THE ANCESTORS OF THE SCOTCH-IRISH

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The Scottish-Irish in this article are regarded as the Presbyterians of Scottish ancestry who, before the American Revolution, migrated to what was to be the United States from the province of Ulster in Ireland. Persons acquainted with the history of the Scotch-Irish are aware that the common explanation given for their origin is that they were descendants of Scots who had settled in Ulster in the beginning of the seventeenth century. Since the validity of this explanation is questioned here, an examination of the Ulster colonies is required.

In 1603, James VI, King of Scots, succeeded his mother's first cousin, Elizabeth, on the English throne as James I. Although Scotland and England then had the same monarch, both countries remained separate and independent. In 1607, James I established the colony of Virginia in North America; and in 1610, he set up the Ulster Plantation in Ireland. Both England and Scotland participated in the latter enterprise, but the greater number of colonists were planned to come from England. Gentlemen of title were to be given large tracts of land — recently vacant — in six counties in Ulster province, if they would assemble and transport to them a sufficient number of settlers.1 These landlords were expected not only to recruit colonists but also to provide what was needed for the existence of a stable community. The colonists from Scotland had to be natives of the Lowlands, which in practice meant the southwestern counties.

Settlers were found only with difficulty because complete families were desired. Such family groups were to form communities which were to be and to remain Scottish or English. They were not to intermarry or otherwise associate with the Irish. In the judgment of the Encyclopedia Britannica the whole colonization scheme was "a failure." 2

Mr. McCune, an engineering graduate of Cornell University, was employed for more than forty years by the Westinghouse Air Brake Company. In 1916 he participated in the Mexican Border Campaign and in 1918 took part in the Meuse-Argonne offensive in France. His ancestors left Scotland not long after the Revolution of 1688.—Ed.

Not all Scottish settlers in Ireland lived in the Plantation. Two Scottish gentlemen, for services rendered an Irish chieftain, were given by him in 1605 with the approval of James I large tracts in County Down, easily reached from Scotland. A round trip to Donaghadee in Down could be made in a good day by a sailing vessel from Portpatrick in Wigtown. With their friends and retainers the Scottish gentlemen moved into their new lands, but as they were without effective official support the population of their holdings did not increase with rapidity. Apart from other reasons, Scots did not migrate to Ireland because of their traditional dislike of the Irish people.

Those Scots who did cross to Ulster in the early seventeenth century were not well-regarded at home. A quotation from a manuscript "History of the Church in Ireland" written by a minister named Stewart, who died in 1671, reads: "—for their carriage made them to be abhorred . . . in their native land, insomuch that going for Ireland was looked on as a miserable mark of a deplorable person." Adair, another contemporary minister, wrote: "Albeit, Divine Providence sent over some worthy persons; yet the most part were such as either poverty or scandalous lives, or the search for better accommodations, did set forward that way." No evidence has been found that Scots were numerous in Ulster until after the Revolution of 1688 in Britain. Such evidence as has been discovered suggests that the Scottish population of Ulster was very sparse until after 1690. James I had surveys made from time to time to ascertain the progress of the Ulster plantation. One of the last of these studies was the work of a Captain Pynnars, who reported in 1619 that the Scots in the six counties of Ulster numbered 139 freeholders, 494 lessees and 257 cottagers, a total of 890. Stewart, previously mentioned, thus confirmed Pynnars' findings: "—the North of Ireland began to be planted with Scots inhabitants, but they were so few at first and so inconsiderable that they were not much noticed nor heard of

3 Hanna, I, 486, 487.
6 Hanna, I, 552.
8 Encyclopedia Britannica, VIII, 665.
9 Hanna, I, 531.
almost till after King James died [in 1625] and King Charles
succeeded—.” 10

In 1638, Thomas Wentworth, Lord Deputy of Ireland, later Earl
of Strafford, was “alarmed” by the signing of the Covenant in Scot-
land and “determined to smash the Ulster Scots,” 11 and in 1639 acts
were promulgated under his management which required all persons
more than sixteen years of age to swear “on their knees” and “upon
the Four Evangelists” that “they would never oppose any of the King’s
commands, and that they would adjure and renounce the Covenant.” 12
Barkley explains: “Some did conform, but the majority stood the
test bravely. They were fined and imprisoned, they left the homes they
had built and the fields made fertile by their sweat and toil, and
fled to Scotland.” 13 The number of Scots in Ulster, it well may be
believed, was diminished by Wentworth’s actions.

