

In a short time the population reached 16,000, troops were stationed here, and warships came and went continually; an immense amount of work was done, especially road-building. A large business was carried on with the West Indies, Europe, and the States, and the first vessel built in Nova Scotia (250 tons) was built here. In 1788 the exports included 13,151 quintals dry cod, 4,193 casks pickled fish, 61 casks smoked salmon, 149 barrels fish oil, and 14,798 gallons sperm oil. It was in this year that PRINCE WILLIAM HENRY (afterwards William IV) visited the town, and a ball was given in his honour in the Merchant's Coffee House.

In spite of all this apparent prosperity, however, there were not wanting elements that made for failure; for the first three years 9,000 inhabitants were assisted by rations from the British Government, comparatively few of the settlers were really equal to the task that confronted them, and contact with the Army and Navy induced habits of dissipation. And to the enterprise of the community came a series of set-backs:—a great storm (September 25, 1798) destroyed wharves and shipping, a fire swept away large sections of the town, an imperial statute crippled the carrying trade between Newfoundland and the United States, the fisheries fell away, and the long delays in issuing titles for land, and the jealous opposition of the Haligonians in this and other matters proved a constant source of discouragement. So the "Boom" was soon over, commerce came to a stand-still, the wealthier settlers deserted their fine houses and moved away. The "Rationers" drifted off in search of a livelihood, and by 1818 the population of Shelburne was reduced to 300.

One of the very few of the old stock that remained was Gideon White, whose family has ever since held a prominent place in the County.