton & 40 yds ditto by Mr Carney and 14 yds Linnen cloth wove by Mrs Logan." That the three weavers belonged to

Scottish or Irish families is significant as it suggests a distinct division of craft production based on cultural origins within a community.

Second, we look again at the holdings of William Pipes and James Fenwick, the two merchants. Both estates contained large amounts of cloth, such as thirty-three yards of osnaburgh (a coarse linen), fourteen yards of linen, eighteen yards of dimity (a cotton), three yards of check (checked cotton?), a lot of worsted yarn, eleven yards of wildbore (a print?), and remnants of broadcloth, durant (imitation leather), baize, fustian, muslin, along with threads, needles and thimbles. Patterns for clothing were available from these merchants as well. That this wide variety of materials was obtainable locally suggests that the need to spin and weave for oneself was not pressing.

The inventories provide good descriptions of the clothing of the Yorkshire settlers. Homespun, it appears, was little used and occurred mainly in petticoats and men's trousers. Most other clothes were of linen or woollen such as baize or worsted wool. Silk and cotton clothes were not unusual and fur hats and even an umbrella were noted. Although the average person does not seem to have been particularly well outfitted, it is not uncommon to find accumulations of certain items among the estates, such as John Jolly with thirteen pairs of stockings, or George Dobson with seven coats. The inventory of Rosanna Forrest (d. 1798) is an unusual one in that it enumerates clothing quite well; there was much to list. Her estate contained: one dark camblet gown (camblet was a water-proof material of wool and silk); one light camblet gown; a pair of stays; one cotton bed gown; one long cotton gown; one red cloak; one black silk cloak; one black silk apron; an apron and remnant of check; one check apron; one ——— petticoat; two white aprons; two muslin hats; cotton hats; a bed gown; twenty caps; one pair of spectacles; two pairs of stockings; nine shifts; bonnet; two quilt petticoats; one long gown, cotton; one short gown, cotton; two blue skirts; six homespun petticoats; a strait coat; a great coat; a petticoat; a baize shift; a pair of stockings. The Forrests may have been exceptional in the quantity of clothing as David was found to have: three pairs of shoes, two old; two coats; three breeches; a pair of overhauls; a cotton waistcoat; two pairs of silver knee buckles.

Farming, the principal economic activity of the community, was done largely without benefit of any new implements the

"agricultural revolution" might have brought by the late eighteenth century. Implements among estates included bridles, yokes, forks, spades (for dyking), shovels, scythes, sickles, grindstones and axes. Harrows and one double harrow appear, as do references to harrow teeth. Ploughs are mentioned but no description given, likewise with wagons and carts. One mechanism, a grain fan, appeared in William Pipes' inventory. It was valued at £5.

Great strides in cattle and livestock breeding were being made in the eighteenth century. Some evidence for this activity exists in Cumberland County—Robert Ripley (d. 1797) had twelve horses and colts, and one-quarter share in a stallion—but a full discussion is not possible here. While animal breeding was one of the most important developments of the time, other changes also occurred. For example, iron ploughs replaced wooden, seed drills were introduced and four-wheeled wagons became more widespread. As Chambers and Mingay comment in their work on the agricultural revolution, "A remarkable feature of the agricultural revolution was the slow pace at which improved tools and machinery were brought into use," and the isolation of Cumberland could have made this even slower.¹⁵

The farms had to provide sustenance and estate inventories offer an indication of the diet of the eighteenth-century settler. Tea was a popular drink as references to it abound among the furniture listings with such items as tea tables, teaboard, tea chests and tea cups and saucers. Indeed, merchant Pipes had two kinds of tea in his inventory. Only one reference to coffee is made, and that is to a coffee pot. Rum in a cask at £30 in 1778 is noted, but the only other references to rum are 84 gallons in the Pipes' inventory, and a charge against the estate of William Bulmer in 1794 for rum served during the auction of his goods. One beer cask (presumably empty at 4s.) and a still at £1 are the only other references to alcohol.

Livestock included hogs, cattle and sheep. Fowl of any kind seem rare and fourteen geese are all that appear. A 1784 list, however, includes a pigeon net. Passenger pigeons, still plentiful, would doubtlessly be added to the diet. A good listing of foodstuffs is found in the inventory of Thomas Robinson who died in November of 1796. In it we have an idea of what winter rations could be laid up, but no clear indication as to how many people these would feed: one-half bushel peas; one-half bushel beans; seventeen cheeses; two bags and one-half bushel flour; one firken butter; 300

bushels potatoes; eight bushels turnips. The inventory for William Pipes confirms that potatoes were the staple food. As for Robinson's seventeen cheeses, his estate, unlike others, included cheese hoops and tray. Whether cheese was usual winter fare or not is inconclusive from the records examined, but as the second most expensive item evaluated in this estate, cheese was then, as now, expensive.

This plain fare could be spiced up with alum, ginger, cinnamon, pepper or raisins, all available at the traders. Sugar does not seem to have been as accessible, and only one pair of sugar nippers occur in the lists. Similarly only one reference to maple sugar is made as we find David Forrest with two big pots in the sugar woods in 1797. That this equipment would have been left in the woods and well away from the notice of any appraisers might explain its general absence from other lists, especially in an area well known for its maple-sugar production.

