

# **SCOTCH-IRISH IN NEW ENGLAND**

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Scotch-Irish in New England by A. L. Perry

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**A. L. PERRY**

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NEW ENGLAND**



# SCOTCH-IRISH IN NEW ENGLAND.

BY

REV. A. L. PERRY, D.D., LL.D.,

PROFESSOR OF HISTORY AND POLITICAL ECONOMY IN WILLIAMS COLLEGE,  
WILLIAMSTOWN, MASS.

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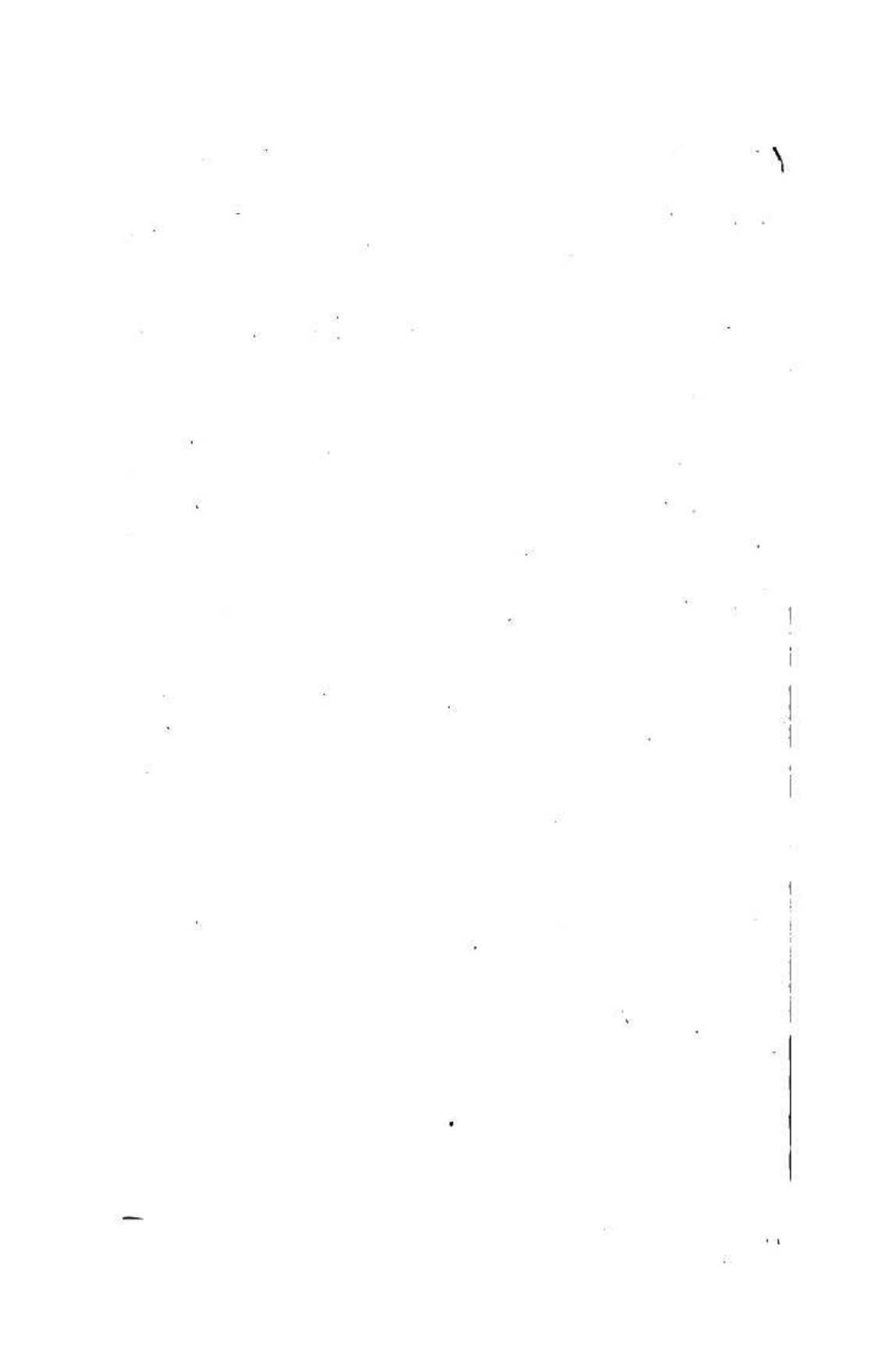
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## SCOTCH-IRISH IN NEW ENGLAND.

### MR. PRESIDENT AND BRETHREN OF THE SOCIETY—

The Scotch-Irish did not enter New England unheralded. Early in the spring of 1718 Rev. Mr. Boyd was dispatched from Ulster to Boston as an agent of some hundreds of those people who expressed a strong desire to remove to New England, should suitable encouragement be afforded them. His mission was to Governor Shute, of Massachusetts, then in the third year of his administration of that colony, an old soldier of King William, a Lieutenant-Colonel under Marlborough in the wars of Queen Anne, and wounded in one of the great battles in Flanders. Mr. Boyd was empowered to make all necessary arrangements with the civil authorities for the reception of those whom he represented, in case his report of the state of things here should prove to be favorable.

