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THE IRISH SETTLERS OF SOUTHERN NEW HAMPSHIRE.

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The men who endured the hardships of this rough climate and encountered the dangers incident to the opening up of this wild country, had to be a class of men with strong hearts and resolute purposes. It was no place for the weak; each had to be a soldier in the battle for existence; each had to do his share in conquering the hardy soil and defending himself and his family against the ever present dangers of Indians and the wild beasts which then infested the territory.

The Plymouth Colony, composed largely of Englishmen, had for over a century established itself in Eastern Massachusetts, provided itself with comfortable settlements and enacted laws as intolerant as this country has ever known, but had not penetrated into New Hampshire. These Puritans, who, it is said, "first fell on the knees and then on the aborigines," had roasted witches, driven Quakers, Baptists and all others, who were outside the pale of the Church of England, with buck shot into the tender mercies of the savage interior; fleeing from the intolerance of their own church in their quest of religious liberty, they inaugurated a system of unparalleled religious slavery here.[1]

These Puritans were not the kind of men, with their selfish views,

[1] Prof. E. D. Sanborn writing of these Puritans (1 *Granite Monthly*, 34), said: "Some portion of the bigotry, intolerance and persecution of Massachusetts Puritans migrated to New Hampshire with their laws. The result was a few prosecutions of witches and Quakers, but no capital convictions. After the lapse of a century some disabilities and distraint of goods for the support of 'the standing order' or clergy were inflicted on dissenters from the established creed. This petty intolerance continued until about 1819, when the Toleration Act became a law of New Hampshire."

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best calculated to extend civilization; their received with disfavor and imprecations the hardy Irish Presbyterians who arrived in Boston in 1736. These Englishmen always treated the emigrants from Ireland in a way calculated to discourage further Irish emigration, but this did not deter these hardy men, who, however, found the inhospitable and cold interior preferable to the section where the influence of Puritanism had established itself and left the darkest record of intolerance to be found in the history of this country.

Irish in considerable numbers had landed eighteen years before, but the continuing antipathy, which had ever existed in the English Puritans against the "Wild Irishmen," as they termed them, were renewed on the arrival of the men in 1736 who were destined to bring civilization into New Hampshire.

In the summer of 1718 five ships, with a hundred or more emigrant families, came over from Ireland to Boston; some of them found their way to Worcester and thence to Palmer, Pelham, Coleraine and other towns in Massachusetts; a large number, under the lead of the Rev. John Morehead, founded the Federal Street Church in Boston, and one ship with some twenty families, sailing for the Merrimac late in the autumn, was driven into Casco Bay, and was frozen in for the winter at the place, which soon afterwards became the town of Portland; their provisions giving out, they suffered some hardships, but found relief among the inhabitants there.

A few families settled in that vicinity; the rest, in the spring of 1719, sailed up the Merrimac to Haverhill, and thence proceeded to that high and beautiful region of country that was called Nutfield, because it abounded in nuts; and there they determined to locate their grant of twelve miles square of land.

This grant had been made by Gov. Samuel Shute, then governor of both provinces, upon a petition signed in Ireland, March 26, 1718, by 217 persons, all but seven signing "in a fair, legible hand," before they set out on their voyage. These sixteen first settlers and their families that had thus arrived, on the 22d day of April, 1719, had come over in company with their pastor, the Rev. James McGregor, most of them from his parish of Aghadowey, six miles south of Coleraine in the County of Londonderry, Ireland. Among them were Samuel Allison, James Gregg, James McKean, John Mitchell, John Morrison, Thomas Steele and John Stuart. They were soon joined by a large number of their compatriots, the lands were divided

out to a long list of grantees, and in 1722 the town was incorporated by New Hampshire authority by the name of Londonderry.

In 1736, seventeen years later, another ship, with emigrants from Ireland, landed at Boston. These families passed the winter at Lexington, and in the next summer settled at Lunenburg, Massachusetts, and other towns in that vicinity. Among them were the names Cunningham, Ferguson, McNee, Little, Robbe, Scott, Smith, Stuart, Swan, White and Wilson.

