

GONE TO SEEK A FORTUNE IN NORTH CAROLINA: THE FAILED SCOTTISH  
HIGHLAND EMIGRATION OF 1884

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **GONE TO SEEK A FORTUNE IN NORTH CAROLINA: THE FAILED EMIGRATION OF 1884**

(Under the direction of Dr. Glenn Hinson)

In 1884, promoters in Scotland and North Carolina recruited a group of at least 180 Highland Scots to settle in the Scottish-American community of southeastern N.C. At the time, the North Carolina settlement (which had been established almost 150 years earlier) was the largest concentrated group of Highland Scots in North America. The 1884 emigration—which proved to be the last organized emigration of Highland Scots to North Carolina—was motivated by desires both to assist impoverished Highland crofters in Scotland, and to reinvigorate North Carolina’s Scottish-American settlement with an ethnically attractive labor force. Conflicting expectations among the emigrants and their hosts, however, quickly led to the emigration’s failure. This thesis draws upon primary, secondary, and oral sources to provide a comprehensive historical chronicle of this relatively unknown emigration. In so doing, it explores the many meanings that this event—and its memories—held among members of the affected communities.

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## Chapter 1: Connections

*“This is the best opportunity we ever had, or ever will have, to secure a good, hard laboring class of population.”*

The Fayetteville Observer, August 30, 1883

*“All I know is they all went to Carolina, and they all came back.”*

Joann Nicolson (Peinichorran, Skye)

June 19, 1996

In fall of 1739, the first party of Highland Scottish emigrants to arrive in North Carolina made their home in the Upper Cape Fear River Valley. As a result of social and political upheavals in Scotland in the decades which followed the Jacobite uprising of 1745-46, these original Highland settlers were joined by thousands more who sought better opportunities in America. By the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Upper Cape Fear region contained the largest settlement of Scottish Highlanders in all of North America; it retained that status well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Within a few decades, Highland emigration to North Carolina had slowed to a trickle; nonetheless, in the years that followed, the Scottish-Americans of the region maintained a distinct ethnic identity. By the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, an awareness of the plight of Scots who were suffering under an increasingly oppressive system of land tenure in their homeland, and a desire to reinvigorate their own ethnic identity and population, led a group of Scottish-Americans in the old Highland settlement of the Cape Fear region to induce new Highland emigration to North Carolina. In 1884 several parties of Highland Scots arrived in North Carolina in what was undoubtedly the last major emigration of Highland Scots to this

state. Due to a combination of circumstances, the emigration effort was a dismal failure for almost all parties involved.

The information which I have uncovered regarding this little-known emigration—and particularly the personal experience narratives and anecdotes of several of the “failed emigrants”—adds an important chapter to the historical record, and suggestively speaks to the function that these narratives served for the descendents of the emigrants. This thesis, which is the culmination of several years of research, demonstrates the historical significance of the “failed emigration” of 1884, and explores the important folk-related aspects of the collected oral histories, which give a more thorough interpretation of the historical events and their meaning to those who participated in them.

The haunting sound of Scottish Highland bagpipes could often be heard around my home in the rural Tirzah Church community near Waxhaw, North Carolina, in the late 1970s. As a youngster, my interests in history, genealogy, and music led me to pursue mastery of this somewhat unusual musical instrument. I was unaware at the time that my hobby and interests were part of a revival of interest in all things Scottish that was inspired by the “roots movement” of the 1970s (which had particular popularity in the American South). My interests in piping and history did not cease during my adolescence, and as a result I have now become a nationally known competitor, teacher, and adjudicator of Scottish bagpipe contests throughout the United States. My hobby proved to be quite lucrative in my late teen years, when I accepted a scholarship from St. Andrews Presbyterian College in Laurinburg, North Carolina, in exchange for my piping services. Located in an area which was settled primarily by Highland Scots in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, St. Andrews had always hired pipers to play for all of the

college's official events, and decided to reward someone who could provide these services in-house for four years. It was a match that seemed predestined. At least eight of my emigrant ancestors from the Scottish Highlands were buried within just a few minutes drive from the college campus, and I spent many lazy Sunday afternoons as an undergraduate exploring the backroads of Scotland and Robeson Counties, searching out local cemeteries and homesites where these ancestors and fellow Highlanders had chosen to live out their exile, far from their native hills and lochs of the Islands of Skye and Islay.

My desire to know more about these displaced people, their life before emigrating to America, and their adaptation and assimilation into a foreign land also guided my undergraduate academic interests. As a senior History major, I wrote my honors thesis on the historical use of the Gaelic language among the Highland settlement of the Upper Cape Fear Valley. Research for this work led me to discover that there was a great deal of primary and secondary source information on the Highland settlement, but that the cultural legacies of this ethnic group had been largely ignored. Folklorists had paid a great deal of attention to the Ulster-Scot settlements in the Piedmont and Appalachian regions of North Carolina; however, the survivals of cultural peculiarities in the Highland settlement of the Upper Cape Fear Valley had been largely overlooked. Through fieldwork that I did with a few elderly citizens of the region who still knew fragments of the Gaelic language, I came to appreciate the fact that important aspects of the history and culture of North Carolina's Highland settlement were still alive within the living memory of the settlement's oldest descendents.

I did not know at that time that several years later my fieldwork efforts would take me to Scotland to investigate the last major Highland emigration to North Carolina. Although this 19<sup>th</sup> century emigration had been largely forgotten in the community from which it occurred, it still struck me as important. It was during the first two decades of this century that large-scale emigration from Scotland ceased, not to be successfully revived. It was also during this century that many of the cultural peculiarities of the Highland settlers—including the use of the Gaelic language, the survival of traditional Highland music as played on pipes and fiddles, and certain religious practices—began to wane and eventually become extinct. Although the Upper Cape Fear region’s ties to the Scottish Highlands were just as strong as those of places like Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, and Glengarry County, Ontario (where many Highland traditions still sustain), on the surface this region had showed much less evidence of this heritage by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Much of what did remain was refueled, in part, by the romantic images of Scotland and its history as presented by Sir Walter Scott and Jane Porter. The works of these authors and others in the antebellum period presented a very different picture of Scotland from that which was left by earlier emigrants. As remnants of Scottish traditions within the emigrant community faded with the passage of time and with assimilation, Scotland was “reinvented” in the minds of Scottish-American descendents through romantic depictions of Scottish history and culture found in popular literature of the day.

The period in which Scottish Highlanders were assimilated into Scottish-Americans has been given less attention by scholars than the periods of colonial settlement and the Revolutionary era (in which the Scots of the region played a notable

role). The transformation of Scots into Scottish-Americans was a topic which greatly interested me, and became one into which I channeled most of my casual research interests during my undergraduate career. The discovery of a very late Highland emigration to North Carolina in the 1880s raised further questions about the assimilation process and the ethnic awareness and identity of late 19<sup>th</sup> century Scottish-Americans in this region.

After graduating from St. Andrews Presbyterian College in Spring of 1989, I was hired by my alma mater to instigate a number of special projects designed to highlight and preserve the institution's roots within the old Scottish Presbyterian settlement of the region. Now pursued under the auspices of The Scottish Heritage Center, these projects have included founding and instructing a prize-winning pipe band, and creating and serving as custodian for a notable collection of books and other resources relative to Scottish and Scottish-American history, culture, and genealogy. The collection continues to grow and draw visitors to the area. My work has allowed me to conduct annual symposia on topics related to the Scottish settlement in North Carolina featuring top scholars from both sides of the Atlantic. It has also fueled many conversations about the failed emigration of Highland Scots to North Carolina in 1884.

I first became aware of the 1884 emigration of Highland Scots to the Upper Cape Fear region in 1990, when I was helping James MacDonald conduct field research on cultural retention and continuity within the Highland settlement of North Carolina; at the time, MacDonald was working on his doctoral dissertation at the University of Edinburgh's School of Scottish Studies. During one of MacDonald's several fieldwork visits in the region, he asked if I knew anything about a very late emigration of



Highlanders into the Laurinburg area in 1884. I had never heard of this emigration. MacDonald shared with me a newspaper article from the period which described the emigration scheme and listed the names of families who were reported to be the first of several parties scheduled to come to North Carolina. Both he and I were astonished that we had not heard of this emigration from local sources. MacDonald's early efforts to uncover further information on the 1884 emigration were somewhat fruitless, but the event continued to fascinate me. The concept of a Highland emigration in the 1880s, as the region was recovering from the ravages of Civil War and the challenges of the Reconstruction era, was very intriguing. The idea that a very late, and perhaps last, attempt at Highland emigration had occurred in the town in which I was now living, and that the emigrants may have even been known by some of our older citizens, was certainly an idea worthy of pursuit. Armed with this single newspaper article from 1884 that listed the names of the first emigrant party, I began my own research.

As I pursued this inquiry, I became more aware of the significance and importance of this unknown occurrence. Local historians and tradition bearers from the Laurinburg area had neither heard of the emigration nor knew of any source materials which might shed light upon it. The newspapers which might have held the most information on the subject, The Laurinburg Exchange and The Robesonian from Lumberton, simply did not exist for the period in question due to tragic fires in both towns. Fire had also claimed the majority of newspapers from Rockingham for the period, though some issues with useful information were spared. A search of cemetery records for Scotland, Richmond, and Robeson counties revealed any number of "Macs" and other Highland surnames which appeared in my newspaper listing of the 1884

emigrants. Yet typical Highland given names and surnames were so common in this region that trying to narrow down the possibilities of matches was virtually impossible, except in a very few cases. The lack of census records for 1890 was also a setback, and the 1900 census showed only a few native Scots residing in surrounding counties who were apparently part of this emigration. What had happened to the Highland emigrants of 1884?

With the local resources exhausted, I turned to other major newspapers in the region and state that may have covered the arrival of the Highland emigrants. The dozens of hours spent perusing every available issue of 1884 newspapers from Wilmington, Rockingham, Fayetteville, and Raleigh supplied a rich cache of information not only on the Scottish emigration, but also about the way in which local Scottish-Americans viewed or represented their ethnic identity. The emigration of Highland crofters to North Carolina was one of the most important news stories of 1884 in eastern North Carolina, and numerous articles described the anticipation regarding the emigration efforts. Nonetheless, as my newspaper research progressed, I discovered that the efforts did not meet the expectations of many who supported the emigration. Indeed, the reason that the historical evidence was so thin was because this Scottish emigration was a dismal failure. What had begun as a humanitarian outreach from Scottish-Americans in North Carolina to impoverished and oppressed Highland crofters in Scotland had ended in disappointment, bitterness, and embarrassment for all parties involved. Due to a number of factors, most of these emigrants either returned to Scotland or moved on to other places within just a few months of their arrival in North Carolina. My research revealed that the motives behind the emigration were rooted more in labor needs and a romantic

desire to renew the Scottish ethnicity of the Upper Cape Fear region than they were in practicality and true humanitarianism. I would later learn from Scottish sources that the North Carolina emigration scheme was also rooted in darker motives of conspiracy and deceit against superfluous tenantry by landlords and factors, who sought to reclaim land for more profitable use than these tenants could provide. The accounts that I had uncovered provided a clearer understanding of the 1884 Highland emigration effort and its failure; however, it became apparent that a full account of this event could not be told without the recollections of the descendents of these “failed emigrants” to North Carolina. The fact that oral tradition was still revered in the Scottish Highlands gave me hope that I could find what I was searching for.

My newspaper research confirmed that a majority of the 1884 emigrants had come from the Island of Skye. Lists of emigrant names that appeared in the Fayetteville, Wilmington, and Raleigh newspapers proved to be invaluable resources in locating their descendents. Through contacts made with BBC Radio Scotland documentary producer Billy Kay and the eminent Highland historian Dr. James Hunter (both of whom I had hosted and assisted with research efforts on the Highland community of North Carolina), I made contact with a grandson of one of the unsuccessful emigrants, who still resided in the township in Skye that his grandfather had left over 100 years earlier. This contact led me to apply for a travel and study grant from the Clan Donald U.S.A. Charitable and Educational Foundation, which I received in early 1996. That summer, I traveled to the Island of Skye. With a rented Volvo sedan and my wife acting as research assistant, I followed my first lead into the chain of adjoining townships known as The Braes, near the island’s main town of Portree. The people of The Braes welcomed me into their

homes, where I both collected and shared information about the 1884 emigration scheme, and was treated to Highland hospitality which must certainly have been an inspiration for that which is so legendary in the American South.

My new friends in The Braes shared with me the last few memories of an episode in their history which was mostly forgotten by even the most avid of local tradition bearers. These oral histories and the lore associated with them give a human dimension to the history of the failed emigration, describing the challenges of emigration and the triumph of the emigrants in extraordinary and unfamiliar experiences. These stories also provided these “failed emigrants” and their descendents with models for fortitude, perseverance, and success in the most trying of circumstances (in a manner described by folklorist Stephen Stern 1977:26-27). My fieldwork revealed that these stories had not only been seen as seemingly humorous anecdotes told by older citizens, but also served as reminders of survival and triumph in later years during the personal challenges of events such as World War II. Although the information gathered was not extensive—which can perhaps be attributed to a sense of shame on the part of some of the “failed emigrants” after their return to Scotland (Hunter 1996a)—the collected narratives do give at least a partial account of the failed emigration experience through the perspective of some of its participants. The purpose of this thesis is not only to examine the written documentation and historical background of the 1884 emigration to North Carolina, but also to show that the surviving personal experience narratives about the event constitute a body of lore that served purposes far beyond mere historical recollection.

During my fieldwork in Skye, I realized that I was receiving information which would be completely lost with the passing of my informants. Since most of the

informants were over 70 years old, the last recollections of this event are short-lived. Few, if any, of the current generation of their descendents know any details of the episode. Television now replaces the nighttime ceilidhs of bygone days in which such stories and narratives flourished. Although the experience in North Carolina was apparently significant enough to provide at least one personal experience narrative which lasted “two winter nights long in telling,” there are only a handful of older residents of The Braes who still recollect fragments of this epic story. One of my informants, the well known Gaelic poet and Skye bard Sorley MacLean, told me, “You’re 50 years too late.” Despite MacLean’s apologetic stance, the narratives which he and other informants shared richly interpret the experiences of those who made their unfortunate journey to North Carolina and returned to Scotland with little to show for their efforts but stories of their experiences while away.

No writer or scholar has ever fully explored the failed emigration of 1884. In my search for relevant materials, I found only a few casual references to the episode; most of these contained information that was incorrect or not fully informed. Several scholars, however, have addressed the broader subject of Scottish emigration to North Carolina. Duane Meyer’s The Highland Scots of North Carolina 1732-1776 (1961) remains the most important work on the topic, though its scope is limited to the colonial period. The late Governor Angus Wilton MacLean’s unpublished manuscript, “Highland Scots in North Carolina” (1919), is broader in scope and served as an important source for Meyer’s research. Nonetheless, MacLean makes no mention of the 1884 emigration attempt. Earlier works dealing with Scottish settlement—such as Rev. William Henry Foote’s Sketches of North Carolina (1847) and J. P. MacLean’s Highlanders in America

(1900)—both tend toward romantic interpretations, and do not extend into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Despite the reasonable amount of scholarship on the Highland settlement of North Carolina, some eminent colonial historians such as David Hackett-Fischer in Albion's Seed (1989) have missed the mark in interpreting the history of this settlement, mostly due to the persistence of romantic myths regarding post-Culloden emigration from the Scottish Highlands in the middle 18<sup>th</sup> century. A plethora of other works (including those of Rev. Eli Caruthers in the 1850s, Bernard Bailyn's Voyagers to the West [1986], Kevin Phillips's The Cousins' Wars [1999]; and William C. Lehmann's Scottish and Scotch-Irish Contributions to Early American Life and Culture [1978]) have also addressed the significance of North Carolina's Highland settlement, but none have focused on the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The emphasis of most scholarship has been on early settlement and the Revolutionary period.

Rowland Berthoff, perhaps one of the best authorities on 19<sup>th</sup> century British emigration to the United States, was the first to mention the 1884 emigration of Highland crofters to North Carolina in his work British Immigrants in Industrial America 1790-1950 (1953). The number of emigrants he cites, however, is likely incorrect due to misinformation found in period newspapers. Several other authors—including Jim Hewitson in Tam Blake and Co. (1993) and Howard Furer in The British in America 1578-1970 (1972)—only follow Berthoff's lead in citing the episode. Anthropologist Celeste Ray mentions the failed emigration in her work, Highland Heritage: Scottish Americans in the American South (2001), but her information is somewhat questionable, largely because it likely drew on second-hand accounts from individuals who were familiar with my own research and interpretation of the event. The only trustworthy

recounting of the failed emigration of 1884 is that by James MacDonald in his Ph.D. dissertation, *Cultural Retention and Adaptation Among the Highland Scots of North Carolina* (1993). Yet while MacDonald gives an accurate account of events surrounding the failed emigration, his efforts are far from complete. None of the previously mentioned scholars and authors thoroughly evaluated the available source materials regarding the 1884 emigration or sought out the oral sources which further establish its historic and folkloric significance.

The five chapters of my thesis will present a comprehensive account of the failed emigration of Highland crofters to North Carolina in 1884. The thesis will also demonstrate that personal experience narratives relating to the episode were used to interpret the emigration not only as a historical happening, but also as a symbolic event with deeper meanings and connotations.

This thesis's second chapter shows that the attempts to entice further Highland emigration to the Upper Cape Fear region in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century were part of a larger movement to reclaim or revitalize the ethnic identity of the Scottish-American community of this area. As emigration from Scotland slowed to a trickle after the first two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the descendents of earlier Highland settlers attempted to renew, revitalize, and perhaps reinvent their own ethnic identity. This chapter includes evidence from contemporary writers and travelers who depict the region as one that was recognized by its unique ethnic identity and cultural manifestations. Furthermore, it offers examples of romanticism and ethnocentrism on the part of the region's Scottish-Americans, suggesting that this may have played a role in community members' plans to renew Scottish emigration into the Upper Cape Fear region in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The third chapter provides a historical overview of the failed Scottish emigration attempt of 1884. An examination of the chronology of events is necessary to completely interpret the personal experience narratives of the failed emigrants. This chapter explores the events which led to the planning and execution of this emigration scheme in North Carolina and Scotland, and examines both the personalities involved and other events which may have impacted the scheme's success. I draw upon newspaper accounts, primary source evidence, and personal experience narratives to present a comprehensive chronological account of the failed emigration.

The fourth chapter explores the collected personal experience narratives which relate to the failed emigration. Folklorist Steven Stern has argued that the personal experience narratives of emigrants are often retold to peers and to future generations to present models for success (1977:26-27). Narrative scholar John Robinson, in turn, relates several criteria by which personal experience narratives retain their tellability, suggesting that the actions being described must be in some way "remarkable" (1981: 59). The collected personal experience narratives relative to the failed Highland emigrants certainly fit within this framework. As James Hunter related to me during my fieldwork in Skye, the stigma of failure would likely have been attached to an unsuccessful returned emigrant. This perhaps explains the relative scarcity of information regarding the 1884 emigration attempt. My analysis shows that the collected narratives may have served the purposes described by Stern in overcoming some of the shame and bitterness that was likely associated with the negative experience in North Carolina.



The failed emigration of Scottish Highland crofters in 1884 is certainly an anomaly within the history of Scottish emigration to North Carolina. It is also a topic which cannot be completely and exhaustively covered within the pages of this work. I hope to achieve two main goals in this thesis. First, I will provide a comprehensive historical record of the event by using primary, secondary, and oral sources. Second, I will demonstrate how the accounts collected from descendents of the failed emigrants functioned not only as historical records, but also as examples of the triumph of the human spirit under the most challenging of circumstances.

## Chapter 2: The Old Scotch and the New Scotch

*“Almost all the people I met were ‘Macs,’ generally Macdonalds, Macleods, Macraes, Macnairs, and Macneils, indicating descent from the clans of the West Highlands and the Hebrides.”*

Rev. David MacRae, on a visit to the  
North Carolina Highland settlement in 1879

*“The arrival of the Scotch seems to bring us nearer to dear old Scotia. We feel so much sympathy for them and hope that they will be pleased and succeed well here.”*

“Aunt Polly” McNeill, in The Scotsman,  
April 12, 1884

The Highland settlement of the Upper Cape Fear region was the largest concentration of Highland Scots in North America from the latter 18<sup>th</sup> century until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The 350 emigrants from Argyllshire who arrived in the fall of 1739—the pioneering “Argyll Colony”—were the first of thousands who would eventually sail for North Carolina. Emigration from the Scottish Highlands gained increasing momentum in the decades following the failed Jacobite uprising of 1745-46. Following the abolition of the centuries-old Highland clan system by the British crown, clansmen who were once looked upon benevolently by a somewhat paternalistic warrior-chieftain class became mere rent-paying tenants in a matter of a few years. Members of the tacksman class, “lieutenants” of the clan chiefs who oversaw sizeable parcels of the chief’s lands, were also alienated. Their position as middlemen in the ancient hierarchy was eliminated despite close historic or genealogical ties to the families of clan chieftains. As rents for the tenants became unaffordable, the former tacksmen sometimes

became emigration leaders, struggling to escape the unfortunate changes in their social and economic status.

By the 1760s, the “push and pull” of emigration from the Highlands of Scotland to America were set into motion. Highlanders were being pushed away from their homeland by the decline of the traditional social order, as well as by oppressive rents. They were also being pulled toward a new homeland by enticing stories of ample land and favorable conditions, reported by other Highlanders who had preceded them. As the Highland settlement in North Carolina had no underlying strategic importance (as was the case with other less prominent 18<sup>th</sup> century Highland settlements in New York and Georgia), the influx of new Highland settlers continued up to the outbreak of the American Revolution, and resumed following the cessation of hostilities with Britain.

Though the years from 1770 until the outbreak of the American Revolution saw the largest numbers of Highland emigrants to the American colonies, and to North Carolina in particular, hundreds more arrived in the first decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Many of these later emigrants were forced away by further changes in agricultural practices and land tenure which were the early results of the period now known as “The Highland Clearances.” By the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many landlords in the Scottish Highlands found it much more profitable to turn their estates over to large-scale sheep herds for market, or deer forests for sport, than to have tenants who could only afford limited rents for their holdings. The majority of Highlanders who came voluntarily to North Carolina in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early-19<sup>th</sup> centuries were persons of at least some financial means; the poorer folk were left behind in the Highlands at the mercy of the landlords and their factors (though indentures were also numerous among the early settlers). Many

families who did not emigrate voluntarily in the 18<sup>th</sup> century—either on their own free will, or at the suggestion and leadership of the former tacksmen—were left to witness a 19<sup>th</sup> century diaspora. Thousands of Highland emigrants were forcibly removed or evicted from their small holdings and shipped away to Canada, Australia, and New Zealand at the behest of their landlords during the Highland Clearances. Those left behind were often pushed to less desirable tracts of land and left to a life of few opportunities outside of the system of subsistence farming known as “crofting,” which developed in the Highlands in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

For several decades in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Emigration Societies, as well as private individuals and organizations, sought to assist the plight of destitute Highland crofters. In the Carolinas, the St. Andrews Society of Charleston, South Carolina, collected \$8,000 for Highland relief efforts in 1847. Most of these relief efforts were directed toward the removal of Highlanders from their homes and their relocation overseas. Many politicians, and—ironically—Church leaders saw emigration from the Highlands as the predestined will for these Highlanders. Yet this notion was not accepted by many of the Highlanders themselves. By the latter two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, organized resistance against oppressive landlords became common, and crofters organized rent strikes in various places throughout the Highlands. One such strike in the spring of 1882 was staged against one of the most offensive of the Highland landlords, Lord Ronald Archibald MacDonald, whose holdings included a large portion of the Island of Skye.

In response to an organized rent strike in the townships known as The Braes in Skye, Lord MacDonald enlisted a force of local police, as well as a company of police from Glasgow sent by gunboat to the island as a show of power and influence, to arrest

the strike's instigators and their confederates. The "agitators" attacked and turned away the police force under a hail of stones, sticks, and refuse from chamber pots, launched primarily by the women of the townships (Nicolson 1930: 262-63; Hunter, 1976: 192-95; MacKenzie 1883: 407-518). This event, now known as "The Battle of the Braes," received worldwide press coverage and was even noted as far away as the old Highland settlement in North Carolina. This occurrence and others like it in the Highlands brought further international attention to the cruel and unfair practices of many Highland landlords and their factors; these events eventually led to reform in land tenure policies and procedures, culminating in the establishment of a government commission to investigate the situation, and then in the Crofter's Act of 1886. Among other things, this act put a legal halt to the forced evictions which had depopulated the Highlands in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The "Battle of the Braes," and other similar events, brought the continuing plight of Highland crofters to the attention of many expatriate Scots communities worldwide. In North Carolina, several members of the Scottish-American community began to consider ways that they might assist their troubled kith and kin. As a result, several of the agitators and participants in the incidents in the townships of the Braes in Skye, and dozens of others like them from various locations in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, were relocated briefly within the old Highland settlement of North Carolina. Yet despite the initial success of securing interested emigrants from Scotland, the Scottish-American farmers of North Carolina did not fully realize how far removed they had become from the culture and values of their oppressed kinsmen. Within a few months, the majority of the emigrant Scots had left the old Highland settlement of the

Upper Cape Fear region in dissatisfaction. To assess why the 1884 crofter emigration failed so dramatically, we must examine the cultural retentions of North Carolina's Highland settlement and the extent to which its ethnic identity manifested itself in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Much of the "authentic" Highland identity which the Scottish-American leaders in North Carolina may have believed themselves to possess, and may have hoped to re-invigorate in their communities through a new influx of Highland emigrants, had been eroded by the passage of time and inevitable cultural assimilation. The influences of 19<sup>th</sup> century romantic writers also may have led many Scottish-Americans to reinvent their understanding of their culture and heritage.<sup>1</sup> By the late 1800s, the Highland identity of the Upper Cape Fear region was a product of American historical events, romantic literary influences, and remnants of ancient Gaelic tradition. Most Carolina Scots had become quite removed from the Highland identity and culture of their emigrant ancestors.