Three years later reports reached Britain and the Continent
to the effect that, in November 1641, Sir Phelim O’Neil had initiated
a massacre of all Protestants of English descent in Ulster. 14 A com-
mmission from Charles I, whose authenticity has been questioned, was
exhibited as authority for the slaughter of 20,000 people in two or
three months. 15 The massacre “literally swept the Episcopal Church
away” and the Presbyterian Church required rebuilding. 16

A Scottish army had been sent to Ulster to protect the Protestants
and restore order in 1642, and the duty of rebuilding the Presbyterian
Church there fell upon the chaplains and officer-elders of this
army. 17–18 But civil war commenced in Ireland in 1642 and did not
terminate until 1652. 19 For a brief period the English were friendly to
the Presbyterians, but in 1650 the Engagement Oath was enacted,
insisting upon submission to the Commonwealth set up by Cromwell.
The Presbyterians refused to take this oath, and an unknown number
of them returned to Scotland. 20 In 1654 there were only three presby-

10 Ibid., I, 551.
11 Barkley, 8.
12 Ibid., 8.
13 Ibid., 8.
14 John Hill Burton, The History of Scotland, first edition (Blackwood, 1867),
VII, 158.
15 James Anthony Froude, The English in Ireland, two volumes (New York:
16 Barkley, 10.
17 Ibid., 10.
18 Ibid., 10.
19 Ibid., 13; Sir George Macaulay Trevelyan, K. B. E., England Under the
20 Barkley, 14.
teries in Ulster: two in Antrim and one in Down. There were no presbyteries in the Ulster Plantation proper.\(^{21}\)

Shortly before the Restoration of Charles II, the condition of the Presbyterian Church was such as to suggest that there were not many Scots in Ulster. In 1662, as appears in a map still extant, Belfast had only 150 houses.\(^{22}\) The population then must have been less than 1500, and doubtless the majority was English. The Scottish community could not have increased appreciably during the persecution of the Presbyterians by Charles II and James II when government troops were available to check migration.

Obviously, a sparse Scottish population before the Revolution of 1688 could not support the large scale emigration to the English colonies in America that actually occurred. Therefore, a large emigration from Scotland to Ulster must have taken place immediately after the 1688 Revolution, and this movement must have continued for some years.

In 1864 Sir Andrew Agnew published a book entitled *A History of the Hereditary Sheriffs of Galloway* containing evidence that such a mass migration from Scotland to Ulster as here suggested did occur. The Agnews had been hereditary sheriffs for more than 400 years (1330-1747). Galloway in the time of the Covenanters was a word used to describe the land included in the modern counties of Wigton and Kirkcudbright. The Agnews established their residence at Locknaw in Wigton in 1300 and still remain there. Documents preserved in his home made Sir Andrew a singularly well-qualified person to write of times past. The quotation which follows comes almost certainly from a paper in his possession 102 years ago:

> It was by the Sheriff and barons taken into consideration, that many tenants, sub-tenants, cottars, servants and others, are daily attempting to go to Ireland, and to desert the service and charge committed to them, they consequently prohibit them to go Ireland without passes from the Privy Council, the Sheriff of the shire, or their own masters; certifying that each contravener shall be apprehended by the Sheriff and his Deputies, and the Collector at Portpatrick, and incarcerate till he find caution (bail).