From these two colonies southern New Hampshire was first settled.

At the time when Londonderry, New Hampshire, was founded, descendants of the English Puritans from Massachusetts had settled along the Merrimac River as far north as the old town of Dunstable. Bitter jealousies existed between the two sorts of people. At first it was said the Puritans hardly knew what to make of the newcomers; they called them the "Wild Irish." When they started up the Merrimac in boats, and one boat was upset in the rapids, a Puritan poet wrote:

> "They soon began to scream and bawl,
> As out they tumbled one and all,
> And, if the devil had spread his net,
> He could have made a glorious haul."

The Puritans, in ridicule, said of these Irishmen that "they held as fast to their pint of doctrine as to their pint of rum."

Thus was shown the relations existing between these Englishmen and Irishmen at that early period. Will this feeling of unfriendliness ever change? When the English people release Ireland from bondage and permit her to take such a position among the nations of the earth that Emmet's epitaph can be written, then and not till then will the Irish people look with favor upon England and her government.

These Irish settlers were intensely anti-English long before that sentiment found violent expression in the War of the Revolution, in which they participated with such zeal and self-sacrifice. As recorded in the Peterborough town history, it was the attempts to establish the Church of England and to destroy the prevailing religious systems, so dear to the people, together with the oppressive land laws, that created in these Irish Presbyterians a hatred for the form of government under which they lived. In Ireland they were made

by that church the objects of persecutions as mean, cruel and savage as any which have disgraced the annals of religious bigotry and crime. "Many were treacherously and ruthlessly butchered, and the ministers were prohibited, under severe penalties, from preaching, baptizing or ministering in any way to their flocks."

And it is further stated that the "Government of that day, never wise in their commercial relations or their governmental affairs, began to recognize them only in the shape of taxes and embarrassing regulations upon their industry and trade. In addition to these restrictions, the landlords — for the people then as now did not own land, they only rented it — whose long leases had now expired, occasioned much distress by an extravagant advance of the rents, which brought the people to a degrading subjection to England; and many of them were reduced to comparative poverty."

They would no longer submit to these wrongs, and "animated by the same spirit that moved the American mind in the days of the Revolution, resolved to submit to these oppressive measures no longer, and sought a freer field for the exercise of their industry and the enjoyment of their religion." How like the present condition!

The sentiments of these people were the same as of the present emigrants from Ireland. They were composed in a very small part of Scotchmen, Englishmen and other nationalities, but the essential part of the pioneers of this section, in fact, nearly all of them, were Irishmen, for I assume that where men were born in Ireland, as they were, where many of their fathers, some of their grandfathers and great grandfathers were born, they were men who can unqualifiedly be called Irishmen.

Adopt any other standard and a large part of the inhabitants of Ireland at the time they emigrated would not be considered Irishmen, and probably few persons in this town today would be considered Americans.

These Scots (who, it must always be remembered, were of ancient Celtic origin) from whom the pioneers of this section trace their ancestry landed in Ireland, as the Londonderry, New Hampshire, history records it, in 1610, more than a century and a quarter before their descendants came to this country in 1736.

The early settlers of this vicinity may be taken as typical of the men who settled other towns in southern New Hampshire. They

were practically all Irish, many from the northern counties, with some from the middle and southern counties of Ireland.

The towns settled by these Irishmen were, in most instances, named in honor of one of the settlers, or from towns in Ireland; some, however, submitted to a change from the names first adopted by them, in order to insure the obtaining of their charters; thus, when John Taggart and others from Peterborough in 1769 settled in what is now Stoddard, they named it Limerick and it was thus known up to the time of incorporation in 1774, when its present name was adopted; the name of the township of Boyle was changed to Gilsum when incorporated in 1763; other similar changes were made under English regime and through English influences. When, however, these Irish settlers themselves selected names for their towns, no English influence obtained, for it must be remembered that the present English and Scotch sentiments, we now hear so much about, did not possess that sturdy, loyal Irish people; the modernly invented name of "Scotch-Irish," for instance — so far as we have any history, tradition or information — was unknown, unmentioned and unrecorded by any of them at any time, the originators and promoters of this strange and peculiar "Scotch-Irish" theory being strictly products of our own time and of our own country; there were, for example, no such names as London, Liverpool, Leeds, Sheffield, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, given to towns where these settlers located, but the selection of names was from their own people, or from their own Ireland, which they loved so well, where they and their ancestors for many generations were born, where their kinsmen and their descendants remaining are found today resenting this modern "Scotch Irish" appellation, as these settlers would undoubtedly do themselves if living; it was in Ireland their sympathies centered and found expression in their selection of distinctly Irish names of the towns they settled, such as Dublin, Belfast, Coleraine, Boyle, Limerick, Derry, Kilkenny, Antrim and many other purely Irish names.

