

THE IRISH AMONG THE LOYALISTS WHO SETTLED DIGBY

*By Brian McConnell**

Interestingly, when the Town of Digby was first laid out after the arrival of the Loyalists in 1783 the largest number of lots assigned to persons not born in America did not go to English but to Irish. At the close of the American Revolution the Loyalists who were evacuated as refugees from New York by ship to Digby, Nova Scotia, numbered over 1,300. The Letter book of Reverend Edward Brudenell, Agent for the Loyalists settling at Digby, indicates lots assigned to Loyalists in the settlement and the Township including place of birth, whether American, referring to having been born in the American colonies, English from England, Irish as native of Ireland, German (including Dutch) and Scots being from Scotland. (1)



Road sign for Timpany Lane at Rossway, Digby County

Timpany Lane is named after Major Robert Timpany, native of Newtownards, County Down, modern day Northern Ireland who served as Officer with 4th Battalion, New Jersey Volunteers during American Revolution.

After the Loyalists arrived in Digby, the settlement was surveyed and close to 500 lots assigned. Many of these lots, close to one – third, were never occupied, since the persons chose to move elsewhere. Nonetheless, as the chart below indicates there were 61 Irish assigned lots while the largest number were Americans being 286. There were also lots assigned to 47 persons originally from Scotland, 31 from England and 20 identified as German, which included Dutch.

ASSIGNMENT OF LOTS TO LOYALISTS IN DIGBY

PLACE OF BIRTH	NUMBER
England	31
American	286
Ireland	61
Scotland	47
Germany	20
Total	455

Some of the Loyalists who were not assigned a lot in the Town were assigned lands in the Township of Digby. This included a further 31 persons of Irish origin. The names of many of them are listed in the Digby Muster Roll, although others do not if they departed before it was done in May, 1784. (2) A Poll Tax Record from 1795 for Digby also confirms some of those who remained. (3)

Who were these Loyalists of Irish origin? They included the first elected representative of Digby to the Nova Scotia House of Assembly, Henry Rutherford, and the first Barrister, Terence Kerin. Listed below are the Loyalists identified as Irish by Edward Brudenell in his Letter Book. Where additional information has been uncovered short biographies have been added. They provide an indication of the variety of surnames and backgrounds.

Aikens, John. Assigned lot in Township of Digby. Appears on 1784 Muster Roll.

Armstrong, Frances. Assigned lots in Town and Township. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll with four in family including wife and one child under 10 and one over. Listed as member of Trinity Anglican Church.

Armstrong, William. Assigned lots in Town and Township. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll. Departed.

Byron, John. Assigned Town lot. Not listed in 1784 Muster Roll. Departed

Campbell, George. Assigned Town lot. Not in 1784 Muster Roll.

Campbell, Captain Robert. Served as Officer with Guides and Pioneers. Assigned Town lot. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll with family of two. Departed.

Cane, John. Assigned lot in Township. Not in 1784 Muster Roll.

Cole, William. Assigned lot in Town. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll.

Conroy, Patrick. Assigned lot in Town. Not listed in 1784 Muster Roll.

Cousins, Thomas. Assigned lots in Town and in Township. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll. Daughter Son James Craig christened at Digby on October 19, 1796 by Rev. Roger Viets. Died June 30, 1808 .(4)

Cudmore, William. Assigned lot in Town. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll.

Cunningham, David. Assigned lot in Town. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll with six in family. Two other Cunninghams, John and John Jr. of Halifax were Charter members of Charitable Irish Society founded in 1786 in Halifax. Three other known Loyalists were also Charter members including John Allen and John Boyd of Shelburne and David O' Brien of Jeddore. (5)

Cunningham, Frances. Assigned lot in Town. Not in 1784 Muster Roll. Gone.

Crane, John. Assigned Lot in Township.

Crowe, Robert. Assigned lot in Town. Not in 1784 Muster Roll. Gone.

Dagan, William. Assigned lots in Town and Township. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll.

Dennison, Edward. Assigned lot in Town. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll described as Loyalist from Port Mouton. Gone

Dennison, Patrick. Assigned lot in Town. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll described as Loyalist from Port Mouton with three in family. Died 1807 of consumption.(6)

Devitt, Edward. Assigned lot in Town. Not in 1784 Muster Roll.

Donnelly, John. Assigned lots in Town and Township. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll.

Dowling, Dennis. Assigned lot in Township. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll with family of two.

Dickson, Robert. Assigned lot in Township. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll with five in family.

Fitzgerald, John. Assigned lot in Town. Not in 1784 Muster Roll.

Fitzgerald, William. Assigned lots in Town and Township. Not listed in 1784 Muster Roll. Listed as member of Trinity Anglican Church. Died December 7, 1801 at Gullivers Hole of Pleurisy. (7)

Flaghan, John. Assigned lot in Town. Not listed in Muster Roll. Gone.

Gidney, James. No assigned lot. Not listed in Muster Roll.

Gilliland, Joseph William. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll. Married Sarah Maria Burns at Digby May 20, 1798. Resided at Rossway, Digby County. Died September 24, 1814 age 40. (8)

Gilmore, Robert. Assigned lot in Town. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll.

Graham, Alexander. No lot assigned. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll with family of two.

Graham, Myers. Assigned lot in Township. Not listed in 1784 Muster Roll.

Griffin, Edward. No lot assigned. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll with family of two.

Grigg, John. Assigned lot in Township. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll with family of three.

Grogan, Richard. Assigned lot in Township. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll with family of three.

