

CLAN MACNEIL EMIGRATION TO AMERICA

by

Lieut. The Macneil of Barra, C.E.
45th Chief of the Clan.

Highland emigration to America, played a very important part in the history of not only nearly all the Clans of Scotland, but also of the Colonies themselves.

Upon war with France in North America being declared, Roderick "The Resolute", son of the Macneil of Barra, 39th, with several clansmen, went to America. He was a lieutenant in Fraser's Highlanders, and met his death at the glorious battle of the Heights of Abraham at Quebec, in 1759.

Roderick the Resolute's son, Roderick the Gentle, 40th, went to America in 1776, leading a number of his clansmen, and fought in several battles of the war of the American Revolution.

From this time on, the imagination of the clansmen was aroused by reports of most wonderful conditions in America. In 1785, the members of the disbanded 82nd Regiment, were given grants of land in Nova Scotia. They included several Barramen, i.e., Macneils from Barra. One of them appears to have revisited the Isle of Barra a few years later, and to have related to his admiring kinsmen the splendid opportunities which awaited them across the Atlantic. The clansmen could not, of course, realize the hardships of the pioneer, nor the vastly different conditions of life in the new country.

But the spirit of emigration had entered into the hearts of the clansmen, with the result, as hereinafter told by Mr. Macqueen, Minister of the Parish of Barra:

" . . . upwards of 200 left this country within the last two years (about 1794); some emigrated to the island of St. John's, (Prince Edward Island) and Nova Scotia, in North America, being invigled thither by a Mr. F., upon promises of the undisturbed profession of their religion, (being all Roman Catholics), and of free property for themselves, and their offspring for ever; but as soon as they were landed, he left them to their shifts, and returned back to his native country.

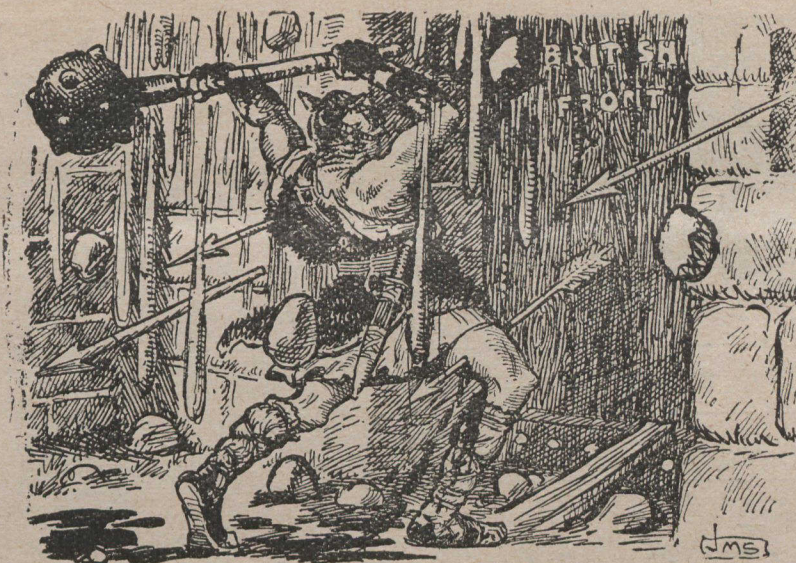
"These poor people were left in the most deplorable situation. If the inhabitants of the different places in which they landed had not exerted themselves for their relief, many of them must have perished, for want of the common necessaries of life. They became sensible of their folly when it was

too late; others went to Glasgow, being invited thither by Mr. David Dale, to work in his cotton manufactory; but Mr. Dale's terms not coming up to their expectations, some of them returned home; and many of them, from a change of diet and occupation, contracted distempers, of which they died; many more prepared themselves for emigration, but repented in time enough to avoid the snare into which their friends have been inconsiderately led, by going to America; they also sold their effects; and spent the money arising from the conversion, so that they would have been destitute in their native country; but the Macneil, the proprietor, not only gave them, and such as returned from Glasgow, lands, but likewise money enough to purchase a new stock of cattle, and all the other necessary implements of husbandry. The spirit for emigration is now happily and totally suppressed."

The Minister, however, was quite mistaken in reference to the cessation of emigration; in fact, it had just commenced.

James and Hector, sons of Hector Og Macneil of Barra, and Roderick, son of Roderick Macneil of Brevaign, had become acquainted with a gentleman named Hugh Dunoon. He had previously emigrated to Halifax, Nova Scotia, later on, removing to Pictou. He prospered greatly, became quite prominent, and was soon appointed a Crown emigration agent.

BRITISH OAK.



(Courtesy of the World Wide.)

A song to the oak—the brave old oak,
Who hath ruled in the greenwood long;
Here's health and renown to his broad green crown
And his fifty arms so strong.

There's fear in his frown when the sun goes down,
And the fire in the west fades out;
And he showeth his might on a wild midnight,
When the storms through his branches shout.
H. F. Chorley, "The Brave Old Oak".

HINDENBERG:—"Shall I ever break through?"
—"News of the World", London).

James had become owner of a small sailing-ship, the Pigeon, and upon meeting Dunoon, and entering into negotiation, he and the above Roderick were commissioned to secure the greatest number of emigrants possible, from their native island.

This they did in the early summer of 1801, meeting with great opposition by the Chief of the Clan. James was the first to sail and the first to arrive at Pictou. Dunoon followed in a larger ship, the Sarah, with 700 souls. He left the Isle of Barra in June, and reached Pictou in September, some thirteen weeks later. During the passage, they were boarded by a man-of-war, which pressed twenty-five men, but upon representations being made by Dunoon in his capacity as Crown emigration agent, they were released. James returned to the Isle of Barra early in 1802, but was soon afterwards drowned.

Hector, above mentioned, had also become owner of a large trading vessel. As the spirit of emigration was at its height, he decided, in the summer of 1802, also to go to America.

In June he fitted out his ship and, with 370 Barramen on board, sailed for Pictou, reaching there in August. Governor Wentworth located most of them on Pictou Island for a while, when they began to scatter along the shore toward the east, to Antigonish and later

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