These Irish, who settled southern New Hampshire — the pioneers in the march of civilization — became the establishers and defenders of popular government here; their blood, transmitted to the generation following them, produced patriots who stood as a secure bulwark in defense of the political structure their forefathers had reared; thus, Irishmen have been identified with every movement in our state

history from the time when the Irishman Darby Field discovered the White Mountains (naming them after Slieve Bawn or White Hills, in the barony of South Ballintubber, County Roscommon, Ireland) down to the present day. I cannot in this brief sketch refer to the part played by men of Irish descent such as Gen. John Stark, Gen. John Sullivan, Gen. James Miller, Col. Hercules Mooney and hundreds of others, who have left their impress upon the annals of our commonwealth. In the history of our state and nation one thing is satisfactorily settled and entirely clear, namely, that where Irish blood is found, there you will find true, unflinching, uncompromising defenders of the honor and integrity of our government and laws. The late Judge Jeremiah S. Black once said: "I have seen black swans, and have heard of white crows, but an Irish traitor to American liberty I never saw nor even heard of."

These early Irish settlers were, in their religious belief, uncompromisingly rigid Presbyterians of the strictest stamp.[1] Their progeny, however, have almost entirely abandoned that severe old doctrine for the, so called, liberal modern modes of worship. However well anchored these old timers may have been in their religious belief, it seemingly was not such as commended itself to their posterity,[2] and

[1] The late L. A. Morrison of Derry, N. H., said of them (10 *Granite Monthly,* page 249), that "They were hard-hearted, long-headed, level-headed, uncompromising, unconquered and unconquerable Presbyterians. They were of a stern and rugged type. They clung to the tenets of the Presbyterian faith with a devotion, constancy and obstinacy little short of bigotry and in it was mingled little of that charity for others of a different faith, 'which suffereth long,' and it was said of them in 1790: 'They have a great deal of substantial civility, without much courtesy to relieve it, and set it off to the best advantage.' The bold idea of rights and privileges, which seem inseparable from their Presbyterian church, renders them apt to be ungracious and litigious in their dealings. On the whole the middle and lower ranks of people, in this quarter of the kingdom, are a valuable part of the community; but one must estimate their worth as a miner often does his ore, rather by its weight than its splendor."— Letters concerning the Northern Coast of the County Antrim Island, by William Hamilton, Dublin, 1790, page 117.

[2] "From the notices given and extracts taken from records, it will be seen that Presbyterianism in New England had passed its noonday, and that its tide had begun to ebb." History of Presbyterianism in New England, by Alexander Blaikie, 1882, page 197. With reference to the condition in Peterborough, it was stated: "The number of members of the church in 1850 was 175, in 1856 their roll was reduced to 67 members and in 1859 Presbyterianism became extinct in Peterborough." *Ib.,* page 367.

today we find no church of their denomination in this section, and indeed comparatively few in the state.