Removal from the specific traditions of their Highland past, however, did not mean that the North Carolina Scots were an assimilated population. They were quite the contrary. In fact, the Highland settlement emerged as a culturally distinct community, one that readily fulfilled widely accepted definitions of an "ethnic group" (see, e.g., Stern 1977). The group was self-perpetuating, with community members well-known for their tendencies to marry within the Highland settlement even until recent memory. The relative isolation of some areas of the settlement, as well as identifiable patterns in which emigrants from certain locales in Scotland tended both to resettle together and to worship together in the same churches, certainly contributed to this perpetuation. Community

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<sup>1</sup> Hugh Trevor-Roper, in his somewhat controversial essay, "The Invention of Tradition: The Highland Tradition of Scotland" (1983), has proposed that a similar "re-invention" of Highland culture and tradition was also occurring in Scotland by the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983: 15-41).

members certainly shared many cultural values, as evidenced by the regional survival of Gaelic, and by the predominance of the Presbyterian Churches and schools that they established in the region (which further fostered the passing-on of common moral and ethical values). The community also made up a field of communication and interaction, in large part due to their continued use of the Gaelic language, which often separated them from other settlers in the region. Finally, the Highland community recognized themselves as distinct and were identified as such by outsiders.

The distinct ethnicity of the Highland settlement of North Carolina's Upper Cape Fear region was noted as somewhat of a curiosity by visitors to the region during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1828, Captain Basil Hall, a Scottish tourist traveling through America observed:

During our stay at Fayetteville, a packet of English newspapers, addressed to me, had caught the eye of the Postmaster, in arranging one of the Charleston bags, which he very kindly intercepted. When I called to thank him for this attention, I learnt that he was one of a considerable colony, as it may be called, of Scotch Highlanders settled in the country round Fayetteville. These people have found it to their advantage, it seems, to occupy considerable tracts of the worn out or exhausted land of preceding generations, and by improved husbandry, directed by the vigorous industry of freemen, with little help from slaves, to reclaim soils heretofore considered as useless. The number of these Highlanders and their descendents, who still retain almost exclusively their native language, is so considerable, that a clerk who understands Gaelic, forms a necessary part of the Post-office establishment. The head-quarters of this Celtic population in North Carolina, is Fayetteville; but we fell in with many others on our route from Norfolk to that town, and also to the southward of it, on our way to Columbia in South Carolina. (Hall 1829: 121-22)

Captain Hall's notice of the Highland settlement is fairly accurate; however, he failed to realize that the Highlanders in North Carolina were in many cases the first occupants of the land on which they settled, and not simply occupying the exhausted tracts of other settlers. Hall's observations regarding the use of Gaelic are perhaps the most noteworthy

part of his account, as the use of Gaelic was a major factor which separated the Highlanders from settlers of other ethnic backgrounds. The British consul for North and South Carolina made a similar report in 1859:

It may, perhaps, be worth mentioning that in the vicinity of Fayetteville, a small town fifty miles south of Raleigh, the capitol, there are many Scotch Highlanders. The emigration of these people to North Carolina began in the early colonial days and has continued to the present time. They come direct in small vessels to Wilmington. Very few Highlanders come to New York, or to other ports of the United States, the principal part of those emigrating land at Quebec, and remain in Canada, so that the settlement at Fayetteville is most remarkable. They still speak Gaelic, and there are even one or two churches in the State in which the services are still performed in that tongue. (British Parliamentary Papers, Vol. 88, Session 2, 1859: 2579)

The continued use of Gaelic was one of the distinctive features of North Carolina's Highland settlement, and the one which most travelers and visitors prominently noted. The usage of this language, and its gradual decline, offer an important measure of the decline of the region's distinct Highland ethnicity.

Gaelic was perhaps the strongest link to the homeland of North Carolina's Highland emigrants. In 1758, the original "Argyll Colony" was supplied with a minister who could relate to worshipers in their native language. This followed a void of religious leadership which had lasted for nineteen years after their arrival. In January of 1756, Rev. Hugh McAden visited members of the old "Argyll Colony" and preached to those who assembled at the home of Hector McNeill. He reported: "Preached to a number of Highlanders, – some of them scarcely knew one word that I said – the poorest singers I ever heard in all my life" (cited in Foote 1847: 171). McAden, a non-Gaelic speaking Ulster-Scot, was instrumental in securing the first minister for the early Highland settlement. The record of his visit attests to the continued use of Gaelic in the early years of the settlement's history.



The Rev. James Campbell, a Highlander who spoke Gaelic, arrived from Pennsylvania in 1758 and established the three mother congregations of the old Fayetteville Presbytery: Bluff, Barbecue, and Longstreet. He was followed in 1770 by the Rev. John MacLeod, and shortly thereafter by the Rev. John Bethune, both Skyemen. By the last decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, several Gaelic speaking emigrant ministers founded or preached at congregations throughout the Highland settlement. By the 1810s, emigrant ministers were joined by several Scottish-Americans who entered the ministry and who also met the area's Gaelic language needs. By the late antebellum period, at least thirty congregations in the Upper Cape Fear region, and also a few in the neighboring Upper Pee Dee region of South Carolina (which by that time also contained a notable Highland population), had demonstrated a need for Gaelic-speaking ministers for those worshipers who either knew no English or preferred to have their religious guidance given in Gaelic (Caudill 1989). The Church was thus instrumental in helping to perpetuate what is perhaps the most prominent historical indicator of Highland ethnicity in the old Highland settlement.

The record of Gaelic religious services not only gives a geographical account of the Highland settlement, but also gives us some record of the decline of this facet of Highland tradition. As emigration to North Carolina slowed in the early decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the numbers of native-born Gaelic speakers naturally declined. In many cases, the language survived for roughly a generation-and-a-half before Scottish-Americans became fully assimilated into the region's English-speaking community.<sup>2</sup> Many accounts show that the post-emigration generation of Highland descendents did not

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<sup>2</sup> This time span differs slightly from the schedule of cultural assimilation outlined by folklorist Linda Degh (1966, 1968-69), who states that, in most cases, the first-born American generation of emigrants tend to radically remove themselves from the ways of the parental generation. See also Stern (1977: 14).

radically break away from traditional ways, but rather adapted them in their new surroundings. This explains the increased demand for Gaelic-speaking ministers within the Highland settlement in the last decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the first decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. By the late antebellum period, however, the public use of Gaelic was declining dramatically. In 1851, the Rev. Colin McIver, an emigrant Gaelic speaking minister from the Island of Lewis, reported that he delivered a communion service at Galatia Church in Cumberland County to a group of over 150, some of whom had not heard the language from the pulpit in over ten years (Meyer 1961: 119; Dunn 1953: 138-39). The Rev. David MacRae, a Scottish tourist of the late 1870s, gave several accounts of Gaelic use in the region, including one of the several 19<sup>th</sup> century accounts stating that African American slaves had been taught the language and used it in everyday life.

MacRae commented:

I met with very few who could either read or speak the Gaelic; though many had been more or less familiar with it in childhood. One lady gave me a very old Gaelic psalm-book which she had often heard her mother read aloud in the old sing-song fashion by the fireside. A gentleman, the son of one of the ministers of the settlement, told me that his father, though American born, kept up his Gaelic to the last, and though English was the language for everyday life, yet when he and any of his old cronies got together in the evening, after a Presbytery meeting, they would go back upon their Gaelic, and sit up half the night talking in it. I was told that in some parts of the settlement which I had not the opportunity of visiting, Gaelic is still understood and cherished by a few enthusiastic Highlanders with a romantic attachment. (MacRae 1879: 200)

He later added,

Even after English became the language of ordinary life, Gaelic was continued in the pulpit. A congregation within a few miles of Fayetteville had Gaelic services regularly till within the last few years, but they are now discontinued. (MacRae 1879: 201)

Gaelic was certainly still in use in some areas as late as the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I made field recordings of several elderly Scottish-American citizens of the

region in the late 1980s and early 1990s who still knew Gaelic words and phrases, as well as recitations that several experts have determined to be in flawless 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Hebridean or West Highland dialects. Despite such scattered survivals, however, the Gaelic language had likely lost its prominence as a determining factor of Highland ethnicity in North Carolina by the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

When advertisements appeared in British newspapers in 1883 encouraging financial contributions for a planned emigration of Highland crofters to the old Highland settlement of North Carolina, they noted that there was still a Gaelic-speaking minister in the settlement. The Rev. John Monroe, an American-born Gaelic speaker who was the founding father of several Baptist congregations in present-day Robeson and Scotland counties, did indeed speak Gaelic, and had held services in the language at several local Baptist congregations. Nonetheless, records show that he was retiring from regular ministry at that time. Although one might question the motivations of the Scottish-Americans who included the information about a Gaelic speaking minister in promoting North Carolina's advantages, the fact remains that Monroe is probably representative of the Gaelic-speaking population of the old Highland settlement in the 1880s.<sup>3</sup>

In some more isolated areas, the 1884 emigrants may have indeed found native North Carolinians—and perhaps some older Highland emigrants—with whom they could converse in Gaelic. The Raleigh News and Observer reported from the correspondence of The Carthage Gazette in Moore County, “We are very often treated to a conversation

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<sup>3</sup> Duncan Moir, the grandson of one of the 1884 emigrants from Skye to North Carolina, informed me that his grandmother, Christine Nicolson MacMillan, was acquainted with Rev. John Monroe during her brief stay in present-day Scotland County. Since she had no knowledge of English, as was the case with many of the 1884 emigrants, Monroe was the only local native with whom she could have any direct conversation. Rev. Monroe apparently served as her translator and friend, and she shared with him her feelings of isolation from other Gaelic speakers, as well as her terrible fear of the African American population (Moir 1996).

in the Gaelic language as the new Scotch crofters and the old Scotch citizens meet in a friendly handshake and express their feelings in their native tongue” (1884a).

Despite this reference, the community into which most of the 1884 emigrants arrived was evidently one in which assimilation to English was more complete. In her work The Home Place, which describes post-reconstruction childhood years spent in present-day Scotland County, Nettie McCormick Henley wrote, “Our language was English, with some Negro softening. Scotch dialect such as in Ian McLaren’s Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush has no resemblance to the way we talked, and I never heard anybody speak Gaelic” (1956: 15). It is apparent that by the closing decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, one of the predominant indicators of Highland ethnicity within North Carolina’s Upper Cape Fear region was quickly disappearing. As Scottish-Americans gradually abandoned customs which may have led to them being labeled as “backward,” they lost the cultural retention which most distinguished them as Highlanders. (This process was likely similar to the abandonment of Gaelic by some speakers in Scotland, for whom the language has carried a negative social stigma associated with a “lack of sophistication” and an anachronistic culture.)<sup>4</sup>

Although Gaelic was perhaps the most evident characteristic of Highland ethnicity in North Carolina, other aspects of Highland culture also distinguished the emigrant Gaels from other ethnic groups, and provided a continuing link with the land they left behind. Notable among these were the use of place names that hearkened back to Scotland. Many local families gave Highland names to their homesteads. (The ancestral homeplace of many McColls in present-day Scotland County, for instance, still

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<sup>4</sup> For a further examination of the decline of Gaelic in some Highland communities, see Language Death: Life Cycle of a Scottish Gaelic Dialect (1981), by Nancy C. Dorian.

bears the name “Ballachulish,” the locale from which they emigrated.) 19<sup>th</sup>-century post offices and crossroads communities bore names such as Skye, Inverness, Tobermory, Bowmore, and Dundarrach.<sup>5</sup> Other traditions did not fare so well. The few accounts of Highland dress from the 18<sup>th</sup> century suggest that emigrants abandoned this rather apparent marker of ethnicity rather quickly for obvious climatic and practicality reasons. Highland foodways were obviously abandoned due to the loss of fishing as a major source of food in inland areas as well as the opportunities for new and more varied vegetable crops. Music and dance are two other facets of Highland culture that did not survive the tests of time as well as the spoken word, despite their intrinsic connection to Gaelic language and the oral tradition.

Piping, fiddle playing, song, and poetry are all important parts of traditional Highland culture. There are several accounts of emigrant Highland pipers in North Carolina, a fact that is not surprising given the relatively high social status of pipers, particularly those who were patronized within clan hierarchy in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Donald Ruaidh MacCrimmon, the last hereditary piper to the chief of Clan MacLeod and instructor at the famed College of Piping operated by the MacLeods of Dunvegan at Borreraig, Skye, was among the pre-Revolutionary emigrants to present-day Moore County, North Carolina. Other pipers of lesser repute also lived in the Upper Cape Fear in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Nonetheless, the considerable change in climate, the lack of specialized tools and materials for making or repairing instruments, as well as the primary responsibilities of creating a new life in a challenging new environment, all help explain the lack of a folk piping tradition in North Carolina past the

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<sup>5</sup> Dundarrach means “hill of the oak tree” in Gaelic. The slightly corrupted pronunciation of “done-dark,” however, has led many Hoke County residents to insist that the name emerged when General Sherman’s troops, stalled by the lack of daylight, stopped there to camp in 1865.

emigrant generation. Emigrant Highlanders may also have wanted to avoid Highland piping's martial associations, particularly given the involvement of many Highlanders in the Revolutionary War, as well as the suspicions about the resident British population during the War of 1812.

The lack of a surviving Highland piping tradition in the Upper Cape Fear region may have been yet another point where organizers of the 1884 emigration realized that some of the traditional Highland culture that new emigrants might expect to find upon arrival was not to be found. The North Carolina Presbyterian printed the following query on December 26, 1883: "Any Scotchman being the fortunate possessor of a Highland bagpipe, and more fortunately still, knowing how to use it, will find it prove a matter of interest to himself and others if he will promptly communicate the fact to Mr. J. L. Cooley, Montpelier, Richmond County, N.C." ("Bagpiper Needed" 1883). Perhaps Cooley, one of the organizers of the 1884 emigration, wished to secure a piper for the grand welcoming celebration in Laurinburg for the new Highland emigrants. He was obviously hard-pressed to find a piper within the Upper Cape Fear region.

One of the 1884 emigrants from the West Highland village of Glenelg, Alexander MacRae, was a piper who was related by marriage to one of the more prominent piping families of the Highlands in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. He likely found no piping camaraderie among either the Scottish Americans of the Upper Cape Fear, or the residents of his eventual home near Linville in Avery County. In his later years, MacRae and his wife operated a guest house and farm on the present day site of "MacRae Meadow" on the slope of Grandfather Mountain, where he played his bagpipe and sang Gaelic songs for the family's guests (Carswell 1997a, 1997b; Dugger 1907: 245-47). It is

an eerie irony that the site of Alexander MacRae's last home in North Carolina is now the location of one of the largest annual gatherings of pipers in the United States—the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games.<sup>6</sup>

The church also played a role in diminishing the vitality of Scottish traditional music and dance in North Carolina. This too is ironic, considering that the Church had effectively perpetuated Highland culture by bringing Gaelic ministers to the old Highland settlement. Yet the conservative Presbyterians and their Baptist counterparts frowned upon both “the devil’s box,” as the fiddle was known, and the carnal thoughts supposedly inspired by dancing. Church sessions regularly reprimanded worshipers for inappropriate behavior, which sometimes included even the *appreciation* of music and dance. The Rev. David MacRae noted:

Highland songs and dances were once common; but ‘Dixie’s Land’ is better known now than the pibroch, and the Church has done a great deal to put dancing down, though its zeal has often been more than its success.

One staunch Highlander, of the name of M’Gregor, who was a great dancer, kept himself, during the New Year festivities, in a chronic state of alcoholic excitement, and put in an appearance wherever there was hope of a reel or strathspey. He was remonstrated with, and at last threatened with the Session. “You may Sayshun and you may Sayshun” cried the obdurate Celt, “but when New Year comes M’Gregor is on the floor.” (1879: 201)

As late as the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, music and dance still carried a religious stigma in the region. An article in The Robesonian of Lumberton, North Carolina, on

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<sup>6</sup> Alexander MacRae sold his large fishing boat to bring his family to North Carolina. He initially arrived in Moore County, yet soon settled on a 150 acre plot near present-day Pembroke, N.C. According to family accounts, he was unsuccessful as a farmer and sought opportunities closer to water. So he moved his family to Wilmington, where they met the family of Hugh MacRae, a wealthy Scottish-American who was involved in various land development projects. Hugh MacRae recruited Alexander MacRae to oversee part of his lands near present-day Linville, North Carolina, which he was developing as a resort area. Alexander MacRae subsequently oversaw lands on the slopes of Grandfather Mountain, and also served as the construction foreman for the Yonahlossee Turnpike, a toll road that connected the Linville area with rail lines in nearby Blowing Rock. The present site of the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games—“MacRae Meadows”—was named for Alexander MacRae’s family (who lived there) rather than for that of Hugh MacRae (who originally owned the tract).

June 15, 1911, gave an account of an “Old Fiddlers Convention” which was held for the first time at Wagram in Scotland County. The article states,

At the conclusion of his sermon at Spring Hill last Sunday, Rev. T. G. Wood, the pastor, administered a mild rebuke to those of his members who attended the old fiddlers convention at Wagram last Friday night. Mr. Wood said he was sorry that the new town Wagram celebrated its entrance into social life with fiddling and dancing, and that he was also sorry that some of his members had participated in those exercises, which he did not think conducive to the life of the church. It is estimated that about 400 or 500 people attended the old fiddlers convention, and only three fiddlers present. (“Spring Hill News” 1911)

With strong social pressures from the Church, and conservative attitudes against music and dance, it is not surprising that Highland music did not have a greater impact on the region’s folk traditions. In this case, a manifestation of Highland culture was depleted due to pressures from within the community itself.

Although religious doctrines and interpretations may have had mixed effects on the survival of Highland traditions, other vehicles helped to recreate and perhaps even reinvent Highland heritage in the minds of the Cape Fear region’s “old Scots.”<sup>7</sup> The same Presbyterians who held onto the use of Gaelic in worship services also fostered an unwavering appreciation of education. Many descendants of the region’s Highland settlers have said that if the first task undertaken by Scottish emigrants was establishing churches, then the second was establishing schools. The literate Scottish-Americans of the region were no doubt predisposed toward books which dealt with the history of their ancestral homeland. The libraries of Scottish-Americans in North Carolina contained works such as Jane Porter’s The Scottish Chiefs (1831), Sir Walter Scott’s Waverly (1814) (as well as the subsequent Waverly novels, which were reprinted in the South and

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<sup>7</sup> In his work Life on the Mississippi (1883), Mark Twain argues that the romantic images of Scotland which were portrayed by the works of Sir Walter Scott inspired antebellum Southern males toward violence and civil war (Hook 1999: 196-97). It is certain that the works of Scott, and of others who romantically depicted legendary events of Scottish history, were prime reading material for antebellum Southerners.



elsewhere during the 1820s and 1830s), Ossian's Poems (edited by James MacPherson), various editions of the works of Robert Burns, Sarah Aguilar's The Days of Bruce (1852), and other works from lesser known Scottish authors. These sat on the shelves alongside the old Gaelic Bibles and Psalm Books brought across the Atlantic by emigrant ancestors (Gibson: 100-01).<sup>8</sup> The reassembled library of D. P. McEachern, a leading proponent of the Highland emigration scheme, contains many of these works, along with others dealing with Scottish history and traditions. (McEachern's descendents have reconstructed his library at the restored Mill Prong plantation in present-day Hoke County.)

These literary works' images of Scottish history—and particularly of the Scottish wars of Independence from England—inspired their Scottish-American readers to conjure imagined ties between their own progenitors and the Scots depicted therein. The foregrounded traits of honor, virtue, and chivalry were certainly qualities to which many Anglo-Celtic antebellum southern males aspired. An affinity for and appreciation of the links between the ideals of the “Old South” and the Scotland of Porter and Scott are quite evident in the everyday lives of antebellum whites. The Carolinas boasted plantations named “Caledonia,” “Bannockburn,” “Waverly,” and other names suggested by modern Scottish-inspired literature (Joyner 1985: 17-19). A steamship which ran from nearby

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<sup>8</sup> The works of Robert Burns, Scotland's most noted bard, were certainly more common than the songs of Iain MacMhurchaidh (John MacRae), a well known Gaelic-speaking Highland bard who settled in Moore County prior to the American Revolution. MacRae's songs have been collected in numerous Gaelic-speaking communities worldwide, but did not survive in the region in which they were composed, though the works of Burns were widely known and appreciated. Burns's influence is also apparent in the works of North Carolina's first poet laureate, John Charles McNeill, who was born and raised in a community in which several of the 1884 emigrants had settled. As a young man, he may have even interacted with some of them. McNeill's familiarity with Scottish literature led him to write a number of poems in a flawless Broad Scots dialect such as that used by Burns, in addition to works composed in African American and Lumbee dialects. It is interesting to note that this literary voice chose the language of a lowland Scot instead of the Gaelic of his own ancestors.

Cheraw, South Carolina, in the Upper Pee Dee to Charleston was named “The Lady of the Lake” after the Scott novel of the same name (Gibson 1995: 68). Southerners even named their children after characters in popular Scottish romantic literature, song, and lore. One could easily find William Wallaces, Robert Bruces, Annie Lauries and even Flora MacDonalds in the Carolinas and elsewhere in the South. With such widespread awareness of the works of Sir Walter Scott, the Scots of the Upper Cape Fear had an added advantage of sharing at least some indirect historical connections with these heroes.<sup>9</sup>

In 1847, The Rev. William Henry Foote published his Sketches of North Carolina, a history of Presbyterianism in the state that furthered romantic historical notions about the Highland Scots. It was Foote who created the “Culloden myth,” which to this day is cherished by many Highland descendents in the Carolinas. Foote states,

This wilderness became a refuge to the harassed Highlanders; and shipload after shipload landed at Wilmington in 1746 and 1747. The emigration once fairly begun by royal authority and clemency, was carried on by those who wished to improve their condition, and become owners of the soil upon which they lived and labored; and in the course of a few years large companies of industrious Highlanders joined their countrymen in Bladen County, North Carolina. Their descendents are found in the counties of Cumberland, Bladen, Sampson, Moore, Robeson, Richmond, and Anson, all of which were included in Bladen at the time of the first emigration; and are a moral, religious people, noted for their industry and economy, perseverance and prosperity; forming a most interesting and important part of the State. (1847: 130)

Foote’s historical information is not substantiated; no primary sources support the idea that Jacobite exiles were sent to North Carolina, though writers such as William Faulkner

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<sup>9</sup> I have been approached many times by elderly ladies who claim to be “a direct descendent of Robert the Bruce.” In North Carolina, the longing to establish kinship with the over-romanticized Flora MacDonald has become so common that the Scottish Heritage Center at St. Andrews Presbyterian College has prominently framed a lineage chart of the House of Kingsburgh and CastleCamus and its allied families to save many visitors from embarrassment.

have included such characters in their tales.<sup>10</sup> This myth was not completely debunked until Duane Meyer's Highland Scots of North Carolina 1732-1776 was published in 1961. Nonetheless, many Highland descendents of the Upper Cape Fear claimed this narrative, believing that instead of rent increases and sheep, it was their loyalty to the lost cause of the House of Stuart that led them to their new homeland, far away from “the land of bens and glens, and heroes.” To many impressionable Scottish-Americans, the vision of kilt-clad warriors bearing claymores at the battlefield of Culloden was much more romantic than that of poor, hungry families huddled in small stone dwellings with thatched roofs and peat fires. As the authentic stories of the Highlands—no doubt conveyed by emigrant Scots to their descendents—began to be forgotten, newly created images took their place and re-shaped ideas of historical and ethnic identity.