As an assurance to the governor of the good faith and earnest resolve of those who sent him, Mr. Boyd brought an engrossed parchment twenty-eight inches square, containing the following memorial to his excellency, and the autograph names of the heads of the families proposing to emigrate: "We whose names are underwritten, Inhabitants of ye North of Ireland, Doe in our own names, and in the names of many others, our Neighbors, Gentlemen, Ministers, Farmers, and Tradesmen, Commissionate and appoint our trusty and well beloved friend, the Reverend Mr. William Boyd, of Macasky, to His Excellency, the Right Honorable Collonel Samuel Sutte, Governour of New England, and to assure His Excellency of our sincere and hearty Inclination to Transport ourselves to that very excellent and renowned Plantation upon our obtaining from His Excellency suitable incouragement. And further to act and Doe in our Names as his prudence shall direct. Given under our hands this 26th day of March, Anno Dom. 1718."

To this brief but explicit memorial, three hundred and nineteen names were appended, all but thirteen of them in fair and vigorous

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autograph. Thirteen only, or four per cent of the whole, made their "mark" upon the parchment. It may well be questioned, whether in any other part of the United Kingdom at that time, one hundred and seventy-two years ago, in England or Wales, or Scotland or Ireland, so large a proportion as ninety-six per cent of promiscuous householders in the common walks of life could have written their own names. And it was proven in the sequel, that those who could write, as well as those who could not, were also able upon occasion to make their "mark."

I have lately scrutinized with critical care this ancient parchment stamped by the hands of our ancestors, now in the custody of the Historical Society of New Hampshire, and was led into a line of reflections which I will not now repeat, as to its own vicissitudes in the seven quarter-centuries of its existence, and as to the personal vicissitudes and motives, and heart-swellings and hazards, and cold and hunger and nakedness, as well as the hard-earned success and the sense of triumph, and the immortal *vestigia* of the men who lovingly rolled and unrolled this costly parchment on the banks of the Foyle and the Bann Water! Tattered are its edges now, shrunken by time and exposure its original dimensions, illegible already some of the names even under the fortifying power of modern lenses, but precious in the eyes of New England, nay, precious in the eyes of Scotch-Irishmen everywhere, is this venerable muniment of intelligence and of courageous purpose looking down upon us from the time of the first English George.

It is enough for our present purpose to know that Governor Shute gave such general encouragement and promise of welcome through Mr. Boyd to his constituents that the latter were content with the return-word received from their messenger, and set about with alacrity the preparations for their embarkation. Nothing definite was settled between the governor and the minister, not even the locality of a future residence for the newcomers; but it is clear in general, that the governor's eye was upon the district of Maine, then and for a century afterward, a part of Massachusetts. Five years before Boyd's visit to Boston, had been concluded the European treaty of Utrecht, and, as between England and France, it had therein been agreed that all of Nova Scotia or Acadia, "according to its ancient boundaries," should remain to England. But what were the ancient boundaries of Acadia? Did it include all that is now New Brunswick? Or had France still a large territory on the Atlantic between Acadia and Maine? This was a vital question, wholly unsolved by the treaty. The motive of Massachusetts in

welcoming the Scotch-Irish into her jurisdiction was to plant them on the frontiers of Maine as a living bulwark against the restless and enterprising French of the north, and their still more restless savage allies; the motive of the Ulstermen in coming to America was to establish homes of their own in fee simple, taxable only to support their own form of worship and their strictly local needs—to escape, in short, the *land lease* and the *church tithe*; the bottom aims, accordingly, of both parties to the negotiation ran parallel with each other, and there was in consequence a swift agreement in the present, and in the long sequel a large realization of the purposes of both.

August 4, 1718, five small ships came to anchor near the little wharf at the foot of State Street in Boston, then a town of perhaps twelve thousand people. On board these ships were about one hundred and twenty families of Scotch-Irish. They reckoned themselves in families. It is certain that the number of persons in the average family so reckoned was, according to our modern notions, very large. There may have been, there probably was, at least seven hundred and fifty passengers on board. Cluttered in those separate ships, not knowing exactly whither to turn, having as a whole no recognized leader on board, no Castle Garden to afford a preliminary shelter, no organized Commissioners of Immigration to lend them a hand, the most of them extremely poor—the imagination would fain, but may not picture the confusions and perplexities, the stout hearts of some and the heart-aches of others, the reckless joy of children, and the tottering steps of old men and women. One patriarch, John Young—I know his posterity well—was ninety-five years old. And there were babies in arms, a plenty of them!

Besides Mr. Boyd, who had stayed the summer in Boston, where he found already settled a few scattered and peeled of his own race and faith, there were three Presbyterian ministers on board,—Mr. McGregor, of blessed memory, Mr. Cornwell, and Mr. Holmes. Those best off of all the passengers—the McKeens, the Cargills, the Nesmiths, the Cochrans, the Dinsmores, the Mooars, and some other families—were natives of Scotland, whose heads had passed over into Ulster during the short reign of James II. These were Covenanters. They had lived together in the valley of the Bann Water for about thirty years, in or near the towns of Coleraine and Ballymoney and Kilrea. Their pastor was James McGregor. They wished to settle together in the new land of promise. They or their fathers and neighbors had felt the edge of the sword of Graham of Claverhouse in Argyleshire; they wished to enjoy together in peace