In 1799 the disaffection in Peterborough with the old mode of Presbyterian worship took tangible form; it was too strict; personal controversies at first broke out which led to dissensions and the somewhat easier ritual of Congregationalism attracted a considerable number, and, having at that time only one church edifice, in the interest of peace and convenience, communion was served at stated times in the Presbyterian form and at other times in the Congregational form; but liberalism was not then satisfied and Unitarianism appeared to claim its share; with these dissensions came the Baptists and Methodists, then other religions of modern invention and atheism with no religion at all, finally shared in the general mix-up; a sort of go-as-you-please condition, embodying the so-called up-to-date ideas, where each strikes out a new religion to suit himself, or takes a hand in reforming old notions, until the original anchorage was abandoned and entirely new dogmas were substituted for the old.[1]

None of these old Irish settlers were Catholics, far from it; but the Catholic Church, which they abhorred, was destined to flourish and grow in the town they established, and today that church has

[1] As an instance of this evolution may be mentioned the efforts of a very estimable lady of our town in 1896 at a church meeting, called for the purpose, who proposed the substitution of water for wine in the church service; the question was solemnly and prayerfully discussed, was not voted down, but the motion was laid on the table, where it still remains for future determination; the matter was not decided then; possibly their progressiveness had not sufficiently advanced. But less important questions have been the foundation of some modern church doctrines. Who will say that this theory, advanced, as then alleged, in the interest of temperance, may not find favor in some new church of, so called, advanced ideas, which will profoundly urge — as is already urged by individuals — that the wine mentioned in the Bible was not in fact wine at all, nothing more or less than water?

A strange spectacle indeed, ten persons of only ordinary intelligence and scholarship — who came together after a few hours' notice — essaying to make a corrected interpretation of the Bible and radically changing one of the most important church dogmas which has received the consideration and approval of the great theologians of the past; absurd you may say, but it is in a very similar manner that many of the churches composing the present religious medley came into existence. Oh shades of old Presbyterianism, could your ancient devotees but see the wanderings of their progeny in the groping for the true path!

a resident priest and the largest religious congregation in Peterborough.

But the religion of these Irish settlers is not important in our present inquiry; I merely mention it in passing. We are not asking whether they were Catholics or Presbyterians, Whigs or Tories, but are dealing with the more pertinent inquiry — from a cosmopolitan standpoint at least, namely, the nationality of the men who brought civilization to this section.

While many of us may not indeed agree with all their religious ideas, we cannot but admire their sterling qualities and take a racial pride in the fact that the land from which they and their forefathers came was the same land from which we and our forefathers came; a land where the people possessed the fear of God, and clung to virtue, fidelity and patriotism as cardinal principles; a people having the courage, constancy and industry necessary for successful pioneers in this new country.

They were in no sense "Irish Scots" or "Scotch-Irish," but Irishmen pure and simple; Irishmen to the manor born; Irishmen by origin, ancestry, sentiment, names, education and tradition; Irishmen with all the manners, traits and characteristics of the Irish. This name "Scotch-Irish" is of modern invention. Why did it not exist in writings of years ago? Simply because these Irishmen claimed no Scotch relationship.

I verily believe that if a person had called one of these hardy Irishmen a Scotch-Irishman, he would have received the same treatment Rev. James McGregor dealt out, when an impertinent fellow replied to the parson, that "Nothing saved him but his cloth," he immediately threw off his coat and squared himself for action, saying, "It shall not protect you, sir," and gave the fellow a thrashing.

In these latter days, as the late lamented Col. John C. Linehan well said, a new school of writers has sprung up, whose pride of ancestry outstrips their knowledge, and whose prejudices blind their love of truth. With the difference in religion between certain sections of the Irish people as a basis, they are bent on creating a new race, christening it "Scotch-Irish," laboring hard to prove that it is a "brand" superior to either of the two old types, and while clinging to the Scotch root, claim that their ancestors were different from the Irish in blood, morals, language and religion.

Scotch Irish in Analogy.

Let us get ourselves right on this Scotch-Irish dream while we are about it. When we have a subject under consideration it is then the best time to settle, if possible, any disputed point. As previously stated, this is not a difficult question—in so far as it relates to the early settlers of this town—if we pursue the inquiry honestly and not try to discover something non-existing. The position here taken is not dealt with or controverted by Bolton in his work. By analogy we can the better understand a situation, hence, I employ analogy.