A number of miscellaneous entries have been extracted for examination. Of eighteen inventories only five holding guns of any sort are listed, leading one to think either hunting or self-protection was not a concern. This lack of firearms may have been a consequence of the Eddy Rebellion, when a band of local and American rebels attacked the nearby Fort Cumberland in 1776. Watches and clocks were not common among the estates, and jewellery did not appear at all. Only one game, a set of tin jacks, was found. No playing cards or musical instruments were listed, although James Fenwick, trader, did have a *Claronet Musick Book*. Fenwick also had nine framed pictures and three plaster images. Pictures did not occur otherwise, although looking glasses were regular features on Yorkshire walls. This situation suggests that Fenwick's geographic location at Maccan allowed him easy access to the Roman Catholic Acadians across the River Hébert.

Finally, the listing of a black man and bed at £15 in Thomas Robinson's inventory of 1796 was singularly strange. It was matched only by Stephen Read's 1801 will, which, as a definite afterthought, included an admonition to his heirs that they care for his black man and black woman. Despite these references, slave holding was not a usual part of the Yorkshire economy, but attitudes towards blacks and their masters by other members of the eighteenth-century Nova Scotian community remain a largely unexplored question.

Very few of the artifacts discussed in this report have actually survived. The public

collections for the region do maintain some scattered pieces of china, two or three chairs, and some other pieces of furniture that have some relation, mainly through ownership, to the Yorkshire settlers.¹⁶ As is commonly observed by museum watchers, these kinds of elite artifacts, which would probably have had extra value despite their sentimental worth, are too much removed from the regular living patterns of the people they were meant to portray to have significant historical value. Considered as a whole, the surviving material from the period of the Yorkshire immigration in public collections does little to enhance our understanding of the group. In consequence, we must look beyond the material remnants,

but not the material itself, in order to attain any notion of reality known to this immigrant group. The records of probate are one way to work toward this goal.

In conclusion, this report attempts to examine through one set of records, the material history of a particular group of eighteenth-century immigrants to Nova Scotia. It raises questions of diet, markets, culture and division of labour which now exist in isolation. In order to test the validity of some of these findings, a comparison with a contemporary but separate group may reveal further the nature of life in eighteenth-century Nova Scotia.

NOTES

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1. John Mannion, *Irish Settlements in Eastern Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974); John Demos, *A Little Commonwealth: Family Life in Plymouth Colony* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970).
2. Julia Cornish, "The Legal Records of Atlantic Canada as a Resource for Material Historians," *Material History Bulletin* 18 (1983): 31; Nancy and Jeff Cox, "Probate Inventories: The Legal Background," *Local History* 16 (1984): 134; B.C. Daniels, "Probate Court Inventories and Colonial American History: Historiography, Problems and Results," *Histoire Sociale/Social History* (1976): 395.
3. Cox, "Probate Inventories," p. 134. The last comment regarding "bizarre spelling" is interesting not only because it suggests that past historians have taken it as a sign of the overall fallibility of probate records. In the records viewed for this study it became quickly apparent that spelling was often done phonetically. This in itself is not unusual, but it does offer a potential source of material for scholars concerned with linguistics.
4. James Snowdon, "Footprints in the Marsh Mud: Politics and Land Settlement in the Township of Sackville 1760-1800" (MA thesis, University of New Brunswick, Fredericton, N.B., 1974), p. 75.
5. J.B. Brebner, *The Neutral Yankees of Nova Scotia* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1969); Margaret Campbell, "English Emigration on the Eve of the American Revolution," *American Historical Review* 61 (1955): 1-20; W.C. Milner, "The Records of Chignecto," *Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society*, vol. 15 (1911); Snowdon, "Footprints in Marsh Mud"; G. Trenholm, M. Norden, and J. Trenholm, *A History of Fort Lawrence: Times, Tides and Towns* (Edmonton: Sherwood Printing, 1985); H. Trueman, *The Chignecto Isthmus and Its First Settlers* (Toronto: Mika, 1975).
6. Snowdon, "Footprints in Marsh Mud," pp. 69-70.
7. Campbell, "English Emigration," p. 11.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
9. G. Fothergill, "Emigrants from England," in M. Tepper, ed., *Passengers to America* (Baltimore: Genealogical Press, 1977), pp. 1-8.
10. Campbell, "English Emigration," pp. 5-6.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
12. Snowdon, "Footprints in Marsh Mud," p. 66.
13. The records of probate discussed in this report are all located in the Registry of Probate, Cumberland County Court House, Amherst, N.S.
14. Cox, "Probate Inventories," pp. 139-42.
15. J.D. Chambers and G.E. Mingay, *The Agricultural Revolution 1750-1880* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1966).
16. These few items are found in the collections of Fort Beauséjour National Historic Park, Aulac, N.B.; Keillor House Museum, Dorchester, N.B.; and the Cumberland County Museum, Amherst, N.S.