The romantic history of Scotland clearly served as an inspiration for the Cape Fear Highlanders, as well as for other Southerners, when the region was drawn into Civil War. The military exploits of the Highland regiments of the British army were legendary by this time. North American Scots regularly read newspaper accounts of the heroic actions of kilted Highland soldiers in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century wars of the British Empire. Such accounts inspired a group of Scots in New York to raise the 79<sup>th</sup> New York Highlanders during the Civil War, borrowing their regimental number from one of Scotland's most famous Highland regiments, and modeling their uniforms (which included kilts and trews in the Cameron of Erracht tartan) after them. Charleston, South Carolina, also had a kilt-clad militia unit, the Charleston Scots Greys, at the outbreak of the war.

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<sup>10</sup> In Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury, Quentin Maclachan fled to Carolina from Culloden Moor with a claymore and the tartan that he wore by day and slept under at night.

Despite their unquestionable Highland identity, the Scots of the Upper Cape Fear had abandoned their traditional Highland dress long before the coming of the Civil War. Nonetheless, their identification with Scottish military traditions was quite evident during the period, and offers another example of manifested Highland ethnicity by second and third generation descendents. This manifestation easily fits within the three-step model of trans-generational ethnic transformation described by folklorist Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1972, cited in Stern 1977: 14). She notes that emigrant generations typically adjust to their new surroundings while still holding onto their original culture; the second generation, in turn, tend to be ambivalent about their heritage (neither fleeing from traditional culture nor consciously acting to retain it); and the third (which would be the generation which included Confederate soldiers from the old Highland settlement) would be completely assimilated, yet wished to identify in some way with the values, traditions, and “authenticity” of the original emigrant generation (Stern: 14-15).

The old Highland settlement of the Upper Cape Fear mustered over thirty companies of men during the Civil War. Some might have likened their call to arms as a last gathering of the Highland clans. Muster rolls reveal that many of these companies—likely inspired by the militaristic Scottish traditions with which they had begun to personally identify—consisted primarily of Highland descendents. On May 20, 1861, The Fayetteville Observer printed the following poem written by a member of “The Scotch Boys” —Company F of the 18<sup>th</sup> Regiment of North Carolina Troops:

We stood long for Union, our loyalty true  
and so till this day, in all conscience might do  
but for the corruption in high places we found,  
and like the tyrannic fetters by which we were bound,  
like brave Wallace and Bruce, we’ll ever now stand. (cited in Gibson 1995: 128)

This allusion to the two main heroes of the Scottish wars of independence shows an unquestionable familiarity with the romantic Scottish literature of the antebellum era.<sup>11</sup> “The Scotch Boys” of present-day Scotland and Richmond Counties joined a host of other ethnically identified companies, including “The Highland Boys” of Cumberland County, “The Scotch Greys” of present-day Scotland and Robeson Counties, and “The Highland Rangers” from Harnett County. “The Scotch Boys” of lower Richmond County prided themselves in the fact that they raised 94 men, over 90 percent of whom were of Highland stock.<sup>12</sup>

Romantic and historic links with Scotland obviously influenced the mindset of Confederate veterans from the region. The postwar histories of North Carolina regiments compiled by Walter T. Clark contain a number of romantic allusions to Scottish history in their accounts of Civil War deeds and exploits. For instance, the commander of “The Anson Rifles,” Company A of the 23<sup>rd</sup> North Carolina Regiment, wrote of his men: “There was a strong infusion of Highland Scotch, descendents of the stout-hearted, strong-armed lads who were out with Charlie in the Forty-five” (cited in Clark 1901: 182). The historian of Company E of the 40<sup>th</sup> North Carolina Regiment wrote: “This was one of the best companies in the service and had in it many descendents of Highlanders who fought under Lochiel at the fatal battle of Culloden and who displayed on the sands of Carolina the warlike spirit of their ancestors” (cited in Clark 1901: 750). After the war, their identification with the failed cause of the Southern Confederacy was yet

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<sup>11</sup> Some might equate the impact of Porter and Scott on Scottish-American Southerners with the modern-day impact of the movie “Braveheart” on the popularity of the Scottish National Party.

<sup>12</sup> Of this number, 60 stood between six feet and six feet, four inches in height; twenty four were over five feet, ten inches; seven were over five feet, eight inches; and only three were under that height. The company’s Captain, W. E. McLaurin would later note: “This record is believed to be unprecedented, for so large a company in the Confederate or Federal Armies, if it does not challenge the armies of the world for a company not specially selected” (cited in Clark 1901: II, 16-17).

another romantic “lost cause” to which Highland descendents in the Upper Cape Fear region could lay claim.

Following the Civil War, the old Highland settlement experienced the consequences of Reconstruction. Many links with old Highland traditions were broken due to the loss of lives and the destruction of property. In 1879, the Rev. David MacRae commented on a typical loss in the settlement: “The house and gates and fences are all more or less out of repair. The place has shared in the general wreck of the war, and also had a visit from Sherman’s ‘bummers’ who plundered the house and destroyed a good deal which they could not take away” (1879: 194). The church and grounds of the Old Laurel Hill Presbyterian Church in Scotland County, founded by Gaelic-speaking Highlanders, were used as a bivouac by one wing of Sherman’s army in 1865; prior to their departure, the soldiers ripped out the church’s pews and floors to “corduroy” a neighboring swamp for the army’s wagons. This was typical of the treatment endured by the North Carolina Highland settlements, which lay directly in Sherman’s path.

Churches, however, were not the only aspect of Highland religious life affected by the war. One of the region’s last emigrant Gaelic-speaking ministers, The Rev. James C. Sinclair from the Island of Tiree, relocated to Pennsylvania. Though he had ministered at various churches in the settlement, he re-affiliated himself with the Northern branch of the Presbyterian Church and later returned to North Carolina, where he reputedly ministered in Gaelic to the former slaves of his old congregations; became the agent for the Freedman’s Bureau in Lumberton, North Carolina; and also became assessor for the Internal Revenue Service—none of which endeared this now-legendary carpetbagger to his former Scottish-American worshipers. Interestingly, Sinclair was

also the regional correspondent and subscription agent for the Gaelic newspaper An Gaidheal, published in Canada and distributed to Gaelic-speaking communities throughout North America. The fact that he was widely identified with this role (even though he remained curiously silent during the post-war years) is another marker recognizing the identity of North Carolina's Highland settlement well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Despite the challenges to Highland ethnicity which were faced during the Civil War and Reconstruction, the region's Scottish-Americans still clung to their identity. Recognizable manifestations of identification with Scotland stretched well into, and even after, Reconstruction. Newspapers which served the region regularly carried items of Scottish interest for those who still cherished links to their ancestral homeland, and the romantic notions of Scottish history were present in everyday literary allusions. The Richmond Rocket of August 7, 1884, for instance, contained the following comments from their Spring Hill (Wagram) correspondent:

Dear Rocket: Did you ever see a better front than is this year presented by the Democracy? Cleveland of noble record and dauntless vim in the front, with Hendricks, the nation's ideal of true greatness by his side. Then our own State with Scales, Stedman, *et id omne genus*, such worthy noble men. Does it not nerve every arm for a Bannockburn victory for the Scotia of Democracy in the coming contest? Let every man be a hero in the coming strife and the "bloody chasm" will be forever closed with the "bloody shirt" forever in its depths. ("Spring Hill Items" 1884)

This 1884 statement suggests that the romantic images of Scotland created by earlier 19<sup>th</sup> century writers were still fresh in the minds of second, third, and fourth generation Scottish-Americans. Although there appears to have been no public effort to reinvigorate Highland ethnicity in the period immediately following the Civil War (as was the case in other North American communities with notable Scottish populations, where fraternal

organizations like the Caledonian Clubs or St. Andrews Societies emerged and flourished), the news from Scotland began to inform Carolina's Scottish-Americans of events in their ancestral homeland which made their own Reconstruction-era hardships pale in comparison. Highland crofters were quarreling with landlords, the direct descendents in many cases of old clan chiefs to whom their ancestors had served allegiances prior to Culloden, for the right to keep tenure of their poor, rented tracts of land. Many crofters were barely able to provide subsistence for themselves and their families. As these stories came to the attention of Scottish-American community leaders, they formulated a plan to provide assistance to their crofting cousins. The idea of relocating some of the destitute Highland crofters to an expatriate Scottish community seemed a logical way to provide assistance. These Scottish-American leaders may have also hoped to solve another problem at the same time—that of an inadequate labor force to fully realize the region's economic potential.<sup>13</sup> One can surmise that they would have anxiously welcomed an “ethnically attractive” group to assist in renewing and expanding the area's vitality and resources. The idea of inviting “new Scots” into a community of older Scottish-Americans must have seemed a logical and easy fit. It is ironic that one of the points which was indirectly conveyed to the prospective emigrants of 1884 was that they would be relocating into a Highland community in North Carolina that had many of the same attributes of their communities in Scotland. Yet as the emigrants would soon discover, the passage of time had created a far greater cultural schism than members of the Scottish-American community in North Carolina realized.

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<sup>13</sup> The out-migration of community members to areas such as Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi began as early as the 1810s and continued throughout the antebellum period. The emancipation of enslaved African Americans—and their subsequent outmigration—further depleted the regional labor pool, as did the Reconstruction-era migration of other community members to regions such as Texas. Exhaustion of the area's virgin pine forests also fueled additional departures during this period.



### Chapter 3: Comings and Goings

*“If these Scotch but knew what was good for themselves, they’d move right over here and say no more about it.”*

The Fayetteville Observer, August 30, 1883

*“I have no doubt that a better class of immigrants would have proved a success. These Skye crofters are a good deal like the Irish land leagues—hard to satisfy, and not worth much after being satisfied.”*

The Rockingham Rocket, October 15, 1885

By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, most Scots emigrating from the Highlands were moving to the Canadian Maritimes, Ontario, Australia, New Zealand, and other locations in the British Empire. Until then, the Highland settlement in North Carolina held the largest concentration of Scots in North America; it began to be eclipsed, however, by settlements in Nova Scotia and Ontario, as well as by those along expanding rail lines in the Canadian prairies. In the late antebellum era, large parties of Highlanders simply did not flock to the Carolinas to live among their kith and kin. Hence, the 1884 emigration of more than 150 Highlanders to North Carolina was quite an anomaly. This was probably the most significant effort to recruit foreign emigrants to North Carolina in the latter 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The scheme which led to this emigration had its origins in the social and economic conditions of the Reconstruction era. Following the devastation of the Civil War, many landholders in the Upper Cape Fear resolved to reinvigorate the region. With the loss of slave labor, and the out-migration of many former landholders who sought better opportunities elsewhere, the region was struggling to expand its agriculturally-

based economy. The State of North Carolina's Department of Agriculture began aggressively recruiting farmers from New England and the Midwest to relocate to North Carolina. Under the direction of John T. Patrick, who was named State Immigration Agent, North Carolina launched promotional campaigns to inform prospective emigrants, investors, and developers of the state's extant and untapped resources, as well as of the availability of cheap land ("Immigration" 1883a, 1883b; "North Carolina Past and Present" 1883). Although these efforts focused on domestic emigration, some foreign emigration also occurred, with mixed results. A colony of English farmers successfully settled in northern Richmond County, and a group of Frenchmen tried to establish a settlement to promote silk culture in Richmond and Moore counties ("Silk Culture in North Carolina" 1884; The Wilmington Morning Star 1884l). Several leading citizens and farmers of the old Scottish settlement also responded to the state's call, and began promoting emigration from the Scottish Highlands.

Though roughly a generation had passed since the flow of emigration from the Highlands had slowed to less than a trickle, the Scottish-Americans of the Upper Cape Fear region were still very much aware of conditions and current events in Scotland. Many still remained in occasional contact with their increasingly distant relatives in Scotland, and local newspapers regularly featured items of Scottish interest well into the 1880s. The Moore Gazette of Carthage, for instance, noted in 1881 that, "Capt. J. D. McIver has kindly given us the use of 'The Scotsman and Caledonian Mercury' published in Edinburgh at 1d. per copy. It is the best Scotch paper we have ever seen and we advise all our old Gaelic friends to subscribe to it" ("Scotsman" 1881). It was through such newspapers that Scottish-Americans learned of the plight of the crofters in

the Scottish Highlands and Islands, who were suffering under despotic landlords with no hope for improving their situation.

Widely circulated news stories that described the cultural “peculiarities” of the crofters, many of whom were barely able to sustain their families due to the land tenure practices of Highland landlords, resulted in humanitarian aid from throughout Britain as well as from expatriate Scottish communities in North America. Though the British government established a formal inquiry into the situation following 1882’s “Battle of the Braes,” it was not until 1886 that the government passed the Crofters Act, which gave crofters legal rights against forced eviction by landlords. Prior to this time, many saw emigration as the only hope for greater prosperity for Highland crofters, though few of these destitute farmers could afford passage to places such as Canada or Australia, where they might start life anew.

Those who promoted such emigration did not take into account the challenges that removal from their traditional lifestyle might bring upon the crofters’ arrival in new communities. Many crofters did not voluntarily seek overseas relocation; they only sought relief from their exorbitant rents so that they could remain in the land to which they were bound by the strong links of history, tradition, and culture. Some Highland landlords provided paid passages for their superfluous tenants, ridding themselves of “agitators” like the five men arrested at The Braes in Skye. Unwanted tenants in some poor crofting communities found themselves with one-way passages to Manitoba and other developing settlements along Canada’s expanding trans-continental rail lines. Emigration schemes abounded in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Highlands of Scotland, and scores of families were lured away from their homeland by promises of prosperity and

encouragement in North America or Australia. Scottish-Americans in North Carolina—some of whose ancestors came from the same locales that were making news headlines in 1882—were among those doing the luring.

Evidence of interest in recruiting a new wave of Highland emigrants to North Carolina first appeared in Rev. David MacRae's The Americans At Home (1879), a reflective journal of MacRae's trip throughout the United States in the late 1870s. A Free Church minister from Dundee, Scotland, MacRae devoted two chapters to his visits in the Highland settlement in North Carolina. He noted the range and scope of the settlement, recounted its history, described its cultural retentions, and discussed how the Civil War had affected the region. In concluding his second chapter about the settlement, he noted:

I found most of them temperate in their views of slavery, some of them even glad that it was gone, and anxious now to have white immigration in order to get free labour fairly tried. One planter said that if ten Scotch families went out he would give them twenty acres of land apiece, free of charge merely to have them settle on the plantation and introduce the Scotch method of farming. (MacRae 1879: 202)

This passage regarding the encouragement of Scottish emigration is rather curious, particularly for its reference to “the Scotch method of farming.” Even as late as the latter 19<sup>th</sup> century, most Highland crofters still tilled the soil with the traditional “cas chrom,” or wooden foot-plow. Agricultural methods in the American South were certainly far advanced from those commonly being employed in the Scottish Highlands during this time. The skills needed to farm cotton, corn, and tobacco would have been unknown to Highlanders; the same is true for the skills needed to work the Southern pine forests. (Crofters would have needed permission from their landlords even to salvage driftwood from shorelines, much less to cut one of the few trees found in Highland landscapes.) Agricultural labor and forestry in the American South would certainly have challenged

the somewhat meager agricultural knowledge of Highland crofters. One is therefore led to wonder if the generous planter whom MacRae described was perhaps envisioning himself as a modern-day Scottish-American laird of sorts, hosting and fostering farm laborers who were more desirable to him than African Americans, and who shared his ethnic background. Though this is only supposition, other Carolina planters certainly shared the same idea that was voiced to MacRae. Just four years after he published his traveler's journal, MacRae himself became involved as a knowledgeable reference for, and supporter of, fund-raising efforts in Scotland and England to remove families of Highland crofters to the old Highland settlement of North Carolina.

Yet another intriguing Scottish visitor to North Carolina's Highland settlement in the post-Civil War period was Miss Margaret MacLeod from Dundee. Miss MacLeod spent approximately two years, sometime prior to 1883, visiting relatives in the Upper Cape Fear. During this extended visit, she met some of the leading citizens of Richmond and Robeson counties, including James L. Cooley of Spring Hill (present-day Wagram) and D. P. McEachern of the Mill Prong Plantation in nearby Robeson (present-day Hoke) County. Upon learning of the growing interest in bringing emigrants to North Carolina, Miss MacLeod told these and other parties about the crofters' situation in Scotland. She apparently began promoting an emigration plan shortly after her return to Scotland. D. P. McEachern related the following information from Miss MacLeod concerning Highland crofters:

In a recent letter to Mr. Cooley she represents the poorer classes of the Hebrides as pitiful in the extreme—much worse than the poorest Negro that roams the sand-hills of Richmond, or picks huckleberries in the swamps of Robeson. They have the same complaint the poor Irish have, viz: poor crops, voracious landlords and exorbitant rents. These poor people who are struggling for existence are the

same stock that settled the five counties of Robeson, Richmond, Harnett, Cumberland, and Moore more than 100 years ago. (“Scotch Immigration” 1883)

McEachern was a second generation Scottish-American and an avid “Scotophile” (as his surviving library attests). He was also one of his community’s more prominent citizens, having served Robeson County in the N.C. House of Representatives. His interest in recruiting emigrant crofters certainly gave credibility to the efforts within his own community, as well as to those within the greater region. He added:

This is the best opportunity we ever had, or ever will have to secure a good, hard laboring class of population. Do we want them? Yes. Have we room for them? Why, bless your soul man, you might empty the whole of Skye into Robeson County and there’d be room for all of Islay and Jura to make themselves comfortable for a lifetime. (“Scotch Immigration” 1883)

Admirably demonstrating his geographic knowledge of Scotland (and particularly of the regions that had sent large emigrations to North Carolina in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries), McEachern offered a set of enticements different from those cited by Rev.

David MacRae only a few years earlier:

The people of this section are all good, honest Scotch Presbyterians, with a few Baptists thrown in to flavor society. We have plenty of churches and schools, and if immigration sets in we will have more. All kinds of labor are wanted—such as farm-hands, cooks, house-maids, &c. Those who would wish to farm on their own hook could easily rent land and get advances from the farmers on whose lands they settle. If you will come, brother Scotchmen, a society will be formed to give you comfortable homes and to protect you from any land shark who might wish to swallow you whole. We are not able to offer the inducements set forth by Canada and Manitoba and others, but this is a better country for the poor man than either of the others. (“Scotch Immigration” 1883)

Many others apparently shared McEachern’s excitement about the potential success of new Highland emigration. By the fall of 1883, McEachern and James L. Cooley—with the assistance of Miss MacLeod and others in Scotland (including Rev. David

MacRae)—had instigated efforts to bring at least several hundred new Scottish emigrants to settle among the “old Scots” of the upper Cape Fear region.

While McEachern and Cooley were seeking support for this plan (identifying, for instance, sponsors who might accept emigrant families on their lands or in their businesses), Miss MacLeod proceeded with fundraising and enticement efforts in Scotland. Advertisements in a number of prominent Scottish and English newspapers detailed the potential benefits for North Carolina’s Scottish descendents in accepting emigrant Highland crofters. One advertisement in a paper from Liverpool, England, stated:

Many years ago a number of families emigrated from the West Highlands and Hebrides and formed a settlement in the Counties of Richmond and Robinson [sic], North Carolina. The descendents of the original settlers, many of whom still speak Gaelic, and one of whose ministers (The Rev. John Monro) can conduct services in that language, are at present sending a warm invitation to families of struggling crofters to join them in their adopted home. They have been led to do this by reading the evidence furnished to the Royal Commission, and they have resolved at a public meeting held for the purpose to give a warm welcome to as many as fifty families, if that number can be found willing to come. They guarantee to provide them with homes for a year after their arrival and to give them fair pay for their labour; and they have appointed a responsible and influential Committee to carry out the arrangements on the other side of the Atlantic. (“Highland Destitution”)<sup>14</sup>

The same article also appeared in several Scottish newspapers, including Edinburgh’s The Scotsman, one of the country’s most widely circulated papers, and one known for its pro-landlord sentiments in the struggles between Highland landlords and their tenants. The article stated that twenty-two Highland families had expressed interest in the scheme, and added that donations to help fund passage and clothing for the poor emigrants would be publicly acknowledged. They could be sent through a number of ministers, including

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<sup>14</sup> This unscribed article was collected by James MacDonald from the personal items of James L. Cooley, held by his descendents who still live on the family farm just outside Wagram, North Carolina. The article was marked in pen script, “Liverpool Newspaper 1883.”

Dundee's Rev. David MacRae, as well as the ministers of Edinburgh's St. Giles and St. Cuthbert churches, two of the city's most prominent congregations ("An Appeal for Aid" 1884).<sup>15</sup>

The claimed historical links between North Carolina and Scotland are perhaps the most intriguing features of this article. It offered D. P. McEachern's name as a reference, for instance, though it identified him as a United States Senator instead of a member of the North Carolina House of Representatives. The article also misrepresented the use of Gaelic in the region, as Gaelic was certainly in decline at that time. The Rev. John Monroe was indeed a Gaelic speaking minister, but the article failed to note that he was an octogenarian, in poor health, and was retiring from his regular ministerial activities. Misrepresentation was a tactic often used in emigration schemes, and this effort was evidently no exception.

As subscriptions to aid this seemingly benign effort were being received, Miss MacLeod traveled among the prospective emigrant population in the Highlands and Islands and initiated correspondence with a number of Highland landlords, their factors, and other interested parties. In a letter written to Lady MacDonald, wife of Lord Ronald MacDonald of the Island of Skye, on November 23, 1883, she stated:

Through the Honourable Mrs. Madocks, you were aware of my mission in Skye and through her you were told I was carefully avoiding any seeming contact with proprietors or factors for the time. I thought it was necessary, and now I see the wisdom of it. At the same time I denied myself, that indeed, which would have been a great pleasure. Knowing the current spirit of the people, I concluded to do good to them while at the same time doing good to proprietors. I must not make a move that would cause the slightest suspicion. When I was asked by many if I was certain that I was not out from proprietors to take these means to get them out of the country how much lighter it seemed to be able to say I was not—and to show them that it was so that I had refused introductions to them. I hoped they

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<sup>15</sup> Other supporters included Mr. E. H. Wood, laird of the Island of Raasay, and G. H. Thoms, Esq., of Edinburgh, who was Sheriff of the counties of Caithness, Orkney, and Shetland.



believed it. I have the satisfaction to know many did believe it although there may be many skeptics. (MacLeod 1883a)

This correspondence leads one to wonder if Miss MacLeod was actually acting out of goodwill, or if there was some social or financial gain to be had from her work with this plan. She proceeded to explain the proposed terms of the scheme for the emigrants, who would supposedly receive housing and employment for a year, but who would need funds for proper clothing as well as for passage to North Carolina. She concluded her request by stating:

I ask your cooperation in bringing before Lord MacDonald my wish, to know if I may look to him for any money to pay or help pay their passages as this has to be got-up by subscription. I am looking forward to each of the proprietors doing as much as possible to help in paying for these families who leave their property. I am led to believe Lady Matheson was willing to do this, but she has not the good fortune to get rid of any from Lewis, i.e. any families. Ten or twelve young men are going, but as yet no families have accepted the offer made to them. (MacLeod 1883a)

The tone of this letter suggests that Miss MacLeod's efforts may have been less than honorable. Additional documents show what appears to be substantial intrigue in her efforts. In a letter to Alexander MacDonald, Lord MacDonald's factor, Miss MacLeod emerges as a woman not afraid to use coercion or blackmail. She wrote: "I grieve to hear that the Rev. John Darroch has been trying to dissuade the poor people from going to N. Carolina and has upset a few of them. If he persists in this course I shall be obliged to give anecdotes he may not relish" (MacLeod 1883c). The Rev. John Darroch was a Presbyterian minister who did not look upon emigration as a divinely ordained "destiny" for the poor crofters, unlike many other ministers of the Free Presbyterian Church.<sup>16</sup> His

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<sup>16</sup> A native of the Island of Jura, Rev. Darroch was likely related to some of the emigrants from that island who resided in North Carolina, as many Highlanders from Jura and the neighboring Island of Islay had settled there. At least one party of emigrants from those islands came to North Carolina as late as the 1830s. Educated at Princeton University, Columbia Theological Seminary, and the Princeton Theological

efforts seemed to confound Miss MacLeod, who wrote to Alexander MacDonald, the factor for Lord MacDonald in Skye:

I hope to hear from you with as little delay as possible what can be done by the various proprietors, seeing I cannot do much more until that is settled and it is necessary for them to have the people removed before the spring work comes on as it is for me to have them in their adopted homes before the spring is far advanced so as to get accustomed to the heat before the very warm weather comes in. The earlier they can be got away the better. . . . I hear the Rev. J. Darroch is giving out that I am American born. I beg to state, much as I admire much of that country, I am proud that I am Highland born and educated. It is futile for him to try to make out that I have any interested motive in getting the people there. I only asked for homes for them where I knew the people and where I knew they would be well cared for. As my next journey will probably be Canada where my father's name will give me away—quite as much as in N.C. and then I may be able to do the same for some of their poor if it is necessary. (MacLeod 1883c)

Miss MacLeod's correspondence reveals a woman fascinated with social engineering, who feels that she is doing a great service to all parties concerned. She claimed no contact with landlords and factors, yet corresponded with them to facilitate the "good fortune" of removing their unwanted tenants. Whether she personally gained from this effort, or whether she simply saw her efforts as an act of Christian compassion, remains an unanswered question. Such schemes usually yielded *some* profit for the emigrant agent, often illicit or provided by the landlord. Nonetheless, she had the support and cooperation of landholders in North Carolina. Ultimately, Miss MacLeod was able to convince a sizeable number of families and individuals from the Islands of Skye and Lewis, as well as from other parts of the Scottish mainland, to accept the offer made by

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Seminary, Darroch returned to Scotland in 1867 to serve as a Presbyterian minister in Skye. Darroch was also a student of the historical links between Scotland and North Carolina. In 1876, he published a noteworthy article, "The Scottish Highlanders Going to Carolina," in The Celtic Magazine (1:142-147) that referenced, among other items of interest, an old Gaelic song titled "Gone to Seek a Fortune in North Carolina"; to this day, the song has eluded folklorists and historians. At the time of Miss MacLeod's note, Darroch was a minister in the village of Portree. He undoubtedly had his own perspectives on America to offer parishioners who were considering emigration.

the North Carolinians. Interestingly, three of the five men arrested as “agitators” at the “Battle of the Braes” were among the first group she convinced to leave Scotland.