The present residents of Peterborough, who are descendants from the old Irish families of Smith, Morrison, Scott, Moore, Miller, White, Wilson, Taggart, Wallace, Steele, Gregg, Robbe, and scores of other Irish settlers, are today considered, as they properly have been for several generations, Americans. You would not call them Irish-Americans, would you? They were and are Americans, if we have Americans outside the Indians, for the reason that they have resided here for generations, over a century, since their ancestors came here from Ireland. If then these present residents of our town are Americans, why call the early Irish settlers of Peterborough Scotch-Irish, who, in a similar way, for generations and for over a century lived in Ireland before they came to this country? If these early settlers were Scotch-Irish, surely the present inhabitants of this town who trace their ancestry from these early Irish settlers must, by the same logic, be considered Irish-Americans.

Let us call the present residents of our town, who are descendants from these old Irish settlers, Americans, not Irish-Americans, the race having been here long enough to be so considered. On precisely the same ground, under entirely similar circumstances and by exactly the same reasoning, we should call those early settlers, Irish, as they themselves did in their early writings, in their town records and on their gravestones, and not the modernly invented and applied name of Scotch-Irish, the race having been in Ireland long enough, even if they were of Scotch ancestry (which was not the case) to be considered Irish. We are not now considering their religious but their racial status.

Again: suppose these Irish settlers, who came to this country in 1736, happened to be descendants of Americans who a long time before had gone from America to Ireland; in that supposed case the descendants of these Irish settlers would not only be considered Americans by long residence, but of course by origin and ancestry as well. It is right at this point we should remember that the ancestors of these so called Scotch-Irish, who went from Scotland to Ireland in 1610, had, long before, emigrated from Northern Ireland across the narrow North Channel to Southern Scotland; thus, these Irish who emigrated to New England from Ireland in 1736, were, in a like manner, not only Irish by over a century's residence in Ireland, but they were Irish by origin and ancestry as well and Scotch in no sense or degree whatever; they were indeed Irish-Irish, if it may be so expressed, instead of Scotch-Irish. Let us be honest and not attempt to distort facts in a way to suit our ideas or purposes, nor try to change, in the interest of modern fads historical truth.

JAMES F. BRENNAN.

—From Peterboro, (N. H.,) Transcript, Aug. 18, 1910.

This is a question not difficult to settle for those who are disposed to treat it honestly, but as a rule, the writers who are the most prolific, as well as the speakers who are the most eloquent, appear to know the least about the subject, and care less, if they can only succeed in having their theories accepted.

The Irish origin of the Scots[1] is studiously avoided by nearly all the "Scotch-Irish" writers, or, if mentioned at all, is spoken of in a manner which leaves the reader to infer that the Scots had made mistakes in selecting their ancestors, and it was the duty of their descendants, so far as it lay in their power, to rectify the error.

These old settlers possessed the energy, faith and cheerful nature that could make life endurable under the hardships and privations of their situation on the frontier of civilized society. They had brought with them the manners, customs and habits of the Ireland of the seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth century. I need not repeat examples of their quaint humor and queer stories, or of their use of the ardent spirits on public occasions, church-raising, trainings, dancing parties, weddings and funerals. They believed in ghosts and witches and of course the devil; indeed, the devil was

[1] They were from an ancient race of pure Celtic (Irish) origin, whose ancestors had emigrated from Ireland to southern Scotland, and, in 1612–20, returned to their ancestors' former home; remaining in Ireland over a century before the emigration to America in 1718–36. In other words, from Ireland to Argyle (Scotland) these Irish went, to Ireland from Scotland they returned in the seventeenth century and to America their descendants came over a century later. Strange indeed it is that the history of the Irish origin of these so called Scots is suppressed by these modern "Scotch-Irish" writers. (See Vol. 2, pages 333 and 712, and Vol. 7, page 555, of Chambers Encyclopædia.)

