

**MEMORIAL VOLUME, 1772-
1922: THE ARRIVAL OF THE FIRST
SCOTTISH CATHOLIC EMIGRANTS
IN PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND AND
AFTER**

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FOREWORD

The erection of a monument at Scotchfort to commemorate the arrival of the first Scottish Catholic immigrants in Prince Edward Island, is an event that deserves more than passing notice. So closely is it connected with the best traditions of Catholicity in this Country, that it deserves to be enshrined in the memory of all, who are impressed with the influence the Catholic Church has exercised in moulding the destinies of the Province.

For this reason the Committee in charge of the matter deemed it advisable to publish a "Memorial Volume" containing an account of the entire proceedings, and at the same time setting forth the aims and aspirations, crystallized in the Scottish Catholic reunion of July 19th, 1922.

The volume thus presented to the public contains in detail the story of the first Scottish Catholic emigrants. It recounts the trying circumstances that forced them to leave their native land, and come to seek homes in Prince Edward Island. It describes the conditions they met on their arrival and the subsequent trials and difficulties they were forced to undergo. The brightest page in the volume tells of the heroism and devotedness of the early Missionaries, who with the constancy of Martyrs stood at their post of duty, and labored to preserve the Faith amid incredible privations.

While the monument standing at Scotchfort will speak to the passerby of things wrought for God and Country, this little volume will bear the same story of devotedness throughout wider areas and to larger numbers. This is the object of the "Memorial Volume" this the wish of

The Committee.

*Charlottetown,
July 19th, 1922.*

SCOTTISH CATHOLICS IN PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

CHAPTER I

Few events in the history of civilized nations compare in interest and pathos, with the attempt made in the middle of the eighteenth century by Prince Charles Edward Stuart, to recover the throne of his ancestors.

From his landing in Scotland on July 23rd 1745, till his final escape into France, his pathway lay through so many vicissitudes of success and failure, of hope and despondency, that the story of those few months seem to belong to the realm of romance, rather than to that of true history.

One trait however, stands forth clearly from the background of doubt and obscurity, and shines like a thread of gold throughout it all, and that is, the unswerving attachment and loyalty of the Catholic Highlanders to the person of the unfortunate Prince. With only, little regard for consequences, they flocked to his standard, on the memorable day when its waving folds blessed by Bishop McDonald were flung out on the breeze at Glenfinnan. They pledged their wealth, their homes, their lives, to his cause. They were ready to go with him, to fight for him, aye and die for him with a tenacity of purpose, that seemed begotten not of calm reason but of thoughtless infatuation. And dearly did they pay, for their devotedness. Terrible indeed, was the retribution that followed their espousal of the Stuart cause and for years they were forced to pay the penalty amid incalculable trials and sufferings.

It is true that the Penal Laws had been in force in Scotland, for years prior to the coming of Prince Charlie; but, with the lapse of time, they had lost much of their earlier severity, and it often happened, that officials well

disposed towards their Catholic countrymen, would allow the latter, intervals of comparative peace. But after Culloden's fatal day when the Stuart cause was ruined forever, the authorities laid deeper plans to harass the poor Highlanders, so that henceforth their existence became a veritable Egyptian bondage. Any leniency hitherto exercised in the administration of the Laws was no longer tolerated. New statutes, surpassing all former ones in ferocity, were enacted, and orders went forth enjoining stricter vigilance in dealing with the Catholic people. Nothing was left undone to make their lives miserable, and it would seem that the policy of the day was nothing less than a plan well thought out, to glut the vengeance of the House of Hanover. According to a modern writer: "more than a thousand persons were transported from the Country, the Highland Clans were decimated and dispersed, the Catholic Chapels destroyed, the Seminary at Scalan plundered and burned, Missals and Vestments publicly committed to the flames, and Priests and people persecuted with merciless rigor. The vigilance of the authorities was directed in a special manner against the Bishop of the Highland District, Right Reverend Hugh McDonald, who was forced to flee the Country and spend some time in retirement in France." (Geddes)

Another circumstance, that added to the difficulties of the times was the conduct of the Landlords, upon whose estates the Catholic people were settled. These landed gentry, taking their cue from the Government of the day, treated their tenants with heartless severity, and pursued in their regard a policy of petty persecution, scarcely less trying than the iniquitous laws of the Country. Howsoever matters stood with the poor tenant, his rent must be paid on demand. Whether his crop yielded well or was a failure, whether his circumstances were good or bad, the collector never failed to come to his door insisting upon the "pound of flesh," and threatening seizure or eviction for the luckless one, who found himself unable to meet his obligations. Oft-times failure to pay the rent was hailed with undisguised pleasure by the haughty proprietor, who pretended to

SCOTTISH CATHOLICS IN PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

find therein some shadow of excuse for proceeding to extreme measures. Occasionally these evictions were carried out on a general scale, and for no other reason than that the Landlord would be able to unite a number of small holdings in a park, which he could stock with game for the amusement of himself and his friends during the hunting season.

One of the most heartless and bigoted of these landed proprietors was Alexander McDonald of Boisdale, in the Western Islands. Originally a Catholic, he gradually fell away from the Faith, mainly through the influence of his wife, who was a Protestant, and not content with his own cowardly perversion, he strove by all means in his power to drag his tenantry with him, as if by abandoning their religion they would furnish him a quasi-justification of his own miserable weakness in that regard. It is said of him that on a certain Sunday, he posted himself at the junction of two roads and brandishing a stout cane tried to keep the people from the Catholic Church and force them to his own place of worship, a circumstance which gave rise to the epithet "Credimh a bhata bhui,"† which they contemptuously applied to his particular style of evangelism. Meeting nothing but failure in his attempts to pervert the older people, he turned his attention to the children in the hope that he might here realize a larger measure of success. He established schools in his neighborhood, where instruction would be gratuitously furnished, and exhorted the parents to profit by the advantages thus supplied by his generosity. Soon however, it was discovered that the Faith of the little ones was being tampered with by ultra zealous Protestant teachers, who found many occasions to inculcate doctrines and opinions contrary to the spirit of the Catholic Church, and, should this state of affairs continue, the plastic minds of the children would be gradually turned away from the Faith of their Fathers. The parents therefore, apprised of this cowardly attempt at perversion at once removed their children from the schools, and would not permit them to

† "Religion of the yellow staff."