(Signed) Andrew Agnew \(\text{Pat. M'Dowall}\)
Galloway (Earl of) \(\text{Vans of Barnbarock}\)^\(^{23}\)

The document was dated September 1689 or only about four months after William and Mary, following the English Revolution of 1688, had become the monarchs of the independent nation of Scotland. Portpatrick was not a good port, but it was much used because sailing

\(^{22}\) *Encyclopedia Britannica*, III, 665.
\(^{23}\) Agnew, 444.
vessels could make the round trip to Donaghadee and return in a single day. A weekly post between Scotland and Ireland via Portpatrick and Donaghadee was established in 1662.  

How many left Scotland in the first twenty-five years after the Revolution is believed to have been estimated reliably by the Protestant Archbishop Synge, son of one bishop, nephew of another bishop and himself father of two bishops, moving in circles that would be informed as to the number of Presbyterians opposed to Episcopalians. As Lecky commented in reference to the Episcopal Church: "—it was confronted and was likely soon to be outnumbered by a powerful, united and hostile Nonconformist body, derived from the same stock and animated by the same sentiments as the Presbyterians in Scotland."  

It was from Synge's "Letters" in the British Museum that Lecky cited the estimate that "not less than 50,000" Scotch families had settled in Ulster "since the Revolution," but it is believed that the Archbishop used "families" in a loose sense and that the immigrants from Scotland included single persons. Synge, indeed, may have assumed that the immigration from Scotland amounted to 2,000 heads of households per annum and that by 1715 had continued for twenty-five years. Two thousand heads of households (some single persons) a year would mean 6.4 each week-day. Since all the immigrants had passes, it would appear that the authorities at Portpatrick and Donaghadee would have fair ideas of their actual numbers and that the Episcopalians would be able to obtain this information.  

Lecky himself states that in 1708-10: "The Presbyterians were then said to have formed rather more than 130 congregations in Ulster."  

If the average congregation consisted of 300 men, women and children, the population represented would then be 39,000 — a calculation agreeing very well with Synge's 1715 estimate. Lecky also comments respecting the immigrants: "They were chiefly of Scotch birth or extraction, and they were endowed with a full share of Scotch stubbornness, jealousy, and self-assertion."  

This sentence certainly does not support the theory that the ancestors of the Scotch-Irish had resided in Ulster since about 1610.  

As quoted by Lecky, Synge also wrote: "Their ministers marry people, they hold synods, they exercise ecclesiastical jurisdiction, as
is done in Scotland, excepting only that they have no assistance from
the civil magistrates, the want of which makes the minister and his
elders in each district the closer together, by which means they have
an almost absolute government over their congregation, and at their
communions they often meet from several districts to the number of
4,000 or 5,000 and think themselves so formidable as that no govern-
ment dares molest them."

In the preceding paragraph the phrase "an almost absolute gov-
ernment over their congregation" certainly implies that congregations
were not scattered; in other words, that the Scots congregated with
other Scots in communities essentially Scottish. Because the communi-
ties in which the Scots lived did not have English or Irish commingled
with them, the Scots retained Scottish characteristics in as full a
measure as though they had remained in Scotland. Presently, after the
lapse of more than two and a half centuries, districts in Antrim and
Down display either Scottish or English characteristics, according to
Shearman, and both counties remain strongly Protestant. Having in
mind the short time the immigrants from Scotland remained in Ulster
before moving on to Penn's colonies, and that they lived all of this
time in distinctly Scottish communities, it is suggested that the Scotch-
Irish, upon arrival in America, were as fully Scottish in all respects
as though they had never emigrated from Scotland.

The question arises as to why the Scots should leave Scotland
in such numbers as Synge declares: something never done before
nor since. The principal reason, it seems obvious, was religion. As the
Britannica says:

On the other hand, Presbyterianism stood in Scottish history for freedom, and
for the rights of the middle and lower classes against the crown and the
aristocracy; and it might not have been held with such tenacity or proved so
incapable of compromise but for the opposition and persecution of the three
Stuart kings.