These hardy and opinionated Celts, while in Scotland, left their indelible and unmistakable imprint on the language and character of the people, in the design of their humble dwellings and churches and more pretentious round towers. In reference to the Round Towers of Ireland, Hamilton wrote in 1790: "There have been but two buildings of this species hitherto discovered out of Ireland; they are both in Scotland, and the fashion of them has probably been borrowed from this country (Ireland), where they are still extremely numerous. One of these usually called a Pictish tower, stands at Abernethy in Perthshire, and seems to be of very ancient date; the other is at Brechin in Angusshire, probably much more modern than the former." Letters concerning the Northern Coast of the County Antrim, Ireland, by William Hamilton, Dublin, 1790, page 62.

seen in person, if old Fiddler Baker told the truth, at the fork of the road, with horns and cloven foot, spitting fire.[1]

Under the conditions of this early time we need not wonder that when the admission of a new member to the church was in question and objection was raised that he made too free use of the bottle, "Well," said the grave elder, "if the Lord may have a church in Peterborough He must take such as there be."

Nearly all of the schoolmasters of these early times were Irishmen from the central and southern counties of Ireland, but their history has been suppressed by modern writers, to the extent, indeed, in some instances, of omitting altogether the mention even of their Irish names.

Rev. John H. Morison, a Unitarian minister, wrote in 1845 a history of Judge Jeremiah Smith,— before this system of suppressing and falsifying history had reached its present perfection — and in recording the facts of Smith's boyhood of about 1771, on page 14, stated "He began to study Latin, when about twelve years old, with Rudolphus Greene, an Irishman, employed by the town to keep school a quarter of the year in each of the four quarters of the town. While he was hearing a boy recite he usually held a stick in his hand, on which he cut a notch for every mistake, and, after the recitation

[1] Rev. David Annan made a fiddle with his jackknife and would sit with his Bible open before him and his inspiring glass standing by, and play tunes while the children danced. His people were shocked, however, on one occasion when he told them in one of his sermons that "he had prayed over one bed of onions and fiddled over another to see which would fare the best." The result of the experiment was not reported.— Judge Nathaniel Holmes' Address of Oct. 24, 1889, page 23.

Jonathan Smith, a lawyer in Clinton, Mass., in his recently published "Home of the Smith Family" on page 56, gives a description of a wake held in Peterborough on the occasion of the death of Elizabeth Smith, April 18, 1769, as follows: "The near relatives and neighbors assembled in the evening to watch through the night with the body in the dimly lighted room. The exercises began with the reading of the Bible, followed by prayer; then words of consolation and comfort were spoken to the mourners, and the virtue and character of the deceased were passed in review. Soon stories of ghosts, witches and demons were exchanged, tales of death warnings to the deceased and her friends. Later, stimulants were freely circulated, and before morning there was eating as well as drinking." Mr. Parker, in speaking of the custom, says: "The affair often ended by shouts of laughter and revelry breaking up the company."

was ended, another stick was employed to give a blow for every notch that had been cut." On page 16 it is recorded that "he was sent for a short time to New Boston, to be under the instruction of an Irishman, named Donovan."

Some of the more recent histories, however, neglect to state that these men were Irish. For instance, in the biographical sketch of this same Judge Smith, the Peterborough History (1876), page 288, states: "At the age of twelve he began to study Latin at the public school, which was then kept in the old meeting house, by Master Rudolphus Greene. After this he studied for a short time with a Mr. Donovan at New Boston," quoted, with the word "Irishman" stricken out.

It is strange what an aversion some of the recent town historians have had to telling the truth about these Irishmen, and with what studied efforts they have suppressed facts.

The Antrim (N. H.) Town History — which, in its dealings with the early Irish settlers of that town, presents the work of an expert in this perversion — in recording, on page 215, the services of that old Irish schoolmaster, Tobias Butler, makes no mention whatever of his nationality.

The seeker of exact truth and complete historical data will, however, hardly consult histories written by narrow men, whose paramount idea apparently was to twist the actual facts to conform to the way they would have wished those facts to have been.

The only explanation or excuse for this condition is, that town histories have to be written by persons familiar with the locality, hence the writer could be chosen only from a comparatively small number, and the selection, unfortunately, of men of contracted ideas sometimes becomes unavoidable; but these writings relative to these Irishmen and their achievements, will never be accepted by the future seeker of truth; it remains for the present generation, advanced beyond the prejudices of the past, to write the true history of these Irish settlers.

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