As Miss MacLeod continued recruiting, North Carolinians were making plans to receive the emigrants. From the summer of 1883 through the spring of 1884, talk of this “new” Scottish emigration was one of the most prominent news items in regional newspapers.<sup>17</sup> Many early reports treated the emigration as something of a curiosity, with papers having to define the term “crofter” even for their Scottish-American readers.<sup>18</sup> Some regional papers also noted a general reluctance about the proposed influx of foreign emigrants. In July of 1883, John T. Patrick, the state’s Emigration Agent, pointed out that “the foreigners do not understand the cultivation of the principal crops raised in this State and they cannot speak our language. They will in nine cases out of ten make a failure the first year.” On the topic of foreign emigration schemes, he noted:

You have no doubt noticed accounts of assisted emigrants starting for America. The “assisted emigrants,” and there are many of them, as your brother editors across the salt water call them, are paupers and “dead beats,” who are not worth the standing room on a barren sand desert. I had rather go North and pick out such men as we want and let those foreigners fill the places made vacant by those we are bringing down. We are not particular about what places they fill so long as they don’t fill our State with their isms, creeds and views. (“Immigration” 1883a)

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<sup>17</sup> It is unfortunate that the period newspapers from Laurinburg, Rockingham, Lumberton, and Carthage—which no doubt would have had the most comprehensive coverage of the emigration—were destroyed by fires. Nonetheless, the substantive information in the surviving newspapers provides a fairly complete account of the emigration, from the arrival of the first party in early 1884 through the scheme’s failure a few months later.

Articles on the proposed emigration also spurred interest from papers as far away as Philadelphia, which noted the peculiarity of the fact that whole communities of Highland descendants in North Carolina were still speaking Gaelic. The Laurinburg Exchange was quick to refute this assertion (Fayetteville Observer, 1884b).

<sup>18</sup> The Scottish system of land subdivision known as “crofting” emerged after the departure of most Carolina Scots and their ancestors from their homeland (Wilmington Morning Star 1884e; see also Hunter 1976: 47-71).

Patrick obviously foresaw the challenges for success that foreign emigrants would face in North Carolina. Whether he, as the son of an emigrant Scottish mother, saw the Highland crofters in the same light as other European emigrants is left to guesswork. Perhaps his xenophobia was limited to continental Europeans, and not to those of Anglo-Saxon or Celtic descent. Whatever the case, he was not alone in opposing foreign emigration in the region. On February 20, 1884, The Fayetteville Observer printed a letter to the editor which stated in part:

Oh, yes, Mr. Editor, by all means let the echoes resound, the world around, with “American for Americans, and protection for American labor.” Let the cry be loud and long and constant and thorough. We have told the Chinese they must not come. Let us tell the Scotch, that are coming, they must return and take their bag-pipes with them. Let us send warnings to the Irish, and the Germans, and the Italians and the French, that our ‘bus’ is full—no more room here for non-Americans. (“Protection” 1884)

This letter, however, expresses the only hostile sentiment against the Highland emigration found in the period’s newspapers. Most such papers seemed to encourage the emigration, heartened by their knowledge of Scots and Scottish history. The North Carolina Presbyterian, a newspaper circulated among members of that denomination, noted:

We need just such emigrants as Scotland alone can furnish. Physically robust and hardy; steady, frugal, industrious; conscientious and most religiously inclined, with that thinking power and habit which is the basis and essence of all intellectuality. It goes without saying that to us it is no drawback that they are sturdy Presbyterians. Let them come, then, by all means. They will be heartily welcomed. There is room for all that can come and will. The State has promised—so we learn—what aid it can furnish, and the railroads will help heartily. (“Scottish Immigration” 1883)

Though this description draws heavily on images created by the Scottish Reformation and the period known as the “Scottish Enlightenment,” it was images such as these that attracted regional interest in this emigration scheme. Able politicians and successful

farmers such as D. P. McEachern and J. L. Cooley were able to secure enough interest among local citizens to pursue the planned emigration to Richmond and Robeson counties, and their efforts and enthusiasm eventually stimulated interest in neighboring counties as well. As the previous article attests, they were also able to secure some funding from state sources to make the emigration possible.

By early 1884, the emigration's planners had secured sponsors for the emigrant families and finalized plans for the Highlanders' arrival. On February 9, the first group of emigrant Scots made their way to Liverpool, England, where they sailed for the United States. Local sponsors planned a grand celebration in their honor, including a speech and prayer in Gaelic by Rev. John Monroe, a response on behalf of the emigrants by the Hon. D. P. McEachern, a speech on the advantages and benefits of the county and State by Mr. Livy Johnson, and an "old fashioned Scotch dinner" ("Skye Crofters" 1884).<sup>19</sup>

On February 20, The Wilmington Morning Star reported that J. L. Cooley was in Wilmington to raise funds for the emigrants' subsistence after their arrival from Norfolk:

Mr. Cooley and the people of Robeson and Richmond have done wonders in overcoming every difficulty they had to encounter and they have had many. For over one year they have been unceasing in their efforts. Means had to be raised in Richmond and Robeson and other places to pay ocean transportation and prepare homes for them when they arrive and many other things. They are about to meet their reward. These emigrants are of an exceptionally good character, thrifty moral, and hardy—just the class to build up a community. The people of Robeson and Richmond have about exhausted themselves, and they call upon the citizens of Wilmington to help them in a small way. Their fare is all arranged to Laurinburg, but they are destitute of all means, and they must have subsistence on the way from Norfolk to Laurinburg, and it will be for that purpose that Mr. Cooley, assisted by Mayor Hall, will call upon such citizens for aid as may feel an interest in the enterprise. Whatever stimulates and builds up our neighboring counties directly benefits the city of Wilmington. We trust the call will not be made in vain. ("Scotch Emigrants" 1884)

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<sup>19</sup> The reference to an "old fashioned Scotch dinner" is curious. There is little evidence to support the survival of Highland foodways in the Carolinas. Perhaps this allusion refers more to a social gathering than to a Highland-inspired meal.

As Cooley continued his efforts, Immigration Agent Patrick traveled to Philadelphia to meet the first party to arrive from Scotland (“Observations” 1884a). A storm had forced the emigrants’ boat back into port shortly after leaving Liverpool, leading the group to split into two parts, the first of which arrived in Philadelphia instead of Norfolk. The second installment sailed from Liverpool on the S.S. Ohio around February 20, and were greeted in Norfolk by McEachern, Cooley, and Alex McArthur of Cumberland County (“Observations” 1884a). News of both parties’ arrival appeared in all of the regional papers, and the groups apparently united before arriving in Laurinburg.

The trip had not been an easy one for the Highlanders. Storms forced their first sailing back to port; they then separated in Liverpool, with twelve of them setting off for an unintended destination; and many likely experienced a long first journey by train after their taxing trans-Atlantic voyage. It had been well over a month since most had departed their homes in the Scottish Highlands. While passing through Raleigh by rail, the crofters met a reporter from the News and Observer, who listed their names and described the men as, “big and burly, with good faces while the women and ‘bairns’ are ruddy and rosy.” He also reported that the crofters were “glad to get to America and especially pleased to be in North Carolina” (“The Crofters” 1884b). The first party of 73 Highlanders finally arrived in Laurinburg on March 1.

The scheduled 4 a.m. arrival was hardly appropriate for the grand reception that had been planned, though the train actually arrived later that morning. Events of the previous few days, however, probably impacted the scale of the celebrations. A series of tornadoes had devastated parts of the eastern piedmont and sandhills, and particularly western Richmond County, leaving a number of fatalities. (News reports do not indicate

that the town of Laurinburg was damaged.) Furthermore, on the night before their arrival, a major fire destroyed much of Laurinburg's downtown. The Wilmington Morning Star reported that the crofters who saw the glow on the eastern sky while traveling to Laurinburg "thought that an illumination had been gotten up in their honor" (Wilmington Morning Star 1884d). Despite these circumstances, local citizens informally welcomed the emigrants, and by early afternoon dispatched them to their newly assigned homes.

The spring of 1884 was undoubtedly an unusual one for the emigrant Highlanders. By April and May, they were already experiencing warmer temperatures than their summer norms in the Scottish Highlands. They met with new foodways, new crops, new methods of agriculture, and forests unlike any they had seen in Scotland; further, many had their first encounters with African Americans and Native Americans (Lumbees from Robeson and neighboring counties). Those who spoke no English also found themselves isolated by their Gaelic language. (The Wilmington Morning Star reported that all of the men could speak English, but most of the women and children could not [Wilmington Morning Star 1884f].) Despite these handicaps, the crofters and their families began the task of adapting to their new life in North Carolina.

After only a few days, J. L. Cooley told The Wilmington Morning Star that the effort was succeeding:

From him we learn that the Crofters who recently arrived at Laurinburg, where they met a cordial reception and welcome, have all been furnished with suitable homes and the most of them have gone to work. These appear to give entire satisfaction, and the Crofters themselves are as well pleased as any number of men, women, and children could be expected to be under the peculiar circumstances in which they find themselves, so far away from their fatherland and among a strange people. Mr. Cooley says they are a fine, healthy looking set

of people and that he has failed to detect a solitary sickly looking one in the whole lot. (“The Scotch Crofters” 1884)

If we look beyond the paternalistic tone of this report, the project seemed to be succeeding.<sup>20</sup> News reports declared that as many as 350 new emigrants would follow from Scotland. This, however, was not to be the case.

Cooley’s glowing account of interaction between the crofters and their Carolina hosts was echoed in newspaper accounts in both North Carolina and Scotland. In a mid-May letter to The Scotsman, emigrant crofter Donald MacPherson from Glenelg stated:

As for the pleasantness of the country, it is all anyone could desire. The climate is very agreeable, with occasional mild showers of rain. I never saw such pleasant weather at home—indeed that same should encourage people greatly to this place, if it was nothing else; and I am quite sure that people of common sense, and diligent in other respects, will soon become owners of land, more or less, and thus find themselves independent. . . . Though we had a very rough passage coming across, we all forgot it at once, through the kindness of the people here. They wish all of us strangers to come on well. I and family are living with D. P. M’Eachan [sic], Esq., who is so kind to us as any brother could. I am not going to be in any hurry in selecting a place for myself till I get better acquaint [sic]. Why not have pick and choice when there is plenty of room? I found all that you have said of the country and people are true to the letter. It is now I see the great error I did in spending the best of my days in Glenelg, making up other people; but its better doing a thing late nor never. In the meantime, I can only thank you for your great trouble in sending us here. (“North Carolina—Crofters’ Emigration” 1884)

As MacPherson and his family were billeted with D. P. McEachern at Mill Prong Plantation, there is no doubt that the emigration’s sponsor would have provided excellent hospitality. This letter went initially to George H. M. Thoms, one of the emigration scheme’s Scottish supporters, and then to The Scotsman. Accounts such as this bolstered confidence in the emigration efforts, and probably provided additional support for the efforts spearheaded by Miss MacLeod.

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<sup>20</sup> Cooley apparently also benefitted from the emigration’s reported success, as shortly thereafter he was named Immigration Agent for the Seaboard Air-Line Railroad.



Another crofter's account—from an emigrant in Laurel Hill, N.C.—appeared in The Scotsman the following month:

I am most happy to state to you that I like this country better than any place ever I have seen yet; it is a healthy country, good climate, good water, and the kindest people that I ever met with anywhere. Also I am most happy that I am able to state to you that I was very lucky. I happened to meet and be sent along with the best and kindest gentleman in North Carolina; we are in the same house along with himself. He is not married and my wife keeps the house for us, and washes and dresses for all of us and helps the cook; also all things he had we had a share of it. ("North Carolina Emigration Scheme" 1884)

In a second letter printed at the same time, this crofter noted:

I am not able to say anything to you about wages. We are getting everything we need from the kind gentleman, Mr. Cameron—he is to give us the summer clothing next week. He told me if I would follow him that he would give me plenty of land next year, and indeed I will follow him. So by that means all the recompense I can give you for helping me to such a good place at this time is my sincere thanks. ("North Carolina Emigration Scheme" 1884)

These accounts portray a very amicable situation for the crofters shortly after their arrival (despite the latter correspondent's curiously noted lack of wages). This letter also presents the first clue of dissatisfaction among the emigrants, concluding with the words: "I am most sorry to hear that some of our party sent back bad reports to the old country about this country; before they were more than a week in this place they sent the reports. At least they should be a year in this place before they would be able to give any information about the place" ("North Carolina Emigration Scheme" 1884). Such letters served to justify the efforts which had been undertaken (for the Scottish readership as well as for the contributors to this and other emigration schemes), and to bill them as successful. It should be noted, however; that these accounts appeared in a newspaper known for its bias toward the Highland landlords rather than the crofting classes.

In North Carolina, newspapers heralded similar successes with the emigration efforts. These reports consistently used the term “satisfied” in their summaries, and often supported this sentiment with individual accounts. One crofter who worked for Capt. F. W. Clark in the offices of the Seaboard Air-Line Railroad in Laurinburg, for instance, was planning to “take up the railroad business” (“Immigration Notes” 1884). Others apparently pursued various rural occupations. J. L. Cooley reported that the “fine looking robust fellows” who arrived in Laurinburg “know nothing of our system of farming, [but] they are apt and industrious and will make first rate field hands” (“The Crofters,” Fayetteville Observer 1884b). Press coverage of the emigration plans, along with subsequent reports of its success, was so encouraging that it seemed to have spurred a broad regional interest in foreign emigration.<sup>21</sup>

Just as had occurred in the Scottish papers, however, dissenting voices soon began to be heard. The first hint of emigrant dissatisfaction came in a defensive note from J. L. Cooley, in the midst of an update about an additional twenty families that were planning to emigrate to Moore County. The Fayetteville Observer noted that Cooley “contradicts the report that any of [the emigrants in Richmond and Robeson counties] are dissatisfied and regret their immigration; on the contrary they are so well pleased that they are anxious to have their friends with them” (“The Crofters” 1884b). This notation was followed by a report on the activities of Immigration Agent John T. Patrick, who “has on feet a scheme that will no doubt attract to our country a class of emigrants more to be

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<sup>21</sup> A month before the Scots emigrants arrived, The Wilmington Morning Star printed a letter from the U.S. Consul in Liege, Belgium, encouraging the Carolinas to establish a regular steamship line between Charleston and Liverpool to attract emigrants from England and Scotland (“Why the South is Unknown in Europe” 1884). Later that month, Raleigh’s News and Observer reported that a group of French settlers had purchased 12,000 acres in Richmond County to establish silk farms along existing rail lines (“Immigration Notes” 1884). The Fayetteville Observer, in turn, noted that a group of Germans, Belgians, and French were planning to settle in Keyser, in Moore County (“French Settlers” 1884).

desired than the laborers above mentioned and that class is not of foreign climes, but of the Northern states of our own Union.”<sup>22</sup> Though this negative response may have only reflected Patrick’s own attitude, it would soon be apparent that his doubts were well-founded.

The Wilmington Morning Star, whose reporting always supported the Highland emigration, shed further light on dissatisfaction among the emigrants a mere month and a half after their arrival:

We learn that the “Crofters” from Scotland who have recently come to reside in Richmond County are generally satisfied, notwithstanding the great difference in latitude between their former and adopted homes and the consequent climatic changes to which they have been subjected. Of course, all are not equally located. . . . Some of them are in large families, and necessarily had to be separated and have their homes among those who, perhaps, have very little affinity to the Scotch or sympathy with people in their dependent condition. Those who have been so fortunate as to be located with and among the native Scotch residents are said to be well pleased . . . . It must be borne in mind that a number of them are quite aged, and that the children of the “land of the mountain and the lake” have a singular attachment to their fatherland—notably more so than any other people in the world. How, then, can it be otherwise that they should long for their deserted homes. . . . It is too soon to speak of a success complete of the experiment (only two or three months having elapsed), but the prospect is that it will in a year or two be seen to be decidedly so. This much we have said because one or two of our contemporaries have somehow been impressed with the idea that much dissatisfaction exists among the Crofters. (“The Crofters” 1884)

This article raises several points that were likely central to the crofters’ discontent. The separation of families would certainly have created distress among the emigrants, particularly when the separations stretched over long distances. The isolation, by even a few miles, of a Gaelic-speaking mother and her children from a laboring husband would almost invariably have led to hardship and disillusionment. So too did the broad

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<sup>22</sup> At the time, Patrick was attempting to establish a winter resort for Northern journalists who would publicize the region and its advantages. Patrick’s efforts eventually resulted in the founding of Southern Pines in 1887, and of the thriving resort communities surrounding it, including the now world-famous golf links of Pinehurst.

dispersal of the group, many of whom were former neighbors or relatives in Highland crofting townships; some families may have been separated by as much as twenty or thirty miles.<sup>23</sup> As already discussed, the lack of a sizeable Gaelic-speaking population in the region would have further fostered the emigrants' sense of isolation. The same is true for the lack of work already familiar to the crofters, such as fishing and shepherding.

The emigrants' arrival in late winter and early spring left them little time to learn about local agricultural practices prior to the commencement of the growing season. This fact was underlined in a letter to Miss MacLeod from "Aunt Polly" McNeill, a resident of Wagram, N.C., who took in two young men from the Island of Lewis:

We are so much pleased with our two boys [Alexander and Duncan MacKenzie], and hope they will be satisfied. The work here is so different from what they have been accustomed to that we very much fear that they will become discouraged, and get home-sick. . . . It is quite unfortunate, though, that the immigrants could not have come early in the year, for now most of the farmers have their hands for the year engaged before the Scotch came. My brother fears that he will have to give up one of the boys at present, as he has too many hands for the work. If, however, he does have to let one go, he will see that he has a good situation and we will still claim them both as ours. It will be hard to part with either of them as we have in this short time learned to love them. ("North Carolina Crofters' Emigration Scheme" 1884a)

The timelines of agricultural employment, as well as the lack of familiarity with the tasks at hand, clearly did not work in the emigrants' favor.<sup>24</sup>

Geography was also another significant change for the crofters. Most were accustomed to large open vistas, hills, and valleys, as well as close proximity to either the

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<sup>23</sup> The initial settlement counties—Robeson and Richmond—were quite large at this time, as they encompassed the present-day Scotland and Hoke counties. Some emigrants were settled as far away as Ellerbe, Wagram, and Shoe Heel (present-day Maxton) (*Wilmington Morning Star*, 1884h, 1884i; "State News" 1884a).

<sup>24</sup> On March 3, 1884, emigrant Donald MacPherson wrote of his new surroundings: "I can not say how long I may wait in this particular place. I am just rather late to commence cultivation of my own this year. They have their corn sown long ago; and reap it in June but I will get plenty of work at my trade. It is quite a level country, this, but well watered" ("North Carolina—Crofters Emigration" 1884).

ocean or the lochs of the Scottish Highlands and Islands. The sandhills and coastal plains of Richmond, Robeson, and Moore Counties posed quite a contrast to the homelands left behind, offering instead thick forests of pine and hardwoods and no large bodies of water beyond creeks, ponds, and swamps.

The fact that some of the crofters were not located among residents of Scottish descent and sympathies provided another likely cause for unhappiness. Many of the sponsoring individuals (such as D. P. McEachern) were enamored of their ancestral homeland; having guests from Scotland not only would have allowed them to foreground their own ethnicity, but also would have also reinforced their stature as community leaders who had the means to support guests in their homes and farms. “Aunt Polly” McNeill expressed these emotions very succinctly when she stated, “The arrival of the Scotch seems to bring us nearer to dear old Scotia. We feel so much sympathy for them and hope that they will be pleased and succeed well here” (“North Carolina Crofters Emigration Scheme” 1884a).

Despite surfacing accounts of dissatisfaction among the emigrants, news reports continued to praise the efforts in Richmond and Robeson counties, while announcing that a second group of Scots emigrants was on their way to North Carolina:

The Crofters in Robeson County are doing excellently well, falling readily into the American ways, and easily accommodating themselves to the changed conditions of life. Some of them express a feeling of enjoyment and a sense of freedom at being in a country where they can shoot and kill game without having the law taken upon them. They are to be joined by twenty-five more families, who are expected to arrive at Norfolk about May. They have already been located between Cameron and Carthage. Arrangements have been made for them to go at once to their new homes.<sup>25</sup> (“Observations,” Raleigh News and Observer 1884b)

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<sup>25</sup> This same article, with a lengthy addition by a reporter of The London Times discussing the situation of crofters in the Scottish Highlands, appeared in The Fayetteville Observer on May 8. The Fayetteville paper prefaced the article by stating, “As it may be of interest to some of our readers, we publish what is said of

This second party of crofters—consisting of 65 individuals—arrived in North Carolina on May 10, 1884 (“More Scotch Crofters” 1884). After disembarking in Philadelphia, they took passage to Norfolk by ship, and then traveled by rail to Sanford. They then journeyed to the vicinity of present-day Cameron, where they were reportedly distributed to various points in Moore County, nearly all within the same neighborhood. Unlike their immediate predecessors—most of whom were from the Island of Skye, and at least two of whom were from the Island of Lewis—this group included twelve or more from the Orkney Islands (on Scotland’s northern coast), additional Skyemen, others from the Island of Lewis, some from Glenelg (on the west coast, just inland from Skye), and some from elsewhere on the Scottish mainland. Only a week later, the News and Observer noted the Raleigh arrival of ten additional emigrants, who were also bound for Moore County (“Observations” 1884d). This second wave brought the total number of Scottish emigrants to North Carolina to over 150—the largest organized party of Highland Scots to arrive in the state since the early decades of the century. It must have appeared to many that McEachern, Cooley, and Miss MacLeod would indeed bring to full fruition the 350 emigrants that Miss MacLeod had initially projected.

The arrival of a second group of emigrant Highlanders likely buoyed the sentiments of their immediate predecessors, particularly since it included some of their neighbors and relatives.<sup>26</sup> Distances of up to fifty miles between the first and second groups of emigrants, however, would have prevented much social and cultural

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the crofters at home.” Perhaps this was an effort to put into perspective the vastly “changed conditions of life” that were causing some doubts about the emigration effort’s success.

<sup>26</sup> In his previously noted letter in The Scotsman on May 15, 1884, Donald MacPherson wrote, “I received your letter of the 28<sup>th</sup> March last, intimating that my brother and others are coming soon. Mr. Cooley told me that he has a place provided for them distant about thirty miles from here” (“North Carolina—Crofters Emigration” 1884).

interaction. Nonetheless, printed accounts of the second party's experiences echo the satisfaction expressed by those who arrived two months earlier, despite the fact that the latter group came well after the commencement of much of the region's agricultural labor.<sup>27</sup>

On May 18, an additional group of ten crofters arrived in Raleigh bound for Moore County. A little more than a week later, the News and Observer relayed news from Miss MacLeod that 75 more crofters were due to join those already in North Carolina. One month later, the paper reported that another party of five crofters had arrived in Philadelphia and were destined for Richmond County. These arrivals swelled the number of new emigrant Highlanders in North Carolina to at least 180 ("Observations" 1884c, 1884d).

Early accounts from the emigrants to their homeland newspapers were filled with hope and forward-thinking commentary. On July 2, 1884, for instance, The North Carolina Presbyterian reprinted the following comment from a letter written to Miss MacLeod and published in The Oban Telegraph: "I am happy as the day is long since I came; all of my family that can are working and are well satisfied. I wish that you would send more of my Uist friends, for they would be much better off here in a few years than they can ever be in the old country." When comparing the situation of the average North Carolina farmer to the plight of their fellow crofters in Scotland, the emigrants likely felt that hard work and the continued encouragement of the hospitable citizens who offered them homes and a sense of security would lead them to become as prosperous as their new neighbors. Utopian outcomes seemed quite possible, as suggested by emigrant

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<sup>27</sup> See Appendix A for an enthusiastic newspaper account by a member of this second group, detailing both his trip and his hopeful prospects.