When the National Covenant was signed in 1638, its signatories
— nobles, barons, gentlemen, burgesses, ministers and commons —
pledged themselves to uphold Presbyterianism. When William and
Mary became Scottish monarchs, they were not, and did not intend to
become Covenanters. The extreme diehard Covenanters deplored the
fact that William III was not a Covenanter because it signified that
he had not taken the oath to continue in the Presbyterian religion

28 Ibid., I, 427.
30 Encyclopedia Britannica, XXIV, 461.
and to defend it. Perhaps the majority of the diehard Covenanters lived in Galloway — because, as Agnew has affirmed: “Galloway may fairly be called the cradle of the Covenant.”

As soon as the Revolution made it possible, many of the diehard Covenanters began to leave Galloway for Ulster, and finding that they were tolerated, and permitted to exercise their religion without interference, although no law authorized it, other Covenanters followed, until they “think themselves so formidable as that no government dares molest them.” When it is recalled that more than 400,000 Huguenots left France in 1685 after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, it does not seem impossible that 50,000 Scots left Scotland in the twenty-five years after the Revolution.

However, not all the migrants left Scotland because of religious motives. In 1707, Scotland joined England to form the United Kingdom of Great Britain. There was much opposition to the Union in Scotland: some wished the Stuarts to return to the throne; others were fearful that Presbyterianism could not survive a close tie with England; and the diehard Covenanters were disconsolate because it meant the end of the Covenants. Without much doubt, some Scots emigrated to Ulster because of the political situation for, although Ulster had the same king as Scotland, Scottish communities in the Belfast area appear to have been ignored by the English authorities in Dublin to a considerable degree.

There was a great deterrent to emigration from Scotland in an effort to improve one’s economic condition — namely, that it required twelve Scottish pounds to equal one English pound. Any accumulated wealth seriously depreciated, therefore, when removed from Scotland to Ulster. But this handicap was largely offset because Belfast was, possibly, the first “boom” town. The linen industry had been founded in Belfast in 1634 by Scots from Dunfermline; it had been encouraged by Wentworth and his successor; it had been greatly helped by the arrival of Huguenot weavers, the best of the time, in 1685; and it had been organized and fostered by Louis Crommelin, appointed in 1689 by William III as “Overseer of the Royal Linen Manufacture.” The measure of its success is that in 1662, accord-

31 Agnew, 286.
32 Encyclopedia Britannica, XIII, 867.
33 Ibid., XXVIII, 455.
34 Ibid., XIV, 750.
35 Ibid., XVI, 773.
ing to a map still extant, Belfast had 150 houses,\textsuperscript{17} whereas ninety-five years later or in 1757 it had 1779,\textsuperscript{38} or nearly a twelve-fold increase, an indication of outstanding growth. In 1757, the population was 8549, and of this population 556 were Roman Catholic. The men from Galloway, either Covenanters themselves or the descendants of Covenanters, were literate, intelligent, energetic and ambitious men, not given to frivolity; and that they readily could engage in well-paying occupations in the Belfast area seems certain.

**Covenanting Ancestors of Americans**

There are millions of Americans with pre-Revolutionary ancestors of whom one or more may have been of Covenant stock. These ancestors came to America so long ago, however, and the records respecting them are of such dubious authenticity, that nothing now may be certain about them except that they were of British origin.

Yet it may be determined if the surname is Galwegian by referring to a comprehensive collection of surnames from Galloway.

