

## Introduction

Between 1759 and 1768 some 8000 New Englanders emigrated to what are now the provinces of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Known as “planters,” the old English term for colonist, they were among the first anglophone immigrants to the area of present-day Canada. In October 1987 nearly 150 people converged on Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, to attend a conference billed as “New England Planters in Maritime Canada.” It was the first time that the Planters had ever been made the exclusive focus of an academic conference, and the unexpectedly large turn-out suggested that the time was long overdue for such an event.

The obscurity into which the New England Planters have fallen is a curious phenomenon of Canadian historical scholarship. In numbers, the Planters included almost as many people as migrated to Quebec during the whole period of the French regime, and they equal or surpass the Icelandic, Doukhobor and Mennonite migrations to the Prairies in the nineteenth century. Yet, as George Rawlyk points out in his article in this volume, authors of Canadian history texts give short shrift to the Planters, if they mention them at all.

Part of the explanation for the “missing” Planters must surely lie in their motives for coming to Nova Scotia. Because the Acadian deportation and Loyalist migration were far more dramatic events than the peaceful migration of a mass of land-hungry Yankees, the Planters have received less scholarly attention than their numbers and impact warrant. But this explanation alone is not enough. Other migrant groups endowed with a healthy strain of possessive individualism have not been expunged from our textbooks. Nor can it be said that little is known about the Planters. J.B. Brebner, whose book, *The Neutral Yankees of Nova Scotia*, was first published in 1937, explored, at great length, the period during which the Planters dominated the population base of Nova Scotia. Why have Brebner’s mighty labours, and those who have followed in his footsteps, not guaranteed the Planters their place in the Canadian mosaic?

It would be easy to blame the Toronto-dominated Canadian history profession for deliberately down-playing the Planter heritage in the Maritimes. However, this explanation, appealing though it may be, will not do. And it would be equally remiss to blame the Americans for refusing to acknowledge that people have actually left the United States for opportunity elsewhere. Indeed, it is the Planters themselves who must share much of the blame for the neglected state of Planter Studies. As Ernest A. Clarke reveals in his discussion of Cumberland Township during the American Revolution, Planter identity was a fragile concept, at best, during the first generation of settlement. It more or less easily gave way to