Johanna MacPherson: “I would advise you to come here if you have money to buy land. Every one here is a gentleman if he can buy ground” (“North Carolina Crofters’ Emigration Scheme” 1884a).

To the newly arrived crofters, the concept of owning their own land had heretofore been only a dream. Even in North Carolina, however, such dreams could not be fulfilled without the means to do so. Some of the emigrants came with some means of financial sustenance.<sup>28</sup> Most, however, were completely dependent on the benevolence of their sponsors, due to either their destitution or their age.<sup>29</sup> Those with personal means likely realized their aspirations much more quickly than those who were destitute. Yet the numbers of this former group were few, suggesting a fertile field for disaffection. By July, this disenchantment led the first of the emigrant crofters to return to Scotland.

On July 10, 1884, The Richmond Rocket noted the departure of Alexander Finlayson and Donald Matheson from Rockingham, North Carolina. Both men were members of the first party of crofters to arrive in Laurinburg in March. Finlayson and his family had settled on the Bennett Farm, near present day Ellerbe, while Matheson and his family lived in the town of Rockingham. The article reported that “they expected to sail from Wilmington to New York, thence on yesterday taking passage by steamer for

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<sup>28</sup> One such emigrant was Alexander MacRae, who was a Glenelg fisherman prior to coming to North Carolina. According to family tradition, he sold his fishing boat to help pay passage for his family, allowing them to join the other assisted emigrants who did not have such means. A picture of his substantive vessel is among the prized family possessions of MacRae’s grandson (Carswell 1997a, 1997b).

<sup>29</sup> Alexander MacKenzie was among this number. MacKenzie was only fourteen when he joined the first emigrant party leaving his home in Stornoway in the Island of Lewis. His only previous work experience was as a “carter,” or delivery boy, in his hometown. Fortunately, he was taken in by “Aunt Polly” McNeill near Wagram, N.C., finding not only employment on a family farm, but also a caring family who treated him as one of their own (“North Carolina Crofters’ Emigration Scheme” 1884a; “Spring Hill Items” 1885; Zimmerman 1996a, 1997b).



Europe to be gone about two months. We are glad to know that their absence is only temporary” (“Personal” 1884).

The newspaper account gave no hint that Finlayson and Matheson were among the most disenchanted of the crofter emigrants. Their journey back to Scotland provided the pro-crofter newspapers and the Scottish public with a very different perspective on the emigration scheme than that which had heretofore prevailed. Their testimony prompted accusations about the emigration’s sponsors on both sides of the Atlantic, and apparently led to the discontinuation of any further emigration efforts to North Carolina on behalf of Miss MacLeod and her supporters. The subsequent negative publicity for the scheme’s advocates in North Carolina, as well as negative sentiments which began to grow between some of the emigrant crofters and their sponsors, brought this experiment in emigration and social engineering to a bitter conclusion.

Alexander Finlayson had come to North Carolina from the township of Balmeanach in the Island of Skye—one of the townships that comprised the community known as “The Braes.” Finlayson’s family had played a prominent part in “The Battle of the Braes,” with both his father, Alexander Finlayson, Sr., and his brother Malcolm among the five men arrested on charges of “deforcing” the police officers who had come to The Braes with eviction notices. The Finlaysons’ landlord, Lord Macdonald, and the local authorities no doubt saw them as “agitators”; consequently, the extended family’s emigration was probably cause for relief for Lord Macdonald and his factors. By the same token, the family’s exploits and courage in standing up to local authority would no doubt have secured their position as leaders within the community of crofters. Perhaps

this was why Alexander Finlayson was the first to take a stand regarding what he felt to be misrepresentation and coercion in the emigration scheme to North Carolina.

Shortly after the departure of Finlayson and Matheson for Scotland, an article reporting the disaffection of some of the emigrant crofters appeared in The Augusta Chronicle of Georgia, and was reprinted in The New York Times. The article stated:

Our esteemed and always interesting Columbia correspondent informed us yesterday that the Scottish crofters or Highland shepherds who had emigrated to North Carolina were unable to obtain employment in the Pine Tree State and desired to try for better fortune in South Carolina. They are represented to be hard working and industrious—an acquisition to any section. How does it happen that North Carolina rejects such desirable emigrants, and why should they hope for successful settlement in South Carolina? It seems to us that the mountain region of North Carolina would present a most inviting field for such men and their families and the native people there ought to welcome them as an addition to their laboring population. There must be something grossly wrong and repulsive in our Southern autonomy if white men of the description of these crofters cannot make or keep a home in this section. (“No Work in North Carolina” 1884)

This article set off a series of exchanges in North Carolina newspapers refuting its claims. The Fayetteville Observer, for instance, asserted that “there is no foundation whatever for the statement of the Augusta (Ga.) Chronicle’s Columbia, S.C. correspondent copied in the New York Times of the 20th, that the Scotch Crofters recently settled in this State are discontented and unable to find employment—quite the reverse being true” (“The Crofters 1884c). A week later, the Observer reprised the issue, noting that: “Further inquiry develops the fact that there is one member of the colony, a very dissipated person, who is dissatisfied—at whose presence among the colonists Miss MacLeod has written to express her distress—who would probably be dissatisfied with any mundane thing, and who is supposed to be the originator of the mis-statements in question” (“The Crofters Again” 1884).

The paper then proceeded to print a letter from the British consul in Charleston, who apparently had learned from Scotland's Rev. John Darroch of the emigrants' disappointment at not being able to "make a living" in North Carolina. Acting on behalf of his emigrated parishioners, Rev. Darroch appealed to South Carolina for help:

I write to ask you if, in your capacity as Agricultural Commissioner, you might be able to inform some of the wealthier farmers in the upper part of this State of the wish of these people to find occupation, and I have no doubt that they would be found very suitable for farm laborers, shepherds, &c. . . . I have no doubt they would be glad to work for little and to repay their transportation from North Carolina to this State by installments out of their wages.<sup>30</sup> ("The Crofters Again" 1884)

Precisely who communicated with Rev. Darroch is unclear; it may well have been Alexander Finlayson, who had been a member of Darroch's congregation. Whoever was voicing these concerns, however, their publication embarrassed the supporters and participants in the emigration scheme, and seriously challenged the stateside efforts of John T. Patrick and the N.C. Department of Agriculture. By mid-summer of 1884, it became apparent that there was good reason to question Miss MacLeod's enterprise.

When Alexander Finlayson and Donald Matheson arrived in Scotland in late July, they told emigration stories quite different from those heralded in the pages of The Scotsman. Shortly after their return, they spoke at a meeting at the Free Gaelic Church in Greenock, one of the primary centers of domestic Highland emigration. At this gathering, which attracted many who were sympathetic to the plight of Highlanders both at home and abroad, Donald Matheson presented his testimony in English, while Alexander Finlayson told his account in Gaelic. Finlayson stated that when his party arrived in Liverpool to board the ship, they were met by Miss MacLeod, who solicited further funds from them to help send out more of their friends. Her efforts were

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<sup>30</sup> The full text of this article appears in Appendix B.

apparently not very successful, as she only raised three pounds. Finlayson then reported that upon reaching North Carolina, they discovered that Miss MacLeod's promises were patently false. Instead of a year's provisions for their families, they received only Indian meal, treacle, and some flour. He was relegated to ditch digging, and was only able to earn 3s 6d a day. Donald Matheson, in turn, reported that he was given farm work, and could only earn about eight dollars a month ("Recent Emigration" 1884; "Discontented Highland Emigrants" 1884; "The Emigration from Skye" 1884).<sup>31</sup> The returned crofters found much sympathy among the gathered crowd, and many took pity on their plight. As one speaker noted, "Had those men found adequate work they never would have come back to this country. No true Highlander with any spirit at all ever re-crossed the Atlantic to look for work here if they could get it there" ("Recent Emigration" 1884).

Even more troubling to the gathered audience was the origin and apparent intent of Miss MacLeod's emigration scheme. Printed transcripts of the proceedings reveal that when asked if there had been a "proper bargain" struck between the emigrants and Miss MacLeod, Finlayson responded in the negative. A member of the audience—presented only as "A Gentlemen"—then asked, "Who supplied the funds?"

Mr. Finlayson – I do not know.

A Gentleman – Did the landlords furnish any money?

Mr. Finlayson – Miss MacLeod told us she got some of the money from the landlords to bring out the parties for the purpose of laboring, but whether it was from the proprietors there or at home I am unable to say.

The Chairman – If the money was supplied by the land owners of this country I would look upon it as a great scandal indeed. Did Miss MacLeod let you know where she got the money?

Mr. Finlayson – She represented that it came from America.

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<sup>31</sup> These three newspapers each published the proceedings of this meeting. Further citations will only cite the The Greenock Telegraph and Clyde Shipping Gazette, as this was the first to print this news.

A Gentleman – She could not have it herself, as she is said to have been only a dressmaker in Dundee. If this is the case then the landlords must have supplied the money (crowd applause). (“Recent Emigration” 1884)

Though Finlayson’s and Matheson’s primary objective was to expose the false promises made by Miss MacLeod, they also sought to raise funds to bring their families back to Scotland. Their efforts were apparently successful, as a collection taken at the meeting realized a substantial sum. At the same time, they drew public attention to the problems faced by many who had succumbed to the emigration schemes that abounded in the Highlands at that time. As a result of the emigrants’ testimonies, the Rev. MacAskill submitted the following resolution:

This meeting having heard the statements of Donald Matheson and Alexander Finlayson, recently returned from North Carolina to which they had been induced to emigrate last February, strongly condemns the way in which these men had been induced to leave their homes to find the promise made before leaving falsified on their arrival in North Carolina; the meeting also expresses deep sympathy with them, and cordially recommends their case to the liberality of their fellow countrymen and of the general public for the means necessary to bring back their families to their homeland, or to enable them to emigrate from North Carolina to some suitable place in the United States, the Dominion of Canada, or elsewhere where they can get employment for themselves and families. (“Recent Emigration” 1884)

This testimony and resolution appeared in the major newspapers of Glasgow, seemingly putting an end to Miss MacLeod’s emigration efforts, and discouraging any further consideration of North Carolina as an ideal emigrant destination.

News of the meeting in Greenock quickly made its way across the Atlantic to the old Highland settlement in North Carolina. Barely a week had passed before a columnist from Richmond County’s Spring Hill township wrote in The Richmond Rocket: “The new Scotch ‘crofters’ are about thinned down to a stand—those remaining being the fittest, express themselves as highly pleased; those who have gone back expressing

themselves through the Scotch papers in ‘groanings’ not here to be uttered” (“Spring Hill Dots” 1884).

By late summer, a number of the Highland emigrants had moved from their original locations, apparently in search better employment opportunities. The climate was likely taxing the physical endurance of some, while the combined stresses of homesickness, resentment over false promises, poor working and living conditions, and the challenges of cultural and workforce assimilation may have forced others to seek alternatives, or to escape. This decision must have been difficult for those who were unfamiliar with the region. Yet the crofters no doubt knew of other places in North America where their countrymen had settled successfully; perhaps this promise drew them to places beyond the sandhills and fields of Richmond, Robeson, and Moore counties.

The journey undertaken by those who abandoned their stations in the Carolina sandhills was probably quite challenging. Raleigh’s News and Observer reported the fate of one such family who had moved to Durham:

A couple of Scotch families, it seems, had been induced to come to this country by the representation of some emigration agency. They located in Moore County among the sandhills, and after investing their all and going to work, failed in their efforts and were sold out of house and home, and hearing of Durham came here. The two families numbered eighteen and when first discovered were all huddled together in a small room, with the cold wind coming up through the large cracks in the floor. In this miserable hole these foreigners ate, slept, and existed the Lord only knows how. Their condition at once enlisted the sympathies of our generous people, and they were removed to better quarters and their wants attended to. The question arises in my mind who is responsible for the condition of these people? (“Durham Notes” 1884b)<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> The News and Observer printed an earlier account of this family’s plight three days earlier, on December 14, 1884 (“Durham Notes” 1884a).

With tales such as this circulating in regional newspapers, it should come as no surprise that the story of the emigrant crofters fell out of the limelight. Regional newspapers that had so enthusiastically reported the enterprise's successes became curiously silent about the Scottish emigration (though they continued to describe plans for other emigration efforts).

In Scotland, in contrast, the story presented by Finlayson and Matheson received much attention. The Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness (1884-85), for instance, discussed at length social conditions in the Highlands and the recent Highland emigration, and offered a detailed account of the North Carolina venture's failure.<sup>33</sup> Noting that "both promises and prospects [of a profitable future] were a delusion," the narrative noted:

Where work was obtained the only wages given was the bare food, and the houses provided were the one room huts (as one of the men remarked) once occupied by slaves. The 70 emigrants, scattered over the country at long distances from each other, struggled on in the hope of better treatment as long as the means that they brought with them lasted. Their conditions, however, getting worse instead of better, and the food and the climate telling injuriously on their health, those who could do so left the place. (MacDonald 1885: 196)

This account—probably less biased than earlier newspaper articles from both sides of the Atlantic, given its scholarly source—offers many reasons for the crofters' dissatisfaction, including the not-before-reported fact that some emigrants were housed in former slave cabins; this itself provides insight into the perceived social status of these emigrants. Though this narrative mentions only the first party of emigrants, the accounts from Durham suggest the later emigrants experienced much the same situation, and that they too were leaving their original destinations.

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<sup>33</sup> A full text of this account appears as Appendix C.

The immediate response of North Carolina newspapers to such accounts was defensive. In February 1885, for instance, The Fayetteville Observer printed a final letter from Miss MacLeod, which forwarded an account by the emigrant William MacLennan, originally from Lower Corry, Muir of Ord, Inverness-shire. An editorial comment prefacing MacLennan's post noted that Miss MacLeod "delayed forwarding the letter for publication, for the reason that she hesitated to wound the feelings of some of the returned emigrants, but that withholding it any longer would be doing injustice to the more honest and industrious portion of the emigrants who are pleased and doing well in their new home" ("Letter from an Emigrant" 1885). Whether Miss MacLeod's intent was to save the returned emigrants from embarrassment or to vindicate herself and her colleagues remains an open question. Whatever the case, MacLennan's letter offered the most effusive account thus far of the emigration's success:

The delightful climate, the magnificent forest trees, with their luxuriant foliage, and last, though not least, the agreeable people I have met with, have quite reconciled me to my new home in the Western Hemisphere. Indeed you were quite right in saying that I would meet with kindness in North Carolina that I never did in Scotland. . . . How can I help wishing that I had a voice loud enough to send through the Highlands and Islands of Scotland that would persuade thousands who would make good citizens to emigrate to this wide and promising field. . . . I am sorry that some of those crofters or fishermen that you sent from Skye proved themselves to be idlers and when they observed they could not obtain a living in any section of North Carolina without working for it, they were compelled to return to the land of the heather. . . . I feel as if I could never cease extolling the beauties of this lovely country.<sup>34</sup> ("Letter from an Emigrant" 1885)

While disparaging the emigrants who returned to Scotland, MacLennan offered a glowing account of the social and agricultural realities of the Carolina sandhills, noting both the bounty of local food and the good relations with African Americans—items certainly of

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<sup>34</sup> It is worth noting that the date given for MacLennan's letter—October 14, 1884—is likely incorrect, as the failure of the emigration scheme was becoming very apparent by this point. The letter's full text, along with its editorial preface, appears as Appendix D. Though first printed in this country on February 19, this account originally appeared in the Inverness Advertiser on January 16, 1885.



interest to prospective emigrants. At the same time, he gave few details about employment opportunities, including his own. Some light on this issue came in a postscript added to the letter by James L. Cooley, one of the emigration scheme's organizers. Cooley noted that MacLennan "left Feb. 1<sup>st</sup> for Georgia to take charge of a vineyard at \$30.00 per month, board, washing, and lodging. I leave others to say if the Scotch Immigration is a failure when the right kind of people come. We want no more fishermen or grumbling drunken Skyemen among us 100 miles from the seashore when there are no fish bigger than a minnow – JLC" ("Letter from an Emigrant" 1885).

Many of the emigrant crofters left their homes in North Carolina's Scottish settlement during the fall of 1884 or winter of 1885. The post-harvest cessation of agricultural labor likely led many of the emigrants to seek employment elsewhere, or to try to return to Scotland. A few, however, stayed, as revealed in a note published in The Rockingham Rocket the following August:

The idea is prevalent in the country that the Scotch immigration movement which created so much sensation in the State two years ago was a failure and the immigrants were worthless. While this may be true in the main, there are a few notable exceptions, among them Messrs. Alex and Duncan MacKenzie. These two gentlemen settled in this community and were satisfied to begin at the foot of the ladder and climb up. They began to work for six dollars a month and were perfectly contented and worked as faithfully as though they were getting ten times that amount. By their industry and faithfulness they have so thoroughly gained the confidence of the people as to command a salary of \$20 per month, which is steep for farm labor. ("Spring Hill Items" 1885)

In addition to bringing hardship to many of the emigrants and embarrassment to their sponsors, the failure of the 1884 Highland emigration also brought the efforts of the State Bureau of Immigration under the press's scrutiny. The Rockingham Rocket, for instance, reported that "the newspapers are discussing to some extent the value of the Bureau connected with the Agricultural Department, the supposed object of which is to

induce immigration.” After noting “there is a certain class of people whose settlement amongst us, we think, would add to our prosperity as well as their own,” the writer concluded that “there are others who would be of no benefit to us” (“Immigration Bureau” 1885). This concluding reference may well have pointed to the Highland crofters, many of whom arrived with no financial means and no knowledge of local labor needs.

A week before the Rocket’s remarks, The Fayetteville Observer raised the same issue after receiving another report of crofters stranded in a distant city:

The question of abolishing the Bureau of Immigration is prominently brought forward because the settlement of the few Scotch Crofters who were brought to North Carolina by the people of Robeson and Richmond counties has resulted in failure. The following from The Norfolk Ledger of Aug. 31<sup>st</sup> had brought the matter prominently forward: “Friday, two Scotch families arrived here from Durham N.C., where they had been for several months. They expected to reach Philadelphia but on arriving here found out that the emigrant agent in North Carolina had only paid their fare to this city. They are in destitute circumstances. Many of our citizens have kept them from suffering by providing them with food. They are still in the waiting room in the depot, but will be sent away from this city in a short time. (“Immigration” 1885)

Since passenger ships to Great Britain sailed from Philadelphia and New York, the families who did return to Scotland probably journeyed to these ports much as they had arrived, traveling by foot or rail to Norfolk, and then connecting with steamships or other trains to carry them further north. The trip certainly would have been long and arduous for those without means and knowledge of this country.

The same Fayetteville Observer article that reported the plight of the crofter families in Philadelphia also offered an after-the-fact review of the reasons for the emigration’s failure in North Carolina. After noting that Miss MacLeod had plans for settling yet another group of emigrants, the writer pointed to the crofters’ lack of work

skills, unfamiliarity with the language, homesickness, and—intriguingly—distaste at working alongside African Americans:

. . . those who went to Robeson county were not accustomed to the habits of the people, or familiar with the work to be done, and besides imperfectly, if at all, understood our language and were found to be of little use. They were not skilled in work adapted to the needs of our people, consequently they became home-sick; felt that they were strangers in a strange land, and could not adapt themselves to our ways or people. . . . It is certainly very strange to us, where land is cheap and the prices of labor remunerative, at least sufficient to supply the wants of thrifty working people, that even these failed to find a home of comfort and plenty, but it may be that being only laborers they were thrown from force of circumstances among a race both distasteful and beneath them, and that they were disgusted with their associations. If, however, skilled workmen can be brought then the result would have been otherwise. (“Immigration” 1885)

As the article notes, the crofters who arrived without occupational skills that could readily translate to the Carolina countryside may have found themselves working as common laborers alongside African Americans.<sup>35</sup> Sharing the social status of former slaves was probably anathema to the Highland Scots, who likely envisioned themselves meriting a station in society closer to that of their Scottish-American hosts.

In late September and early October, The Rockingham Rocket published two final articles discussing the crofter emigration. Both attempted to vindicate the project’s planners and the state Immigration Bureau, and both located the blame directly on the crofters themselves.<sup>36</sup> The second of the two pieces included a letter by D. P. McEachern, one of the project’s initial sponsors and most enthusiastic supporters, that concluded by belittling the crofters as a class:

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<sup>35</sup> A piece in The Rockingham Rocket three days earlier also addressed this issue of occupational translation, noting that “the fishermen from the banks of ‘Isle o’ Skye’ gave promise of making quite indifferent farmers, turpentine dippers, or lumber getters, and . . . had to be taught from the stump in all the ways of work which are peculiar to our country.” (“An Experiment in Immigration” 1885)

<sup>36</sup> The full text of these articles appears in Appendix E.

Being fishermen, they proved a miserable failure, with a few exceptions, and they all have returned to Scotland except these few. You ask how they got back, – I don't know but back they went. I have no doubt that a better class of immigrants would have proved a success. These Skye Crofters are a good deal like the Irish land leagues—hard to satisfy, and not worth much after being satisfied. (“The Crofters—How They Got Here” 1885)

Just two years earlier, McEachern had extended welcoming invitations to the Highland crofters in regional newspapers, and even suggested that there was enough space in

Robeson County to relocate the whole populations of several Scottish islands.

McEachern had been enamored with the idea of inducing a sizeable emigration of Highland Scots to North Carolina just two generations after his own emigrant ancestors had arrived in the region. Now, however, the story had changed. Likely voicing the sentiments of many of his kith and kin in Robeson and Richmond counties, McEachern essentially declared that Scottish emigrants without means or applicable work skills were worthless and unwanted.

The failure of the crofter emigration to North Carolina has to date been only a small footnote in the history of Scottish settlement in this state. The efforts of a group of Scottish-Americans to secure an ethnically attractive labor force for themselves, and in so doing to reinvigorate the ethnic identity of their own communities, failed due to the challenges that cultural assimilation presented to parties from both sides of the Atlantic. Though the ancestors of the scheme's supporters in North Carolina likely arrived in this region in similar socio-economic circumstances a mere two or three generations earlier, the Scottish-Americans apparently made little effort to nurture and encourage the newly arrived Scots. The fact that the new emigrants shared historical and cultural ties with many of their Carolina hosts failed to override the reality that, in the eyes of their hosts, they were primarily a means to an economic end: they provided a source of cheap labor.

Given the degree to which the American hosts' images of Scotland were framed by the reminiscences of ancestors and relatives, and by the romantic images created by writers such as Sir Walter Scott, it is easy to see how their hopes for the scheme's success would have been high. This lack of knowledge would have also made it easier for a potentially corrupt emigrant agent to fuel false hopes among the Carolina Scots, just as she did among her potential clients in Scotland. As few of the Highland emigrants remained in the places to which they had been assigned, the entire occurrence quickly (and probably purposefully) vanished from the memories of local citizens.

The failure of this effort also demonstrated that the Scottish-Americans of North Carolina's old Highland Settlement had indeed become assimilated as Americans. Though they may have held romantic attachments to Scotland, the succeeding generations had been further and further removed from their ancestral homeland. Economic needs and desires in North Carolina now outweighed sentimental bonds to the "Old Country," its people, and their once-shared cultural values.

## Chapter 4: Reminiscence and Meaning

*“He was a survivor! Yes . . . yes. He was a survivor! And he taught us to be survivors as well.”*

Willie Nicolson  
Upper Ollach, Skye June 20, 1996

*“You’ve come fifty years too late to get the whole story.”*

Sorley MacLean  
Peinichorran, Skye June 23, 1996

The long winter nights of the northern hemisphere allowed ample time for storytelling in the ceilidh tradition on the Island of Skye. In the years after the return of the North Carolina emigrants, accounts of this episode lived on in the repertoire of at least one storyteller in the Braes community. Though those who heard this story as youngsters now remember it as an “epic,” its details have largely been lost to time. Some descendents of the emigrants recall small bits about the emigration, but most do not remember it as a prominent part of their family history (though they were anxious to know more about it). Even fewer memories remain in North Carolina. Those who encouraged the failed effort probably purposefully forgot it; the descendents of the emigrants who stayed, in turn, know very little about their ancestors’ trials. Despite this general lack of knowledge regarding the episode, the surviving stories not only provide historical information which allows us to interpret the event from the emigrants’ perspective, but also hint at the deeper meanings that the narratives came to hold for their descendents and the communities in which they lived.

In summer 1996, I traveled to the Island of Skye to collect oral histories and personal experience narratives related to the failed emigration. I identified a number of informants who were direct descendents of the emigrants, including a woman whose father was one of the emigrating party. Being that close to the source raised my hopes that I would be able to gain a fuller historical perspective on the episode. Yet though the information I collected was insightful, it was not as extensive as I had hoped. Nonetheless, it revealed that the surviving narratives and anecdotes hold deep symbolic meanings for some of those who remember them.