Although not all were of the diehard variety, virtually all commoners in Galloway were or had been Covenanters. Agnew comments in connection with the Covenant of 1638: "—the men of Galloway were the most ardent supporters. Its actual members were principally of the middle class, but the barons were in general not unfavorable to the movement, and where they did not assist, showed strong sympathy with its adherents."\textsuperscript{39} Sir Herbert Maxwell, of an older southwestern family than Sir Andrew Agnew, observed:

The attitude of the barons and chief landowners in the southwest has been greatly misrepresented, as if they had joined heartily in oppressing their tenants. — the majority of them, especially the better educated, though philosophically indifferent to theological and ecclesiastical controversy, yet sympathised with the people.\textsuperscript{40}

The upper classes being sympathetic, Galloway was without much doubt the district in Scotland most firmly attached to the Covenant when the persecution under Charles II commenced in 1661. When the persecution continued for twenty-eight years, until William and Mary became sovereigns in 1689, the government offered various "Indulgences" which always were accepted by some Covenanters. Thus, the diehard Covenanters, who never compromised, gradually became a minority; but even if they had not persisted until the bitter end

\textsuperscript{17} Encyclopedia Britannica, III, 665.
\textsuperscript{38} Lecky, I, 434.
\textsuperscript{39} Agnew, 284.
\textsuperscript{40} Maxwell, 265.
virtually all Galwegians had been Covenanters at some time.

Consequently, a Galwegian surname, with a high degree of probability, belonged to a man who had been a Covenanter during the persecution. If the surname had been carried to Penn’s colonies before the Revolution, it would have been recorded in the first United States Census, taken in 1790. Complete records are not available for every state, but they are for Pennsylvania, and the surnames have been indexed. So, if a surname is found in Galwegian records during the persecution period and also in the 1790 census, the surname is almost certain to be Scotch-Irish and Covenanting.

A copy of the National Covenant, signed in 1638 by the inhabitants of the parish of Borgue in the county of Kirkcudbright, has been preserved in Register House, Edinburgh. The 219 names found on the roll probably included all the men in the parish. Of these men, 182 or 83 per cent could write — a remarkable percentage of literacy at such an early date. The 182 men had 127 surnames, and of these 79 or 62 per cent appeared in the first Census of Pennsylvania.

In 1662, or one year after Charles II had abolished Presbyterianism, 39 ministers in Galloway, of whom more than 80 per cent were university graduates, faced ejection from their charges because they were unwilling to accept the authority of the bishops. Of the surnames of these ministers, 34 or 87 per cent appear in the 1790 United States Census.

During 1663 occurred what presently would be called a “protest march,” which the government elected to take very seriously. Although it had developed spontaneously in Galloway and was broken up without difficulty at Rullion Green in the Pentland Hills near Edinburgh, the Covenanters were punished with great severity. Many gentlemen had not only their estates forfeited but their lives as well.

In 1667, “the King's Indemnity was given to those in the Rebellion, excepting always from his pardon the persons and fortunes” of 56 gentlemen in Galloway, including three lairds. The 56 had 42 different surnames, of which 36 or 86 per cent are found in the first United States Census.

The Scottish Record Society has published the names affixed to testaments or wills in the county of Kirkcudbright for the years 1624-1725 inclusive. This compilation of names belonged to families well-

42 Ibid., 97, 98.
43 Ibid., 125, 126.
established in southwestern Scotland. To make this even more certain, only names which appeared two or more times between 1624 and 1699 were selected. There were 284 of these names, and of these 175 or 62 per cent appeared in the 1790 United States Census.44

Finally, the Scottish Record Society has published a census of the county of Wigtown, including the parish of Minnigaff of the county of Kirkcudbright for the year 1684.45 The population of the area, including all persons male and female more than twelve years of age, was 9276. Separate names numbered 468, and of these 288 or 62 per cent appear in the 1790 United States Census.

These five lists of surnames geographically cover Galloway very well. There are few names included that are not evidently Scottish. It therefore reasonably can be asserted that the great majority of the ancestors of the Scotch-Irish came from Galloway; that they or their immediate ancestors had been Covenanters, and that the chief cause for removing to Ulster was that they thought their Presbyterianism was being threatened. The reason they moved on to Penn's colonies after a comparatively short stay in Ulster is considered to be accurately explained by Lecky in this succinct statement:

The Presbyterians were, it is true, free from the innumerable restrictions and oppressions relating to property and to education which ground the Catholics to the dust, but they soon found that Ireland was no country for an enterprising and ambitious population. The commercial restrictions had struck a death blow to its prosperity, and as leases fell in and as famine after famine swept the land the emigration of the Presbyterians continually increased, diminishing their numbers and carrying away their more enterprising members.46

APPENDIX

The following are some of the surnames from Galloway transplanted to Pennsylvania anterior to the taking of the first United States Census in 1790:

Adair, Agnew, Alexander, Alison, Allan, Anderson, Andrew, Arnot, Austin.
Baird, Barbour, Barclay, Barton, Beattie, Beck, Beggs, Bell, Benton, Bingham, Bishop, Black, Blaine, Blair, Blake, Blythe, Boyd, Bratton, Broadfoot, Brown, Bruce, Bryan, Bryce, Buchanan, Burney, Byres.
Caldwell, Calhoun, Campbell, Cannon, Carlyle, Carrick, Carruthers, Carson, Chalmers, Chambers, Charters, Christie, Clark, Cleland, Cockrane, Colvin, Connell, Cook, Cormack, Corsan, Coulter, Cowan, Craig, Crawford, Crumb, Cunningham, Currie.
Dalrymple, Dalzell, Davidson, Dempster, Dickson, Dill, Dinwiddie, Dixon, Dods, Donald, Donaldson, Dorman, Dougan, Douglas, Dun, Dunbar, Duncan.
Edgar, Elliot, Erskine, Ewart.

44 The Scottish Record Society, *The Commissariat of Kirkcudbright*.
46 Lecky, I, 437.
Ferguson, Findlay, Fisher, Fleming, Forsythe, Fraser, French, Fullerton, Fulton.
Galbreath, Galloway, Geddes, George, Gibson, Gilchrist, Gillespie, Gillmour, Gladstone, Glover, Gordon, Gowan, Gracie, Graham, Gray, Guthrie.
Hall, Hamilton, Hanna, Harkness, Hay, Henderson, Heron, Heslop, Hope, Houston, Hunter, Hutcheson.
Inglis, Innes, Ireland, Irving, Irwine.
Jackson, Jamison, Jardine, Johnston.
Kay, Keith, Kennedy, Kent, Kerr, Kilpatrick, Kincaid, Kinzean, Kirk, Kirkpatrick, Kyle.
McAdam, McBride, McCall, McCallum, McCance, McCartney, McCleanachan, McClean, McClellan, McClung, McClure, McComb, McConnel, Mc Cormick, McCrae, McCulloch, McCune, McCutchon, McDougall, McDowall, McElvain, McEwen, McFaddan, McGhie, McGill, McGowen, McIntosh, McKain, McKay, Mc Kee, McKelvie, McKenna, McKenzie, Mc Knight, McLean, McMaster, McMillan, McMurray, McNab, McNaught, Mc Nish, McRobert, McTaggart, McWhurter, McWilliam.
Mair, Marshall, Martin, Matheson, Maxwell, Miller, Milligan, Mitchell, Moffat, Montgomery, Morison, Morton, Muir, Murhead, Mulroy, Mundell, Murchie, Murdoch, Murray.
Neilson, Nicoll, Nicholson.
Orr, Osbourne.
Ramsay, Reid, Richardson, Riddick, Rigg, Robertson, Robeson, Robinson, Robison, Robson, Roger, Rose, Ross, Rowan, Rule, Russell.
Sanderson, Scot, Semple, Shank, Sharp, Shaw, Shearer, Shilling, Short, Simpson, Skelly, Sloan, Smith, Spence, Steven, Stevenson, Stewart, Stirling, Stott, Strachan, Sturgeon.
Tait, Tagart, Taylor, Telfer, Templeton, Tennen, Tennet, Thomson, Trail, Turner.
Vance.

These names appeared in the Borgue Covenant, 1638; the official lists of testaments (wills) of Kirkcudbright; the census of Wigtonshire and Minnigaff, 1684; lists of Covenanting ministers, or lists of persons whose lives and estates had been forfeited.