There are several explanations for the lack of remembrances. Naturally, the passage of time is one. The stories I collected came from informants who were all over seventy years of age. They recalled bits and pieces of narratives that they remembered from their youth, having heard them from grandparents or other community members. I was only able to gather fragments, for instance, of an epic tale that apparently took two nights to complete. Even though the informants were of good health and mind (particularly given their age), one might well expect that the details of even such a noted story would be lost to young minds and the passage of several decades. As informant Sorley MacLean, the noted Gaelic poet whose grand-uncle was the source of the two-night-long account, said, “You’ve come fifty years too late to get the whole story” (1996). Even 85-year old Shonaigh (Joann) Nicolson, whose father was among the returned emigrants, remembered little. Noting that she was the youngest of the family, and that her father was already “advanced in years” when she was a child, she could only say: “All I know is that they all went out to Carolina and they all came back” (1996).

Though family circumstances and the passage of time might account for this lack of information, there are also other reasons why memories of the emigration—which was no doubt important, and perhaps pivotal, in the lives of those who emigrated—may not have survived. One is the issue of shame. The diaspora of Scots throughout the world has yielded many stories of successful pioneers and nation-builders, particularly in North America. There were certainly a few instances in which Scottish emigration was not completely successful; some Scots Loyalists of the American Revolution, for example, made their way back to Scotland after being exiled. Nonetheless, the case of the “returned” or “failed” emigrant is generally an anomaly within the greater emigration story of Scotland; this is particularly true for emigration prompted by the 19<sup>th</sup> century Highland clearances.<sup>37</sup> The noted Highland historian, Dr. James Hunter, agrees that shame may well have played a role in the disappearance of the 1884 emigration’s story:

I would guess that there would have been a great deal of shame to have gone out to America and to have come back without success. I’m sure that there would have been those who stayed behind who would have felt that they should have stayed and fought for the land as they did in those years—that they were somewhat stupid to go in the first place. But to go out and come back without success—to return like this was practically unheard of. I’m certain that there would have been at least some stigma of shame among these people. To go out to the United States and then suddenly reappear again would have brought some shame and perhaps even scorn on these people.” (Hunter 1996a)

Hunter suggests that shame may also have contributed to the episode’s disappearance from oral histories in North Carolina. He stated, “I’m quite sure that these real-life Highland crofters would have been far-removed from the romantic images of the ‘Sir

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<sup>37</sup> In late July of 1884, *The Greenock Telegraph and Clyde Shipping Gazette* told of a meeting held upon the return of the first two crofters from North Carolina, noting that, “No true Highlander, with any spirits at all, ever re-crossed the Atlantic to look for work here if they could get it there” (“The Recent Emigration,” 1884). This statement suggests that there may have been some stigma against returning emigrants, which may have induced a sense of shame among those who came back.



Walter Scott Highlanders' that must have been envisioned by the Highlanders in Carolina" (Hunter 1996a).

In addition to the embarrassment of return, emigrants perhaps also felt the personal disappointment of being deceived by the false promises of an emigrant agent, as well as of being unable to succeed in their destination. One informant, Duncan Moir of Sconsor, Skye, touched upon this when speaking of his grandfather Neill MacMillan's participation in the episode: "I knew of it, but very little was said . . . for some reason or other. I don't know why, but I could never get anything in the way of information about North Carolina. Why they didn't speak of it I don't know. . . . I wondered about this for years. I wondered if there was a certain amount of shame about having to quit and come back" (Moir 1996).<sup>38</sup>

Despite this stigma of shame, at least one family has proudly kept memories of the emigration and return alive to this day. The MacRae family are descendents of Colin MacRae, his wife Henrietta, and their three infants, who were part of the second group of Highland emigrants in 1884.<sup>39</sup> According to family tradition, the MacRaes returned home to the Island of Lewis due to Henrietta's homesickness. They and their descendents have since been known as "The Carolinas" or "The Carolina MacRaes" (to distinguish them from other local families of the same surname). An informant in Lewis

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<sup>38</sup> Though Moir did provide some important historical information, he knew less of the emigration than a number of other informants.

<sup>39</sup> The family of Colin and Henrietta MacRae arrived in North Carolina with the second major party of crofters in May of 1884. Janet MacKenzie, a local historian in Lewis, corresponded with me at length regarding the "Carolina MacRaes." She interviewed 87-year-old Jean MacKenzie, a relative of "The Carolinas," who reported that the family would have stayed in North Carolina were it not for Henrietta's desperate homesickness. She also recounted stories of the family being occupied in fruit picking—working with apples, oranges, and bananas. Though this is doubtless either an exaggeration or a misinterpretation, it also suggests that the narrative of the Carolina MacRaes may have told of a remarkable journey, whose details were recounted and exaggerated through the years. MacKenzie additionally noted that "The Carolinas" were proud of the expedition and their name, and that there had been no stigma attached to the homesickness that was the motivation for their return (MacKenzie 1997b).

noted that this family has long taken pride in their association with the journey. On New Year's Morning—during the custom known in Scotland as “first footing”—the MacRae men apparently would sing a song to the tune of “London Bridge” as they passed through their home township of Newmarket. The lyrics went: “We’re the men who fear no foe, fear no foe, fear no foe, we’re the men who fear no foe, we’re the Carolinas!”

(MacKenzie 1997b). Though most of the returned crofters may have been reticent to share their emigration experience, this one family reversed the stigma of return, turning it into a positive and long-lasting marker of identity.

Another factor that may have contributed to the lack of information about the emigration is the decline, over the latter 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, of the social events that would have supported the telling of such experience narratives. The primary site for such tellings was the ceilidh (a Gaelic word meaning “a gathering”—spelled ceili in the Irish tradition), a long-practiced custom in Skye and elsewhere in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. As historian Alexander Nicolson has stated, “The ceilidh was then one of the principal institutions in the island; and he who could best relate the heroic tale, or recite the ancient barderie, was the person most respected among those who frequented the meeting” (1930: 218). Following the influence of conservative evangelical ministers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this tradition began to wain. Nicolson relates:

All gatherings except those held for religious purposes were viewed with disfavor. . . . We have seen that the playing of musical instruments, the singing of secular songs and the telling of ancient tales, were all put under a ban and that those who had the faculty for these arts mortified the talent, either voluntarily or under the coercive influence of public opinion. . . . In these localities the ceilidh was no longer an institution. (1930: 272)

The 20<sup>th</sup>-century availability of radio and television also had a dramatic impact on the survival of the ceilidh tradition, hastening its demise. Yet it was likely the ceilidh that

would have provided the most welcome setting for returned emigrants to tell their stories of the 1884 emigration. As folklorist Henry Glassie has noted (drawing upon his fieldwork with ceilis in the Irish community of Ballymenone), “Stories are narratives artfully ordered to do the serious work of entertainment, pleasing their listeners in the present, then carrying them into the future with something to think about” (1982: 40).<sup>40</sup> As the subject matter of such ceilidh stories shifted from ancient bardic tales to more modern experiences—and particularly to experiences that centered around an “exploit,” or a demonstration of strength and courage (Glassie 1982: 42)—the emigration would likely have prompted the creation of new stories for ceilidh telling. The narrative of John Nicolson was apparently one such successful ceilidh story.

John Nicolson—known in the Braes community by his Gaelic name of Iain Dubh (Dark John)—was one of the first party of 1884 emigrants to arrive in Laurinburg, N.C. Family tradition suggests that Nicolson—an unmarried man in his mid-twenties when he left Skye—may have been enticed to emigrate by a local shopkeeper, who was apparently rewarded by the landlords for each person he could organize for Miss MacLeod’s emigration.<sup>41</sup> With little prospect of improving his personal fortune in the congested townships of the Braes, Nicolson sought the opportunities that other lands might offer. He most likely sailed from Liverpool on the S.S. Ohio, accompanied by Dutch and German emigrants as well as his fellow Scots. After landing, Nicolson made his way by rail to Laurinburg with the first group of crofters. Very little is known of his time in

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<sup>40</sup> See Chapter 2 of Glassie’s *Passing the Time in Ballymenone* (1982) for an examination of the role of storytelling in the Irish ceili tradition. The ceilidhs that Glassie described are probably close analogues to those in which the narratives of the 1884 emigration would have been related on the Island of Skye and elsewhere.

<sup>41</sup> John Nicolson’s grandson—Willie Nicolson—recalled: “there was a gentleman here . . . I can’t remember. He had a shop here. I recall he got so much a head for those he could put together” (W. Nicolson 1996).

North Carolina, though he told of traveling a great deal by foot in hot weather shortly after arriving. At one point on a journey, the party with which he was traveling (supposedly other emigrants) stopped for water at a residence. After knocking on the door, they were greeted by an African American woman. Nicolson told of refusing the water from that woman—the first African American he had ever seen. These two details—emphasizing the difficulty of travel, and the surprise of meeting someone from another ethnic group—are common motifs in emigrant narratives (Stern 1977: 27). Nicolson’s grandson suggests that his grandfather may not have been in North Carolina long enough to find steady employment. He related that “it wasn’t what it was pictured to be when they arrived there,” and that they were “more or less going into the places where slaves had been” (W. Nicolson 1996).<sup>42</sup>

After leaving North Carolina due to the bad conditions he found there, Nicolson made his way to New York. At some point on the journey, he contracted an illness that led him to shave his head, which caused others to stereotypically mistake him for being Dutch or German. When Nicolson arrived in New York, he was alone and penniless. One day, while walking in the city, his gaze into a storefront window led the proprietor to come out and ask him if he were a West Highlander. When he responded affirmatively, the storeowner—a Highlander himself—took him in and helped him find a job on a ship that was part of the Allen Line, which sailed between Glasgow and New York. Apparently, one of the crew had deserted, doing a “pierhead jump” after the ship’s arrival

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<sup>42</sup> It is unclear whether John Nicolson related this as part of his original narrative, or if it came from his grandson Willie’s assumption. It is interesting to note, however, that the testimonies of the first two returned emigrants mentioned that they had been housed in former slave cabins while in North Carolina.

in New York, leaving an opening for Nicolson.<sup>43</sup> When he was interviewed for the position and asked if he had any prior sailing experience (which he did not), Nicolson answered by citing the name of the ship on which he had come to America; he was then hired on the spot. The family story includes a humorous sequence that highlights Nicolson's ineptitude as a sailor, recalling what happened when he was asked to ring "eight bells." Not knowing what "eight bells" meant, Nicolson kept ringing and ringing the bell until another member of the crew approached him and asked, "What the deuce, do you think you are in a bloody church?"<sup>44</sup>

After returning to Scotland via the Allen Line, Nicolson did not return directly to Skye. Instead, he went to Campbeltown, on the Kintyre peninsula of Scotland's southwest coast, and took a job on a herring ship operating out of the Loch Fyne area. After a highly successful fishing season, Nicolson returned to Skye with 50 pounds in his pocket. He married shortly after that, and used the money to hire someone to build a stone home for him and his wife. After his fruitless venture to North Carolina, John Nicolson's adventure ultimately ended well. Indeed, some locals apparently looked upon him as a hero for having returned with some money in his pocket, unlike most of the other emigrants who came back to Skye. Nicolson told the story of his adventures—which my informants know simply as "Carolina"—many times prior to his death in 1942. Local folks remember it as "his epic," a story that lasted two nights in its telling, and one that people would line up to hear.

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<sup>43</sup> The term "pierhead jump" comes from Willie Nicolson, himself a career sailor (W. Nicolson 1996).

<sup>44</sup> This part of Nicolson's narrative emerged in a phone call between Sorley MacLean and his brother Dr. Alasdair MacLean, during my interview with Sorley (1996). It brought tremendous laughter from Sorley MacLean both during the phone call and as he related it to me.

John Nicolson's epic story easily fits within a familiar model of personal experience narratives.<sup>45</sup> The situation that Nicolson experienced proved difficult, had no predictable outcome, and was far from the norms of everyday life in his native Skye. His story, in turn, related an extraordinary experience that occurred during his absence from his home community, and was told in a thrilling and perhaps humorous way. Many themes common to emigrant narratives—including difficulty in travel or transportation, naiveté in new technology or work skills, and contact with different ethnic groups—all appear in the surviving fragments of Nicolson's narrative.<sup>46</sup> One might infer that John Nicolson used this narrative not only to relate his experiences, but also to provide personal vindication for his involvement in the unfortunate episode—finishing this exploit in better circumstances than those with which he started. Community members who heard the story may well have seen him as a hero who overcame a tremendous challenge in order to survive, succeed, and eventually return home with money in his pocket and great adventures to relate. That people came in numbers to hear the story certainly attests both to its popularity and to the esteem in which the teller was held.

With this in mind, we should perhaps explore the impact that the narrative had on its listeners. Though my informants didn't specify the "point" of this story, they certainly hinted that it conveyed a meaningful message about survival in challenging circumstances.

I heard the narrative of John Nicolson primarily from his grandson, William MacDonald (Willie) Nicolson, M.B.E., who resided in the township of Upper Ollach,

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<sup>45</sup> For more on the criteria used in classifying personal experience narratives, see Robinson (1981) and Stern (1977).

<sup>46</sup> For a fuller discussion of shared themes in emigrant personal experience narratives, see Stern (1977: 26-27).

Skye.<sup>47</sup> (The poet Sorley MacLean of Peinichorran, Skye—who remembered John as “a great man”—provided additional and substantiating information.<sup>48</sup>) Willie Nicolson explained that he and his three brothers were living in Glasgow when his mother died, causing the boys to move to Skye to live with his grandfather John and his aunt.<sup>49</sup> It was during this period, when Willie was less than 12 years old, that he heard the narrative of “Carolina” from his grandfather. When asked about the story, Willie responded:

Well, he used to talk about it. I used to listen to it back then, ‘cause there was quite a few people that used to come ‘round to hear this story. It wasn’t a one-night story, you see. I think it went on for a couple of nights! Oh, yes . . . there was quite a queue. There was a tailor here—a Donald Nicolson—and he used to know the story better than my grandfather did. And he used to prompt him. [He laughs.] He used to prompt him, and “Oh, yes” and all, and they would really carry on!<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> M.B.E. signifies membership in the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, a designation granted by the ruling monarch for specific services rendered on behalf of the government. It is the highest award given to British civilians short of Knighthood.

<sup>48</sup> Sorley MacLean (1911-1996) was a well-known Gaelic poet, who is widely seen as the father of the modern-day Gaelic renaissance in Scotland. A native of the Island of Raasay, he had family roots in the nearby Braes community in Skye, located just across the Sound of Raasay. In addition to his literary fame, MacLean was known as a great keeper of Skye legend, lore, and genealogy. My interview with him was quite long—in large part due to his many digressions to other related topics. MacLean knew many of the 1884 emigrants personally, as he spent much time in Braes during his early teaching career in nearby Portree between 1934 and 1937, and was fascinated by that community’s local legends and lore. Surprisingly, he said that he did not remember the story of “Carolina” from John Nicolson, but rather heard bits of it from his own grandfather . . . suggesting that the narrative was popular enough to have been re-told by others who had heard it. Though he recalled hearing of the episode, could recite several of the participants’ genealogies back three or more generations, and could give physical descriptions and anecdotes about them, it was evident that this story did not have the personal resonance that it appears to have had for Willie Nicolson. During our conversation, MacLean phoned his brother, Dr. Alasdair MacLean (1918-1999), a retired general practitioner and well-known amateur historian. It was Dr. Alasdair MacLean who supplied the details of John Nicolson’s humorous tenure as a sailor from New York back to Scotland. Sorley MacLean died after a short illness just four months after I visited him.

<sup>49</sup> Willie Nicolson and his three brothers went to school in Skye, and remained there—living with their grandparents—until their father remarried. In 1930, they returned to Glasgow and lived there until shortly before the start of World War II. Then the brothers “scattered again,” to use Willie’s term (W. Nicolson 1996). All of the brothers were decorated veterans of World War II.

<sup>50</sup> The referenced Donald Nicolson may have been the same Donald Nicolson listed as one of the 1884 emigrants.

Willie also noted that his grandfather was, “good too with all the genealogy, . . . who was related to who and what have you. I remembered a bit, but I was young. You know when you’re young you sort of take it in but you don’t retain it.” When I questioned him about the two-night length of the story, he smiled and affirmed the duration, calling it “an epic! It was his epic!” (W. Nicolson 1996).

Willie easily related the parts of the narrative that he remembered, amidst a fuller discussion about the history and events of his grandfather’s generation. He explained that his grandfather had been present at the “Battle of the Braes” in 1882, and that many other young men like his grandfather had left Skye for places like Australia, Canada, and Cape Breton Island—“hard country because they were used to hard country.” Well versed in his community’s history and traditions, Willie (like so many older Highlanders) still held contempt for the landed gentry who prompted the emigration and forcibly displaced so many crofters from their land—this despite the reforms of the 1886 Crofters Act that had gone into effect long before his own birth. Willie particularly recalled the role that Lord MacDonald and the local clergy played in the tragedy of the clearances:

Lord Mac was working to get them all out. Lord Mac would work to put them all out himself. . . . They were all shifted ‘round to different places and they ended up all being piled up here. They were shifted from Sconsor and such, and all stuck on top of each other here. . . . They were living on top of each other. There were cottars. Many young men went away because they couldn’t even get a couple of acres. . . . The church had a lot to do with these things [emigration], you see. The ministers! The ministers were hand in glove with the lords—the estate owners. They had small parcels of land. Some of them were probably the offspring of the Lords as well, but they were hand in glove with them! The ministers were in league with the landed gentry.<sup>51</sup> (W. Nicolson 1996)

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<sup>51</sup> “Lord Mac” is a derogatory reference to Lord MacDonald. Interestingly enough, some residents refer to the current Lord MacDonald, whose given name is Godfrey James MacDonald of Macdonald, as “Lord God,” again in a joking but purposefully derogatory manner. “Cottars” were sub-tenants who lived on subdivided parcels of a croft. The subdivisions of crofts were often so small that agricultural pursuits were nearly impossible. Finally, regarding the comment about the relationship between ministers and the lords, there were many instances—and even more inferences—that clergy were indeed the illegitimate sons of landed gentry.



Though Willie was not witness to the events of the late 1880s, his grandfather's generation had been the one that finally made a stand to end the injustices of the older land tenure system. He conveyed these recollections with just as much bitterness as if he himself had been cleared off his land, heard from a minister that emigration was God's will for him and his neighbors, and been deceived by an emigrant agent. Willie clearly identified with the tragedies of Highland history and had internalized them himself, as have so many other Highlanders of his generation. The fact that his grandfather had been a victim of these tragedies—and, more importantly, had eventually triumphed over them—is perhaps the most significant aspect of the narrative for Willie.

Willie concluded his memories of the “Carolina” narrative by noting that his grandfather had lived to the age of 84, dying in 1942. At this point, he pointedly stated, “A great old man! A great old man. He had his knocks. He was a survivor! Yes . . . yes. He was a survivor! And he taught us all to be survivors as well. There was three of us and we all went through the war. And we were survivors too. We survived as well” (W. Nicolson 1996). It is clear that John Nicolson's life served as an inspiration for Willie and his brothers. The ill-fated journey to North Carolina was certainly a “knock,” but one that the elder Nicolson both survived and transcended. In like manner, Willie survived the challenges of World War II, inspired at least in part by his grandfather's example. He served as a ship captain in the Murmansk convoys, and was awarded both a Queen's Medal and a medal from the Russian government for his service. When I told Willie that I felt I was in the presence of a real hero, he modestly downplayed my insinuation. One could imagine that his grandfather John may have conveyed this same

modesty to those who marveled at his adventures in the United States. Adding to his reflections on being a “survivor,” Willie remarked:

When you’re young you do a lot of things. My brothers—they went right through the war. One was in the Commandos; another was in the Air Force. He had the Distinguished Flying Cross and Bar, my younger brother. He was in the “pathfinders”—they used to mark the sites for the bombs, you know. He would mark the sites for the Lancaster bombers. They had a hard time of it. I had a hard time of it too! Sometimes you never thought you’d get away from it all. But there was good things too; . . . you were able to go abroad. (W. Nicolson 1996)

There are many parallels between Willie’s statement and the narrative of his grandfather. Willie obviously credited his grandfather with instilling a survival instinct in him, to which he attributed his ability to come through World War II unscathed. Further, by closing with the remark on going abroad, he echoed the attitude of many generations of young Highland men, including that of his own grandfather. The desire to see the world, and to accept the challenges of adulthood while doing so, have led many from the Scottish Highlands and Islands to follow the promise of opportunity in other parts of the world. In these ways, Willie Nicolson and his grandfather John had much in common in their young adulthood; it is not difficult to see how John’s exploits and adventures may have played a role in shaping Willie’s life. John Nicolson’s epic tale “Carolina” presented a model of fortitude, perseverance, and success that served as a model for his grandson Willie, and perhaps for others within the community.<sup>52</sup>

I collected information on another returned crofter, Neill MacMillan, from his grandson Duncan Moir, M.B.E., of Sconsor, Skye. Like Willie Nicolson, Duncan also earned the M.B.E. for his community service. Moir, like Willie Nicolson, identified personally with the tragedy of the Highland clearances. At 78 years of age, he too would

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<sup>52</sup> Steven Stern cites this shaping as a reason why emigrants tell their personal narratives to their American-born children. The model is slightly different in this instance, but the telling yielded the same end (see Stern 1977: 27, and the accompanying footnote references).

have remembered community members who were present at “The Battle of the Braes,” and would have heard narratives about forced evictions and clearances from his own community as well as from other townships in Skye. Unlike Willie Nicolson, however, Duncan knew little about his grandfather’s participation in the 1884 emigration (though he shared much about his grandfather’s life as a crofter, the construction of his home, and the livestock he raised on his croft after his return from North Carolina).<sup>53</sup> He seemed quite anxious to know more about the venture, and stated that he had often wondered about it. Evidently he had heard mention of the episode during his youth. Duncan had badly injured his hip as a child, and spent a little more than a year recuperating with his grandparents. During that period (and also at other times in his youth), Duncan heard about the emigration and his grandparents’ participation in it; however, he reported that they were reticent to talk much about it. Duncan was the only direct descendent who suggested that shame may have kept the matter from being discussed.

Moir did, however, offer two notable insights in our conversation. The first echoed a theme from John Nicolson’s narrative, recounting the shock of his ancestors’ first encounter with African Americans. Moir reported that his grandmother Christine MacMillan’s fear of African Americans served as a major motivator for the family’s return from North Carolina:

She didn’t have a word of English, and far as I can tell the colored people frightened the life out of her! Well . . . what I was told, that never having seen a black person and then going out there and being confronted with them [he

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<sup>53</sup> A very personable gentleman, Duncan Moir introduced me to several other descendents of the 1884 emigrants at a ceilidh at the local community hall in Braes the night after our interview. One of these was Alexander (Sandy) Rankin, the great-grandson of Alexander Finlayson—the first to return back to Scotland from North Carolina. Though Rankin had a good deal of information to share about his ancestor’s participation in “The Battle of the Braes,” he knew nothing about the emigration to North Carolina except that his great-grandfather was one of the emigrants involved.

paused]—you know? And not being able to communicate. It'd be enough to terrify anyone, don't you think? (Moir 1996)

Moir's account also raises a second familiar theme—that of some emigrants' inability to speak English. When I asked Duncan if his grandparents had mentioned the use of Gaelic in North Carolina, he responded, "Well, there was a minister. And he was a translator. The minister was the translator for the group who had no English. The minister was virtually the only educated one there who knew Gaelic. That's right" (Moir 1996). This minister was likely Rev. John Monroe, the Gaelic-speaking Baptist minister who lived in what was then Richmond County. This remembrance offers evidence that some community members in North Carolina did indeed strive to help the new emigrants after their arrival.

Moir also made a curious reference about the emigrants' employment. When I asked if he knew anything about his grandparents' work in North Carolina, he said that he thought the offered employment was in mining, and then asked if there were any coal mines in the state. When I told him that there weren't any such mines where his grandparents had settled, he again asserted that he thought this was the employment offered. Later reflection on this remark led me to wonder if he may have mistaken "digging" for mining. Given that one of the first returned emigrants reported that he was put to work digging ditches, one can only wonder if this was perhaps a misconstrued fragment of information.

After returning from Skye, I was able to locate (rather serendipitously) two descendents of emigrants who stayed in North Carolina. I hoped that these informants would have fuller stories than their Scottish counterparts, as their narratives would not have been clouded by shame or embarrassment. Unfortunately, this was not the case.

Perhaps this is because there were so few emigrant Highlanders left for whom the story might have served as a means of self-validation. And perhaps the fact that these emigrants *did* succeed (though not necessarily in the community in which they originally settled) led them to place less emphasis on the challenges that grounded stories such as John Nicolson's "Carolina." Whatever the reason for their incompleteness, the narratives told by the grandchildren of these emigrants present an alternate historical perspective of the 1884 episode—that of those who succeeded.

70-year old Robert Carswell of Camden, S.C., related the narrative of his grandfather, Alexander MacRae, and his family. MacRae, his wife Mary MacLennan MacRae, their seven sons, and one daughter emigrated from Glenelg, Inverness-shire, and arrived with the second party of North Carolina emigrants. Unlike the typically recruited emigrants, the MacRaes seem to have been a family of some financial means. Alexander MacRae owned a large fishing boat, which he sold in order to book the family's passage to North Carolina.<sup>54</sup> After a short time in Moore County, the MacRaes moved to Robeson County, where in November they purchased a 110-acre tract in the Back Swamp Township that adjoined the land of fellow emigrant Donald MacPherson.<sup>55</sup> This land was in an area of the county just south of present-day Pembroke, which was known as "The Wasteland." By 1888, the family had relocated to Wilmington, perhaps due to a lack of success at farming, or to possible tension with the local Lumbee

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<sup>54</sup> An album of old family photos in the Carswells' possession includes a photo of MacRae's fishing boat. It was obviously a treasured reminder of the life the family had left behind in Glenelg.

<sup>55</sup> This information appears in a letter from Hon. Henry A. McKinnon, Jr. to James MacDonald, dated June 21, 1990.

population.<sup>56</sup> In Wilmington, the MacRaes met the family of Hugh and Donald MacRae, who were prominent citizens of the city. (In that same year, the MacRaes lost two of their children to “black measles.”) Perhaps the family’s search for a satisfactory and permanent home led the Wilmington MacRaes to suggest that the emigrants relocate to an area they were developing in the western part of the state. As Carswell related, “Hugh and Donald MacRae owned this 16,000 acre tract at Grandfather Mountain in the western part of North Carolina. And they took my grandfather up there and showed it to him, and he liked it so much—it reminded him of the Highlands of Scotland—so he persuaded them to sell him a small tract of land near Linville, and he moved his family there” (Carswell 1997b). MacRae was employed by the Linville Improvement Corporation, a company founded by Hugh and Donald MacRae to develop the resort community of Linville.

Although MacRae’s primary employment in Robeson County had been agricultural, in Linville he became a foreman for a crew constructing a toll road between Linville and Blowing Rock, where the rail line was located.<sup>57</sup> Shortly after establishing himself and his family on a farm near Linville, MacRae’s family built and operated a

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<sup>56</sup> The area in which Alexander MacRae settled is close to the present-day crossing of the north-south Amtrak rail line with “old” US 74. This sparsely settled land may have provided a relatively cheap opportunity to gain a large tract of land for both MacRae and MacPherson. It should be noted that this period was marked by tensions between whites and the neighboring Lumbee population, with Federal troops having been evacuated from the region following the exploits of the Henry Berry Lowry gang only a few years earlier. Though not mentioned by Carswell or others, such cultural conflicts may have led to situations analogous to those mentioned by Nicolson and Moir regarding contact with African Americans.

<sup>57</sup> This road, known as the “Yonahlossee Turnpike,” was privately owned until it was taken over and improved by the N.C. Department of Transportation; part of the original road is now US Highway 321. In addition to helping build this road and serving as a toll-keeper, MacRae cleared bridle paths and trails on Grandfather Mountain for the growing tourist trade, and worked as a U.S. Mail contractor between Blowing Rock and Linville. On his farm, “MacRae Meadow” (located approximately two miles up the Yonahlossee Turnpike from Linville), he raised sheep, horses, and cows, as well as crops.

guest house, “The MacRae House,” for tourists. It was here that the MacRaes’ Scottish background became a celebrated part of everyday life.

“The MacRae House” was a renowned tourist destination for the remainder of Alexander and Mary MacRae’s lifetime. “People were thrilled with the way he would play the bagpipes there,” Carswell noted.<sup>58</sup> Bagpiping was not the only Scottish custom that the MacRaes observed at their guest house. Carswell remembered that western North Carolina versions of Highland ceilidhs were also held at the house: “They used to have square dances on Saturday nights. Alexander would play his pipes. They’d sing. They’d bring in local musicians to play, and they’d ask my Uncle John MacRae to dance. He’d dance a dance they called ‘A Highland Fling’” (Carswell 1997b). Carswell also recalled a few Gaelic words and phrases used by the family. He recited:

*Ciamar a tha thu*—a welcome when people came to visit. *Calleach beag*, which means “old man.” “Dog” was *cú*. “Mean little boy” was *baloch crosd*. Oh yes, they definitely had the brogue. Sometimes when they were out or something and didn’t want to be overheard, they’d speak in Gaelic. My mother even spoke a little Gaelic.<sup>59</sup> (Carswell 1997b)

Whereas the cultural peculiarities of Highland Scotland may have stigmatized some emigrants, the MacRaes were able to use them as positive attributes both for their own family and for those they hosted in western North Carolina. These traditions did not

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<sup>58</sup> A number of photographs in Carswell’s possession picture his grandfather playing the bagpipes for guests. These images are complemented by several written accounts of MacRae’s piping. On February 13, 1907, for instance, an article in The Scottish American described the visit of three Scotsmen to the MacRae House, and his entertainment for them on the bagpipes. Shepherd Dugger, author of The Balsam Groves of Grandfather Mountain, noted that, “He enjoys his bag-pipe, which he plays at entertainments, and on the cliffs of the Grandfather; the people enjoy it, both for its entertainment and for the reflection that such is the music of a land that has enriched the world with poetry and heroic deeds. If you would have the best substitute for a visit to Scotland, stop at the MacRae House, where you can see pictures made in Glasgow, ‘And harmless shepherds tune their pipes to love, and Amaryllys sounds in ev’ry grove.’” (Dugger 1907: 245-47).

<sup>59</sup> “Calleach beag” actually means “little woman”; however, Carswell pronounced it correctly.

completely disappear there until the deaths of emigrant sons John and Alex in 1961 and 1963.<sup>60</sup>

Robert Carswell was not aware of the 1884 emigration that brought his grandparents to North Carolina; nor was this episode ever mentioned in other accounts of the family's history. This is somewhat surprising, considering the manifestations of their ethnicity that the family openly maintained throughout their lives. The circumstances of the emigration remained unknown to family members until my contact with them. It is ironic that in 1956, the now world-famous Grandfather Mountain Highland Games were located on "MacRae Meadow"—the farm once owned by 1884 emigrant Alexander MacRae.

When I asked Carswell if his family saw themselves as Scottish or American, he replied that they had held onto their Scottish heritage and traditions, and were very proud of them. At the conclusion of our conversation, Robert Carswell offered this deeply poignant memory: "When I was growing up, my Grandmother told me a story. She told me to be a strong person. She told me the story of a man called Duncan of Torloisk, who was a very strong and healthy man in Scotland" (Carswell 1997b). At this point, Carswell broke into tears, and I ended the interview. Robert Carswell was a polio victim who had spent most of his life using leg braces. Though the story of his grandparents' experiences may not have served as a model for his own development, at least one story told by his Highland grandmother did have deep emotional meaning for him.

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<sup>60</sup> MacRae died in 1929, when Robert Carswell was only two; yet Carswell grew up in a household with his emigrant grandmother and his uncles John and Alex, who remained in Linville until their deaths. The family operated the MacRae House until 1931, when it was destroyed in a fire started by Department of Transportation road paving crews who were staying in the home and drying wet clothes by a fire. Carswell's mother operated a second, smaller guest home on the site until her death in 1941. By that time, however, the house's obvious connections with Scotland were not as readily apparent.



A final emigrant account came from Isabel Zimmerman, granddaughter of Alexander MacKenzie. Zimmerman is the only known descendent who still maintains connections with the community to which her grandfather emigrated, as she and her family annually visit a summer home in the Riverton community (near Wagram, N.C.) that serves as a retreat for descendants of the early Scottish-American families who settled there. Alexander MacKenzie married the daughter of one of the prominent local families; hence the continuing connection.

Alexander MacKenzie arrived in Laurinburg with the first group of emigrants. Isabel Zimmerman stated that he came to North Carolina to escape family poverty in Lewis, recalling that “he just came over here because he was desperate to have a better future than his family had had. Times had been very tough, and there was a very severe winter” (Zimmerman 1997).<sup>61</sup> Upon arriving in North Carolina, he and fellow emigrant Duncan MacKenzie were employed by the widow Polly McNeill as farmhands in the Spring Hill community, near Wagram.<sup>62</sup> Alexander was one of two young men from the Island of Lewis whom the local papers praised for their willingness to learn new work skills and to remain in the community when most of their fellow emigrants had departed. Evidently these learned skills included those of the naval stores industry, for MacKenzie soon thereafter left North Carolina to follow this trade further south.<sup>63</sup> Apparently

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<sup>61</sup> The year 1882 was known in Gaelic as “The Year the Corn Was Flattened,” referencing the harsh weather that brought famine to some regions.

<sup>62</sup> Newspaper accounts list Duncan MacKenzie as Alexander’s son; given the men’s histories, however, this isn’t likely, though they might have been related in some way. Duncan accompanied Alexander on his journey to Florida a few years later; then the connection disappears, though letters in Isabel Zimmerman’s possession hint that Duncan might have later relocated to Monroe, N.C.

<sup>63</sup> Many North Carolinians who were active in the lumber and naval stores trades migrated further south in the 1880s and 1890s. Notably, this stream included a sizeable number of Lumbees, who resettled in South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida during this period.

successful in his pursuits, MacKenzie eventually purchased a large lumber and turpentine plantation in Rye, Florida (a now vanished community located just east of present-day Bradenton). Fourteen years later, he returned to North Carolina with his wife, who had suffered from several bouts with malaria in Florida.<sup>64</sup> He built a home in the Philadelphus community of Robeson County, and began what was to be an unsuccessful venture in farming. Zimmerman recalled that the family had always said that “Grandpa was no farmer.” Indeed, after his success in Florida, MacKenzie apparently always had a difficult time making a living. He became a naturalized citizen in 1908, in order to run for County Commissioner for the Burnt Swamp Township. Despite his reputed popularity and charm, he was as unsuccessful in this pursuit as he was in his farming, eventually forcing the family to leave the region. Zimmerman recalled:

He tried farming there and never could make a go of it. Through various family connections, he was able to get a number of state jobs. He managed to keep working, but the second daughter had to drop out of college, and my mother said she cried all night when she had to drop out. But he lived to see his son Duncan get a grand job with Burlington Industries in Burlington and he dropped out of his junior year at Duke to take that job. He ended up doing quite well. (Zimmerman 1997)

After leaving Robeson County, the MacKenzies went to Chadbourn, Windsor, Williamston, and Edenton, where Alexander retired in 1936 from a job with the Department of Motor Vehicles. The family eventually re-settled in Burlington, to be near their son Duncan. Isabel Zimmerman and her mother lived with the family for a while

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<sup>64</sup> When MacKenzie returned in 1905, he was with his second wife. Early in his travels south, he had married a woman from Valdosta, Georgia, who died in childbirth (along with the infant) in 1890. MacKenzie continued to nurture his flourishing business in Florida, while periodically returning to North Carolina. On one such visit, he became reacquainted with Eupha McMillan from Wagram, whom he married in 1893. Shortly after the two returned to Florida, however, his bride contracted malaria. After several recurrences of the disease, the MacKenzies left Alexander’s thriving lumber and turpentine business and returned to North Carolina around 1905.

during this period; her grandfather Alexander MacKenzie died when she was seven years old.

Alexander MacKenzie's life was filled with challenges. As a young man, he left his native Island of Lewis, likely to alleviate the burden on his family. He then found a nurturing family in North Carolina, and used skills learned in the area to amass a small fortune in land, which his wife's poor health forced him to give up. His return to North Carolina, coupled with the many setbacks he faced there, may well have been a humiliating experience. Of this, though, we know very little. As Isabel Zimmerman recalled, "Mother said he felt things very deeply, but he didn't discuss personal things. The things he felt most deeply about were the things he was most reticent about" (1997). Despite this silence, Alexander MacKenzie did leave one testimonial piece of evidence that says much about his experiences as an emigrant.

In my second visit with Isabel MacKenzie, she shared with me a drawing made by her grandfather in 1928; she had found the drawing among her mother's personal items. Drawn on a small card was what Alexander MacKenzie said was his personal coat-of-arms: a stag's head flanked by Scottish thistles, with a banner below giving the Gaelic motto of the Clan MacKenzie, "Ghraidich N Rich" (the correct spelling is "Cuidich An Righ," though MacKenzie's version likely reflects his phonetic interpretation of a Lewis Gaelic dialect). A second banner indicates another MacKenzie association—"Tulloch Ard—A Mountain in Kintail." Interestingly, the arms are flanked on the right by a saltire cross (the national flag of Scotland) and on the left by a stars-and-bars Confederate battle flag (see Appendix G). The symbolism is unmistakable, showing not only MacKenzie's

deep Scottish roots, but also his association with the American South. When I asked Isabel Zimmerman about this curious artistic narrative, she replied:

I think he's saying, "This is who I am." He has absorbed all this Southern culture and this is the product. I thought it was really fascinating. I figure he was close to my age. He was born in 1864 and this is 1928, so he would have been 64 at the time. I'm 62 now. It's an age when you do tend to look back on your life and think about who you are, and this is what I think he was doing at the time. He was combining his two worlds. (Zimmerman 1997)

The combination of the two worlds is indeed revealing, as is Zimmerman's reflection.

After spending most of his life in his adopted country, Alexander MacKenzie clearly saw himself as an assimilated American Southerner with deep and meaningful Scottish roots.

When I began to search for oral evidence of the 1884 emigration, I had high hopes for gathering a wealth of historically revealing stories. After completing the interviews, however, I came away feeling that Sorley MacLean might indeed have been correct when he told me that I was fifty years too late. After returning from Scotland in June 1996, I was initially disappointed by what I had found. Sorley MacLean's death the following November drove home the idea that I was probably the last person to stir the memories of this historical episode among my Scottish informants. Sorley MacLean had been right. Perhaps more of John Nicolson's epic tale "Carolina" might have been recalled a decade or two earlier. Perhaps others might have had additional information to share. Yet the narrative stream had been interrupted by reticence motivated by shame, as well as by the simple passage of time. The information collected does indeed further illuminate the 1884 emigration, and does give a voice to the emigrants, whose stories are now largely silenced due to the passing of most of the interviewed descendants. Perhaps most importantly, the collected narratives show that the experience of emigration, and the challenges that the emigrants overcame to yield various kinds of success, served as

inspiration for those who experienced them, offering models for determination and achievement.

## Chapter 5: Legacies

*“There are no agents of the State employed in foreign countries; a few young men come from Scotland each year, and land and immigration companies bring some people to the State each year but no report is made to the Department; however, it cooperates with them as far as practicable.”*

North Carolina Manual For The Use Of  
Members of the General Assembly Session  
1917

*“They hung on to a large extent to their Scottish heritage and were very proud of it.”*

Robert Carswell, grandson of emigrant  
Alexander MacRae, August 9, 1997

The failed emigration of 1884 is a little-known episode in the history of North Carolina, its Highland settlement, and the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. The dismal failure of this attempt to reinvigorate Highland settlement among North Carolina’s Scottish-American community is probably the principal reason for this lack of knowledge. In North Carolina, those who participated in the scheme likely purposely forgot it, while in the Highland communities from which the emigrants came, it was likely overshadowed by the era’s substantive changes in land tenure policies for crofters and small landholders. The folly of a relatively short and unsuccessful journey to America was simply incomparable to the stories of those who heroically stood up against the landed gentry in rent strikes, clashed with the police, and provided testimony that led to the Crofters’ Act of 1886—a law that dramatically changed the lifestyle and outlook of Highland crofters. Despite the fact that this episode is now a mere footnote in the history

of the affected regions, some conclusions and inferences can nonetheless be drawn from its failures . . . as well as from its successes.

The Highland settlement of North Carolina was not positively affected by the 1884 emigration scheme. Hopes to revive and reinvigorate the settlement with new Scots were dashed by the apparent clashes in culture and work skills between the old Scots of North Carolina and the new Scots from the Highlands and Islands. In 1883, D. P. McEachern had asserted that Robeson and Richmond Counties could hold and welcome the whole population of the Hebridean islands (“Scotch Immigration” 1883). But attitudes obviously changed after the experiment’s conclusion. McEachern’s partner in the venture, James L. Cooley, stated two years later that, “We want no grumbling drunken Skyemen among us 100 miles from the seashore when there are no fish bigger than a minnow” (“Letter from an Emigrant to North Carolina” 1885). Later in that same year, McEachern himself added a final blast against the emigrants, writing:

Being fishermen, they proved a miserable failure, with a few exceptions, and they all have returned to Scotland except these few. You ask how they got back, – I don’t know but back they went. I have no doubt that a better class of immigrants would have proved a success. These Skye crofters are a good deal like the Irish land leagues—hard to satisfy and not worth much after being satisfied. (“The Crofters—How They Got Here” 1885)

These comments by the scheme’s main North Carolina proponents certainly capture their extreme bitterness over the venture’s failure. Their recruitment efforts did not consider the vast differences in work skills that they would encounter, demonstrating a lack of knowledge about the current lifestyle and culture of the recruited emigrants—despite their avowed interest in Scottish ethnicity and the heritage of their ancestral homeland. Though Rev. David MacRae reported in 1879 that one farmer was anxious to recruit Scots to introduce “the Scotch method of farming” in exchange for free land, there were

obviously vast and perhaps insurmountable differences between the imagined and actual abilities of the new emigrants (MacRae 1879: 202). As one commentary explained, “Our staid old Scotch farmers of lower Richmond and upper Robeson found that fishermen from the banks of ‘Isle of Skye’ gave promise of making quite indifferent farmers, turpentine dippers, or lumber getters, and that they had to be taught from the stump in all the ways of work which are peculiar to our country” (“An Experiment in Immigration” 1885).

The fact that Carolina Scots believed that the emigrants would quickly and readily adapt to the occupational pursuits for which they were intended reflects a great deal of naiveté about the speed with which this ethnically attractive labor force might assimilate. The members of the Scottish community in the Carolinas clearly saw themselves as a distinct ethnic group, and sought to reinvigorate their population with others like themselves. Yet this attempt at ethnic reintensification was a failure.<sup>65</sup> The Carolina Scots apparently did not account for the fact that their emigrant ancestors had gone through a long process of assimilation before becoming the successful citizens and farmers that then populated the region. Perhaps the stories of their earlier ancestors’ struggles—stories that might have clarified these challenges—were lost as the population gained financial and social stability, leaving behind associations with humble beginnings that were in most cases quite similar to those of the 1884 crofters. Though this assimilation had taken a number of years, those involved with the 1884 emigration scheme apparently did not recognize this reality. Nor were they patient enough to accept

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<sup>65</sup> The effort to reinvigorate or reintensify the population of the Highland settlement was perhaps idealistically based on the positive attributes that the members of the community saw in themselves and their ancestors. This idea relates to the models of acculturation put forth by Kenneth A. Thigpen (1973), as cited in Stern (1977: 18-19).



the challenges that this process posed to newcomers. Hence the initially buoyant attitudes of both local emigration proponents and those who employed the recently arrived Scots changed dramatically after just a few months (as period newspaper accounts tellingly reveal). This change may well have negatively impacted the emigrants who were still in the area. Some might have left as a result of the conflicts created by the push for quick assimilation into the local labor force, as well as by the community's growing apprehension about, and impatience with, their presence.

Conflicts in expectations likely existed on both sides of the Atlantic. The earliest appeals for aid that appeared in Scottish and English newspapers in late 1883 and early 1884 indicated: "They guarantee to provide them with homes for a year after their arrival, to furnish them with suitable work, and give them fair pay for their labour; and they have appointed a responsible and influential Committee to carry out the arrangements on the other side of the Atlantic" ("Appeal for Aid" 1884). It cannot be determined whether these terms were agreed upon by all the recruiting Carolinians—or if they were simply assumed by an anxious D. P. McEachern. Whatever the case, we can safely assume that there was some coercion on behalf of the Scottish initiator, Miss Margaret MacLeod. Her letters to Lord MacDonald's factor, Alexander MacDonald, indicate her anxious efforts to remove tenants from Lord MacDonald's lands in Skye (MacLeod 1883b, 1883c, 1884a, 1884b, 1884c); her letter to Lady MacDonald, however, indicates that she was capable of clandestine activity in order to help the landed gentry get rid of unwanted tenantry (MacLeod 1883a). One can presume that she may have also used false promises and deception in her enticement efforts—perhaps (as was the case with many emigration agents) for her own financial gain.

Although pre-emigration newspaper accounts in North Carolina seemed to echo the promises set forth in the Scottish papers, a year and a half after the emigration the Rockingham Rocket noted that the emigrants, “lured across the ocean by pictures probably self-created, found that the situation in fact was by no means such as to have warranted their high expectations. As a result many of them soon drifted away from their first moorings and are still unsettled and dissatisfied, while others long since have returned to the ‘land o’ cakes’” (“An Experiment in Immigration” 1885). The Carolina recruiters and the Highland emigrants both made assumptions that ultimately led to the venture’s demise. Shared ethnicity alone could not bridge the gaps created by several generations of removal from Scotland and the particular labor needs of the Carolina sandhills.

The failure of this particular emigration scheme, and the resulting widespread publicity, drew harsh criticism for the State’s Bureau of Immigration. Though immigration agent John T. Patrick and the Bureau were indirectly involved in the scheme (having granted \$600 to transport the crofters by rail from Portsmouth, Virginia, to Laurinburg), their involvement was minimal (“The Crofters—How They Got Here” 1885). Nonetheless, this venture’s failure, as well as that of a French settlement in Moore County, led critics to call for the Bureau’s abolition. By the fall of 1885, many were expressing grave doubts about the success of the Immigration Bureau’s efforts, and were saying that future emigration attempts should focus on a class of emigrants with capital to invest and readily adaptable work skills.<sup>66</sup> As a result, the Bureau did not actively pursue any further attempts at foreign emigration during this period. Patrick’s efforts to induce

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<sup>66</sup> See, for instance, articles printed in The Fayetteville Observer (“Immigration” 1885; “Immigration—What Has So Far Been Accomplished?” 1885).

*domestic* emigration, however, did succeed in bringing a more “desirable” class of emigrants to the region. The establishment of the resort communities of Southern Pines and Pinehurst attest to the success of these endeavors.

Though North Carolina did not actively pursue foreign emigration in the years after 1884, some evidence suggests that efforts to induce further Scottish emigration were still being considered. On August 26, 1885, The New York Times reported the arrival of Miss Margaret MacLeod in Philadelphia, this time on a journey to the West. She was to be in the United States for several months, appealing for funds from western and southern philanthropists, as well as from Scots settled in those regions. She publicly voiced her hopes that a great influx of crofters would settle in North Carolina and other states as a result of her efforts; no evidence suggests, however, that Miss MacLeod made any further efforts in North Carolina (“To Help Scotch Crofters” 1885). The sense of promise that the Crofters’ Act of 1886 gave to oppressed crofters who might have contemplated emigration, coupled with widely circulated reports of the failed North Carolina efforts, likely helped to dissuade candidates for such schemes.

Despite the failure of the 1884 venture, another group of North Carolinians may have contemplated a similar venture twenty years later. On October 19, 1905, The Fayetteville Observer printed correspondence from Cumberland County native John G. Shaw announcing the proposed formation of a “Scotch Immigration Society.” The announcement invited citizens of Cumberland, Robeson, Scotland, Richmond, Moore, Harnett, Bladen, and any other county to meet for the purpose of recruiting Scottish immigrants, to “not only furnish the required labor needed in our fields and elsewhere, but also become valuable citizens and aid in building up the waste places of the whole

community” (“A Scotch Immigration Society” 1905). There is no evidence that this venture actually materialized, perhaps because people in the region still remembered the failed attempts.

Yet emigration from Scotland—albeit on a much smaller scale—apparently *did* continue. A 1911 letter from Archie McSwan of Ballygrant, Island of Islay, to D. P. McEachern suggests that McEachern was a contact person for parties from Scotland who were contemplating relocation to North Carolina; perhaps he continued to recruit Scots to the region privately (McSwan 1911). The 1917 manual for members of the General Assembly of North Carolina noted that “a few young men come from Scotland each year” (Connor 1917: 94-95). Despite these references, no evidence suggests the existence of any further large or organized emigration, or even of any additional emigrants settling in the area encompassed by the earlier Highland settlement of the State. The 1884 emigration was apparently the last effort of organized Scottish settlement in North Carolina.

Just as in North Carolina, the failed emigration of 1884 has largely been forgotten in Scotland. This can be explained by the passage of time and people, as well as by the fact that this relatively short-lived episode was overshadowed by events that more directly affected the future and livelihood of the communities from which the emigrants came. This is certainly the case in The Braes community in Skye, where the primary event of importance was the famed “battle” in 1882. The fact that many of the participants in the 1884 emigration had been involved in this pivotal incident (several very conspicuously) seems to have led it to completely overshadow memories of the emigration. Hence Sorley MacLean—widely regarded as one of the best sources of

information about Skye, and particularly about the Braes community—remembered many details about the *participants* in the emigration, but few about the *emigration itself*. For example, he recalled that Alexander Finlayson, Sr.—one of the five men arrested at the “Battle of the Braes,” and also one of the returned emigrants—“[took] out a number of the policemen before being captured and hauled away to Portree”; he also remembered that Finlayson was called “Alasdair Beag” (in Gaelic, “Little Alasdair”) not because he was small, but because his broad shoulders made him seem short in stature (MacLean 1996). Finlayson’s great-grandson, Sandy Rankine, proudly recalled the family’s exploits in the battle, including the fact that his great-grandmother used a pruning hook to nearly cut the ear off of a Glasgow policeman, but knew nothing of the family’s experiences in North Carolina (Moir and Rankine 1996). Community members clearly passed down stories of the battle as remarkable, exciting, and exemplifying the merits of the participants. The same was generally *not* true for narratives about the emigration. Though this episode would have been equally remarkable and exciting, the embarrassment of failure—as well as the emigrants’ relatively short absence from the community—likely contributed to its absence (or dismissal) from local lore.

Although stories of the 1884 emigration may have been purposely purged from the narrative repertoires of its participants, it is worth noting that at least two of the emigrants reversed the negative stigma that may have been associated with their venture. The fact that a family in the Island of Lewis is still known as “The Carolinas”—generations after their ancestors’ emigration—keeps this event alive in local lore. Rather than carrying derogatory associations, the episode was one in which this family took some pride, even though they remember virtually nothing about the emigration today.

Even more telling was the story of John Nicolson, perhaps the most significant narrative memorializing the emigration in the Braes community. His epic “Carolina” perhaps helped ameliorate some of the shame locally associated with the episode, while simultaneously providing a model of perseverance. Remarkably, tellers were still recounting his story forty to fifty years after the events that inspired it. In that time, some listeners clearly heard the tale as a source of inspiration. This was certainly the case with Nicolson’s grandson Willie, who attributed his ability to survive the challenges of World War II to the example set by his grandfather. Perhaps others among the many who lined up to hear the story also found within it a model for conquering adversity.

Although the stories of the emigrants who remained in North Carolina may have been less remarkable than those recounted in John Nicolson’s “Carolina,” the challenges that these emigrants faced were likely equal to or greater than a return home to Scotland. Those who remained apparently did not look back, but determinedly set out to succeed in America. Though Alexander MacRae, for instance, was a fisherman (just like the Skye fishermen assailed in the North Carolina newspapers), he was able to succeed in his non-fishing ventures and provide a good living for himself and his family, even if not in the Highland-settled region to which he originally emigrated. The isolation of western North Carolina clearly allowed the MacRae family to retain and perform parts of their Highland culture and to share it with the greater community. Ironically, this family’s retention and gradual loss of such cultural features as the use of Gaelic, piping, and dance seems to have paralleled the assimilation patterns and generational weakening of these traditions in the earlier Highland settlement of southeastern North Carolina, where numbers alone would seemingly have reinforced their survival.

Other emigrants—such as Alexander MacKenzie—may not have so overtly displayed their cultural heritage, beyond their distinctive Highland brogue. Young men such as MacKenzie may have integrated into American society more quickly, and accepted the challenges of learning new occupational skills, thus making them models to whom other emigrants would be compared. Without a language barrier or the concerns of providing for a family, their challenges were likely less apparent to observers. MacKenzie’s story is certainly no less remarkable than that of John Nicolson (though later setbacks in his life may have made him reticent to share details of his past). Nonetheless, at least one material testimony supports the fact that even late in life, he still identified himself as a Scot, despite being a fully-assimilated citizen of the American South.

Although other 1884 emigrants likely had similar narratives, these now seem to be lost. Such is the case for Murdoch MacDonald, a native of the Island of Lewis, who apparently ran away from home as a young man to seek adventures in America. The local history museum in Red Springs, N.C., holds a torn letter fragment—apparently from MacDonald’s mother—seeking information on his whereabouts. Sent to “Miss McNeill—North Carolina” (perhaps the same Polly McNeill who provided work for Alexander and Duncan MacKenzie), the letter wonders if MacDonald were still there, or if he had joined other Lewis men who had gone to Manitoba.<sup>67</sup> After serving as a young farm manager for two widows in the Antioch community, near Red Springs, MacDonald inherited property from them and farmed there as a bachelor for the remainder of his life

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<sup>67</sup> The museum also holds correspondence from MacDonald’s younger siblings, who wrote asking him to return home as late as the 1940s.

(MacDonald Miscellaneous Papers).<sup>68</sup> MacDonald is the only known 1884 emigrant—out of at least 180—who remained in the community in which he originally settled.

Though local residents remembered him as a man who enjoyed sitting at the country store drinking Coca-Colas for afternoons at a time, they knew nothing about his experiences as an emigrant. Perhaps MacDonald's assimilation was so complete that those who knew him took him and his background completely for granted. Just as Sorley MacLean had noted, I was again fifty years too late.

My research for this thesis uncovered a great deal of information in period newspapers regarding the failed emigration of 1884. This information alone tells quite a compelling story. The collected oral accounts add immeasurably to this narrative, providing a multi-dimensional picture of the episode. They show that these emigrants' experiences were not unlike those of others who have used narratives to demonstrate the challenges and successes of adapting to a new land. They also reveal how even when such stories end in failure, they can provide vindication and inspiration.

Though the 1884 emigration did not positively impact the Scottish settlement of North Carolina, it tells us that the region's Scottish-Americans did indeed identify themselves as a distinct ethnic community. Though their efforts in 1884 were unsuccessful (thus marking the end of a string of emigrations that had lasted over 140 years), the community's current members still identify with this ethnicity and heritage—even if their demonstrations of this identity are now more romantically and popularly

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<sup>68</sup> Although he remained in Antioch until his death, MacDonald may have dreamed of venturing to the American West, as suggested by a foreclosure note on a plot of land owned by a Texas cattle ranching company (MacDonald Miscellaneous Papers). He served as a road overseer for many years, and was a member and elder of the Antioch Presbyterian Church. My largely unsuccessful attempts to gain further information about him suggest that he led a rather unremarkable life. MacDonald died in 1951, and was buried in the church cemetery.



inspired. Certainly, few of the thousands of attendees at the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games know that they celebrate their heritage on ground once owned by one of the last Highland emigrants to North Carolina.

Knowledge of the 1884 emigration is largely unknown in both North Carolina and Scotland. The informants whom I interviewed left their last remembrances about this episode with me. Their passing means that the last vestiges of the emigrants' stories may well appear within this work. Though the episode was perhaps not significant enough to warrant record in most histories of the state or region, it is certainly worthy of note. For well over 100 years, thousands of Highland Scots left their homeland to seek better fortunes in North Carolina, making this settlement the largest Highland community in the United States. The failed emigration of 1884 was the only effort of active *recruitment* in the settlement's history, as well as the only known Scottish emigration scheme involving North Carolina during the era of the Highland Clearances. The effort's failure brought the hopes of Carolina Scots for a continued reinvigoration of their ethnic identity to a bitter and final end. Today, Scottish descendents in North Carolina actively celebrate this community's heritage and ethnicity. Few, however, know anything about the unfortunate emigration of 1884, a venture that sought not merely to celebrate—but instead to revitalize—the settlement's cultural identity.

## **Appendix A: Roderick MacPherson's Emigration Account**

On June 27, 1884, The Scotsman printed this detailed account from a member of the second party of Highland Scots to arrive in North Carolina. Written to Miss MacLeod by Roderick MacPherson (perhaps the brother of the previously cited correspondent Donald, who was living with D. P. McEachern in Robeson County), the letter recounts MacPherson's journey from Scotland to Moore County, and describes the welcome in his newly found home.

Pocket, Moore County, NC June 3, 1884

Madam - in order to fulfil (sic) to you my promise, I now take the liberty of giving you an outline of my journey to North Carolina while on board the Pennsylvania. We had head winds almost the whole way, and some days and nights pretty rough. Almost the whole of the passengers were seasick. However, I should be thankful I did not feel any. We arrived at Philadelphia on Friday the 9<sup>th</sup> May about 9 a.m. We got all manner of attention and kindness on board the ship. We did not wait long at Philadelphia, took train to Baltimore, then steamer to Norfolk where Mr. Cooly (sic) and Mr. Duncan M'Iver from this county met us. These gentlemen accompanied us to our destination and showed us great kindness all the way; far more than we expected. We arrived at Sandford (sic) Station about 10 o'clock p.m. (Saturday) where we all landed. There Thomas Campbell, Esq., from this place waited on me and family with a carriage and a wagon and took us to his own house, where Mrs. Campbell and family received us with great kindness. On Monday Mr. Campbell accompanied us to our home; a very good house of five or six rooms, about one and a half miles from his own house. He also provides us with beds and all kinds of provisions, and anything that he thinks we are in need of or will benefit us we have it as soon as possible. So in that respect we have great reason to be thankful; and for the good of our home and children he bought us a cow and calf, a thing I did not expect so soon; it shows you however, a little of the kindness of the family who care for us, and I freely admit that I never met with kinder neighbors altogether, visiting us and wanting us to their houses, and if we were in want of anything would be glad to help us. There are all kinds of provisions used in this district and all kinds of fruit and vegetables. We like this place much better than I expected before I left Scotland, and we begin to like it more every day. We live about seven miles from the station, three or four miles from church, and about two and a half miles from a school. We are all of us getting plenty of work through Mr. Campbell's influence. I did not see any of those who came with me yet but Alex. M'Rae, who is quite well, as also his family. All the rest got masters and I understand are quite well; they all live in this county. You will much oblige me by sending me Scotch newspapers. When I get more acquainted I will send you my views on agriculture &c. The weather as yet is not uncommon hot. Farmers

think they will have a plentiful crop this season. I hope this will find you enjoying good health, as it leaves us all. Mistress and family wish to be kindly remembered.  
I remain yours faithfully,

Rodk. MacPherson

## **Appendix B: Reports of an Appeal to South Carolina**

On July 31, 1884, The Fayetteville Observer published a second article answering charges made by The Augusta Chronicle of Georgia, which asserted that emigrant crofters in North Carolina were appealing to South Carolina landholders for jobs. The article follows:

In the last issue of the Observer we had occasion to correct the mis-statement made by the Augusta, Ga. Chronicle's Columbia, S.C. correspondent that the Scotch Crofters recently settled in this State were discontented with their surroundings, treatment, &c. Further inquiry develops the fact that there is one member of the colony, a very dissipated person, who is dissatisfied—at whose presence among the colonists Miss MacLeod has written to express her distress—who would probably be dissatisfied with any mundane thing, and who is supposed to be the originator of the mis-statements in question. In the July Report of the South Carolina Department of Agriculture we find the following—in the letter which “will explain itself,” probably lying the explanation of the Columbia correspondent's superserviceable epistle to the Georgia paper viz:

EMIGRANTS – The following letter will explain itself. If any of our people desire to engage any of the emigrants they should communicate at once with the British Consul at Charleston. From information we have received we are led to believe that these emigrants would be a very desirable class of citizens, and it might be well for some of our large landowners to give them homes and employment.

British Consulate Charleston, July 15, 1884

DEAR SIR – I take the liberty of enclosing you copy of a letter I have received from the Rev. John Darroch, minister of Porthee [sic], Island of Skye, relating to some of his parishioners who have been induced to emigrate to Robeson County, N.C. From their account they seem to have selected a very poor part of the South to make a living in, and therefore I write to ask you if, in your capacity as Agricultural Commissioner, you might be able to inform some of the wealthier farmers in the upper part of this State of the wish of these people to find occupation, and I have no doubt that they would be found very suitable for farm laborers, shepherds, &c. They are a hardy, moral and thrifty race and when they get accustomed to the new conditions of life here, I have no doubt would in time become good farmers and good citizens. I have no doubt they would be glad to work for little and to repay their transportation from North Carolina to this State by installments out of their wages.

I remain sir your most obedient servant,

George H. A. Box

HRM Act'g. Consul.

TO: A. P. Butler, Columbia, S.C.

**Appendix C: The Emigration Story, as Reported in the *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* (1884-1885)**

Drawing upon the testimonies of returned emigrants Alexander Finlayson and Donald Matheson, the Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness for 1884-85 printed the following account of the emigration scheme's failure in North Carolina:

Last year a remarkable instance of the uncertainties and hardships of emigration came under our notice here. I understand that the facts are still under investigation, and may yet attract some attention. Shortly after the troubles that made the 'Braes' famous, a body of Skye people (including some of those who were conspicuous in that trial) were induced to emigrate to North Carolina. According to the apparently-truthful story of two of the men who came back to collect as much as would bring home their families, their fares to the port of shipping, as well as their passage to North Carolina were paid, they knew not by whom. The prospect of plenty work and good wages was held out to them on arrival, with other brighter prospects for the future. On their arrival, however, they discovered to their bitter disappointment that both promises and prospects were a delusion. Where work was obtained the only wages given was the bare food, and the houses provided were the one room huts (as one of the men remarked) once occupied by slaves. The 70 emigrants, scattered over the country at long distances from each other, struggled on in the hope of better treatment as long as the means that they brought with them lasted. Their conditions, however, getting worse instead of better, and the food and the climate telling injuriously on their health, those who could do so left the place. The poor men who told this story in Inverness and other places had no means left to bring back their families. By the kind assistance of some friends and countrymen they have, I trust, by this time been enabled to rescue the remaining members of their families from the desperate condition into which they consider themselves to be misled. The melancholy tale of the hardships and disappointment experienced by this small band of Skye emigrants is, I suspect, if all were known, not infrequent in the history of emigration from the Highlands. (Vol. XI, 1884-85: 196).

## **Appendix D: William MacLennan's Emigration Account**

No doubt responding to the negative publicity generated by the testimonies of returned emigrants Alexander Finlayson and Donald Matheson (see Appendix C), emigration organizer Miss Margaret MacLeod sent this letter from emigrant William MacLennan to the Inverness Advertiser in early 1885. The Advertiser printed the letter on January 16, and The Fayetteville Observer reprinted it on February 19. An editorial comment prefaced the posting, purportedly explaining the delay between the letter's receipt and its publication:

We have been requested by Miss M. MacLeod, Sea Wynd, Dundee to publish the following letter received some time ago from a native of Inverness-shire. Miss MacLeod explains that she delayed forwarding the letter for publication, for the reason that she hesitated to wound the feelings of some of the returned emigrants, but that withholding it any longer would be doing injustice to the more honest and industrious portion of the emigrants who are pleased and doing well in their new home.

MacLennan's letter was the most extensive (and most unabashedly effusive) account of the emigrants printed in any of the period newspapers.

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Laurinburgh, North Carolina, U.S.America, 14<sup>th</sup> October, 1883

Dear Miss MacLeod – Here now I find myself located in North Carolina, a country to which I had been once a day long looking for, and heard and read much of it, but now am delighted to find myself in a position where I can safely say that all I had heard or read about it put together cannot come up with the reality of the country. The delightful climate, the magnificent forest trees, with their luxuriant foliage, and last, though not least, the agreeable people I have met with, have quite reconciled me to my new home in the Western Hemisphere. Indeed you were quite right in saying that I would meet with kindness in North Carolina that I never did in Scotland. I am sure I have met kindness here that I did not look for, or even dream of. I had been once a day a constant reader of the history of the settlements in North Carolina, but I had formed an inadequate idea of all I find that is attractive and inviting here. I have often said, and said sincerely to my friends in Scotland, North Carolina offers a good home for you, but I knew not the beauties, the richness and the luxuries of the country I was recommending. Now I see this home, this delightful home, for any poor or rich Highlander, wherever he is found. When I arrived at the growing town of Laurinburgh I was met by Mr. Cooley, a

gentleman in whom I place great confidence, and after giving me a Highland welcome he took me to Captain William McLaurin's house, where every kindness and attention was shown me. Next morning I had an invitation from Mr. Cooley to take a buggy ride with him to his residence at Spring Hill; which I willingly accepted. Mr. Cooley, in a strict sense of the word, is in easy and independent circumstances. He lives, as you know in a large wooden house, surrounded by a happy and interesting family and from his well known good nature it is seldom that he has not one or more visitors. I feel perfectly at home as long as I am within a hundred miles of Mr. Cooley's house. Next morning Mr. Cooley and I took a buggy ride through the country; our time was not idly employed; we were constantly on the move going from farm to farm, giving me excellent advice on the mode of agriculture, and imparting such information as my poor mind was capable of receiving. Among the places we visited, and at which we spent hours of the most agreeable kind, was that of your old friend, the Hon. D. P. MacEachern. His premises indicate the true and independent farmer. The neighing of horses, the bellowing of cattle, the squeaking of pigs, and the continued 'bah-bah' of goats and sheep spoke more plainly than words that there was nothing like hunger in his neighbourhood. I have thought much since I came here and the more I think of what I witnessed, I willingly admit that those who adopted the farming life have chosen the better part. There seems to be a contentment about the farmers here that is not to be witnessed scarcely in anyone in Scotland. If wealth is man's object, there is no surer way of finding it than by cultivating the soil. If health is desirable, let his occupation be on a farm in North Carolina. If he wishes to live in peace with his neighbors, avoid the bustle and vexations of a town. In fine, if he wishes to pass through this life with less of the troubles and perplexities which a town or city life is heir to, go live on a farm. But prudent men want something more, the promise of health and plenty to allure them to a new home in a distant land. They want the means and facilities for educating their children, they want school-books, newspapers, they want all the means of social and intellectual improvement, and I remark that all these advantages can be obtained in any part of North Carolina to a degree that is truly wonderful considering the age of the colony. As this is the view I take of it, and in which I am more and more confirmed every day, how can I help wishing that I had a voice loud enough to send through the Highlands and Islands of Scotland that would persuade thousands who would make good citizens to emigrate to this wide and promising field. As people come trees fall, houses go up, snakes leave, deer flees. Even if I thought they would be no better off here than there, I would urge them to go for their children's sake, but I am sorry that some of our country people labor under wrong impressions that they think they cannot get the luxuries of life in North Carolina. But we all know that salvation is always considered too cheap to be accepted. I had an invitation to dine yesterday with a gentleman in this neighbourhood. I never enjoyed a better dinner, though it was of North Carolina production. I returned home and had not well seated myself before another invitation came from Mr. Cooley requesting me to dine with him. The first thing that caught my eye on entering the dining room was a well-spread table, with a large and beautiful roasted turkey, chickens, beef, pork, cabbage, sweet potatoes, plantains, rice, &c., &c., all of North Carolina production. I was constrained to cry out—North Carolina is good enough for me. Well, you say, you have given us the good, now give us the bad. I will. If you come here you will have to work, and get your bread out of the ground. Adam had to do so, and if you go to work to others you will be

paid according to your ability. If as a mechanic, you must come prepared to take contracts. If as a merchant, don't bring goods. If as a teacher or ruler, take care the Americans don't make you get your lesson over. It would be silly in me to attempt a description of North Carolina. I think nobody has a right to give an account of North Carolina but a poet. But I shall give my opinion—shall say what I honestly think upon my own responsibility—and let it pass for what it is worth. I have no point to carry or interest to gain, no ambitions to gratify, but as I have said before, I am anxious that our country people should be united in their choice of a future home. It strikes me that we can never be a nation in any part on earth if we cannot be in North Carolina. So far from inducing the idle and vicious to emigrate to North Carolina, if I could I would discourage them every way in my power; she wants none but sober, industrious families to come. I am sorry that some of those crofters or fishermen that you sent from Skye proved themselves to be idlers and when they observed they could not obtain a living in any section of North Carolina without working for it, they were compelled to return to the land of the heather. In addition to this I may mention that I am enjoying myself much more than I expected among the colored people. They behave so much like well-bred white people that while among them one forgets all about the prejudices of color, and they conduct themselves so well and courteously that they receive the credit from visitors of being a polite, clever, and hospitable people. They have got schools and institutions for the attainment of literacy and useful knowledge, Bible societies, a lodge for Freemasons and Oddfellows, and a division of the Sons of Temperance. Drunkenness is looked upon as very disgraceful and is seldom seen among them, and the selling of whisky as a mean, low occupation though it is not prohibited by law. I must not tire you more with this long letter, but I feel as if I could never cease extolling the beauties of this lovely country. Perhaps we may be so fortunate as to awaken in you a wish to visit it another time. Should you do so I am sure you will not be disappointed. As there are several friends and acquaintances of mine writing to me, asking my views, &c., of this country, therefore you will oblige me by publishing this letter in an early issue of the Inverness Advertiser so that they can judge for themselves. Mr. Donald MacPherson, late of Glenelg, who left in spring with your first batch of emigrants, has purchased a few hundred acres of land in Robeson County and is now enjoying his freedom the same as the landlord are doing in Scotland. Then farewell, with kindest regards from your fortunate emigrant.

William MacLennan

Late of Lower Corry, Muir of Ord

Inverness-shire



## **Appendix E: *The Rockingham Rocket's* Assessments of the 1884 Emigration's Failure**

In fall of 1885, The Rockingham Rocket published two final articles that outlined the crofter emigration “experiment” and the reasons for its failure. The first, appearing on September 24, stated:

It is true as an act of generosity and in response to solicitation from Robeson’s former Senator, Mr. McEachern, the Department at Raleigh paid \$600 toward their transportation, but this we think was only what was required to pay expenses from some point after they had reached our shores. For the importation, the State was not responsible further than to extend the aid mentioned, which we think, under the circumstances, was little enough to have done. It was then practically a private enterprise and one which resulted in mutual disappointment. Our staid old Scotch farmers of lower Richmond and upper Robeson found that the fishermen from the banks of “Isle o’ Skye” gave promise of making quite indifferent farmers, turpentine dippers, or lumber getters, and that they had to be taught from the stump in all the ways of work which are peculiar to our country. They, on the other hand, lured across the ocean by pictures probably self-created, found that the situation in fact was no means such as to have warranted their high expectations. As a result, many of them soon drifted away from their first moorings and are still unsettled and dissatisfied, while others long since have returned to the “land o’ cakes.” Of course there were exceptions and of the comparatively small number that remained, we know two most excellent young men in this county. The county would gladly welcome many more like them. Whether immigration generally shall prove a blessing to our country remains to be seen. We have grave and honest doubts about it, and we think it will come quite fast enough without any extra effort to stimulate it. We know of no one who is anxious to invest money in another Scotch Crofter experiment.

The second article reprints a letter by D. P. McEachern—who had provided such emphatic support for the emigration effort from its inception—to the editor of The Raleigh Chronicle. The Rockingham Rocket printed this piece on October 15, 1885, offering a second summary of the “Crofter immigration failure”:

Robeson County’s former Senator writes a letter to the Raleigh Chronicle explaining how the Crofters came. Our views on this experiment in immigration were given a week or two since, and Mr. McE’s letter only confirms our convictions as to the sad disappointment that resulted from the project. But here is his letter:

“Mr Editor: I notice a disposition on the part of some to run down the Agricultural Department, and especially the Immigration Bureau, presided over by Mr. Patrick on

account of the Crofter immigration failure. I wish to state that Mr. Patrick is not responsible for the failure. The history of the Scotch immigration is as follows: Miss Margaret McLeod, of Dundee, Scotland, who visited her relatives in Robeson county some eight or ten years ago, seeing the great destitution among the Crofters of the Western Isles, conceived the idea of sending some of them over to this country, in order to better their condition, thinking they also would be beneficial to our farmers. To this end, sometime in the summer of 1883, she wrote to Mr. Jas. L. Cooley of Richmond county, suggesting such a movement. He thereupon called a meeting of a portion of the citizens of the county to consider the matter. The movement was favorably received and arrangements were immediately put to foot to bring them over. The first thing to be done was to furnish the means for transportation. I went before the Board of Agriculture and Immigration at their regular meeting and presented the subject for their consideration and asked for sufficient funds to bring 30 families from Liverpool to Portsmouth, Va., Capt. Clark, G. P. & F. Agent from Portsmouth, via Hamlet, to Wilmington generously furnishing free transportation from Portsmouth to Laurinburg. The Board granted \$600 to be used for that purpose. Mr. Patrick having charge of the funds, they together with what Miss McLeod was able to raise from the friends of the movement in Scotland, sufficed to transport that number from Scotland to North Carolina. The Crofters arrived and were distributed among the farmers of Robeson and Richmond counties. Being fishermen, they proved a miserable failure, with a few exceptions, and they all have returned to Scotland except these few. You ask how they got back, – I don't know but back they went. I have no doubt that a better class of immigrants would have proved a success. These Skye Crofters are a good deal like the Irish land leagues—hard to satisfy, and not worth much after being satisfied.”

## Appendix F: Photos of Alexander MacRae

These two photographs of Alexander MacRae were found among an old family album during an interview with his grandson, Robert Carswell.



Alexander MacRae playing his bagpipe on the porch of the MacRae House near Linville.



Alexander MacRae (far left) during construction of the Yonahlossee Turnpike.

## Appendix G: Alexander MacKenzie's Coat of Arms

This sketch was drawn by Alexander MacKenzie in 1928 as a representation of his personal coat of arms. The image contains the arms of the Clan MacKenzie, the saltire cross of St. Andrew flag (the national flag of Scotland), and the Confederate battle flag.



Alexander MacKenzie  
June 16, 1928

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