Hammil, Daniel. Assigned lot in Town. Not listed in 1784 Muster Roll.

Hill, Jane. Wife of Captain Richard Hill, also from Ireland. Headstone in Digby's Trinity Anglican Church Cemetery inscribed:

Here lieth body of

JANE HILL

Consort of Richard Hill

Died 6th of June, 1800, aged 60 years

Born in Ireland. Descended from the noble

Families of Bruce and Stuart.

Her life was exemplary and pious.



Headstone of Jane Hill in Digby's Trinity Anglican Church Cemetery

Hill, John. Brother of Captain Richard Hill (below). Assigned lots in Town and Township. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll with family of six including wife, one child over 10 and three servants over 10.

Hill, Captain Richard. Brother of John (above), native of Ireland and believed to be from Northern Ireland. Resided in Westminister, Cumberland County, New York. Appointed Inspector with brother John Hill of Brooklyn Ferry. (9) Built first framed house in Digby. (10) Wife Jane Hill buried in Digby's Trinity Anglican Church Cemetery. Assigned lots in Town and Township. Appears in 1784 Muster roll with family of eight, including wife, three children ten years and older and four servants. Member of vestry of Trinity Anglican Church. Headstone of wife Jane is in Trinity Anglican Church Cemetery, Digby. Appointed Justice of the Peace and one of first judges in Digby. Died June 3, 1803 of nervous disorders.(11)

Huston, James. Assigned lots in Town and Township. Not listed in 1784 Muster Roll.

Johnson, Nicholas. Assigned lot in Town. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll as Johnstone with family of five. Gone.

Johnston, George. Assigned lot in Town. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll with family of three including wife and one child under 10. Son Thomas christened on July 1, 1786. Gone.(12)

Kane, John. Assigned lot in Township. Not listed in 1784 Muster Roll.

Kane, Eleanor. Assigned lot in Township.

Kelly, Mathias. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll as Matthew Kelley with family of two. Member of Trinity Anglican Church. Builder according to Isaiah W. Wilson (13)

Kennedy, Thomas. Assigned lot in Town. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll as Discharged soldier in 82nd Regiment with family of three. Gone.

Kerin, Terence. Assigned lots in Town and Township. Not listed on 1784 Muster Roll. First Barrister & Attorney in Digby (14). Died at Digby in 1816. Attorney – at – law in New York. Had also been appointed a Notary Public in New York. Married Diana Maria in New York in 1799. Birth of daughter Charlotte A. Kerin, April 7, 1780, Jamaica, Queens, New York. Daughter Terentia christened by Rev. Roger Viets on December 19, 1789 at Digby. (15) Daughter Diana Maria married at Digby in 1798 to Jeremiah Skidmore Everett, Loyalist also from Jamaica, Queens, New York. He is buried in Barton Cemetery, Digby County. Kerin surname originated in County Mayo. Diana Maria Kerin, widow of Terrence Kerin, passed away July 6, 1851, aged 89 in Digby County, Nova Scotia and has headstone in St. Peter's Anglican Church Cemetery in Weymouth North.



Headstone of Diana M. Kerin, widow of Terence Kerin, in St. Peter's Cemetery, Weymouth North

Kerr, William.

Leonard, John. Assigned lot in Town. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll. Gone.

Long, Alexander. Assigned lot in Town.

McCartney, Daniel. Gone.

McCleane, James. Assigned lot in Township.

McConnell, Joseph. Assigned lot in Township. Arrived in Sissiboo (Weymouth) from New York with brother Benjamin and other Loyalists.

McCoy, John. Assigned lot in Township. Sons John, James & Daniel christened at Petit Passage on August 27, 1798 by Rev. Roger Viets.(16)

McDorman (McDormand), Robert. Assigned lot in Township. Listed on 1795 Poll Tax Record for Digby, Digby County. Sons Cormick, Robert, & Thomas christened by Rev. Roger Viets on July 13, 1780 at Digby. Daughter Sarah christened on September 12, 1792 at Digby by Rev. Roger Viets. Daughter Jane christened at Digby on June 29, 1794.(17)

McDormon, William. Assigned lot in Township.

McElhaney,(McElleny) Alexander. Assigned lot in Town. Son Patrick Clarke christened by Rev. Roger Viets on January 30, 1790. (18)

McElhaney, William. Assigned lot in Township. Relinquished.

McIlroy, Eowan. Assigned lot in Township.

McGuire, John. Assigned lot in Township.

McGuire, Patrick. Assigned lot in Township.

McKennie, William. Assigned lot in Township. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll with family of five.

McNeil, Neil. Assigned lot in Town. Appears on Muster Roll of 1784 with wife and three children aged 10 and over.

McMullin, Neil. Assigned lot in Township.

McMullen, Peter. Assigned lot in Town. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll with family of two. Member of Trinity Anglican Church. Son Archibald christened on August 9, 1786 by Rev. Roger Viets. Daughters Elizabeth and Mary and son Peter christened at Digby on January 2, 1792 by Rev. Roger Viets. Son George christened at Digby on June 25, 1793 by Rev. Roger Viets. Son James christened at Digby on February 16, 1794 by Rev. Roger Viets. Died May 1, 1794 a son of scalding. (19) Peter McMullen appears on 1795 Poll Tax Record for Digby. Digby County.

Milligan, John. Assigned lots in Town and Township. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll.

Morrison, John. Assigned lot in Town. Gone to Clements, Annapolis County. Daughters Katherine and Elizabeth christened at Clements on December 16, 1791 by Rev. Roger Viets. Daughter Magdalena christened at Clements on December 14, 1794 by Rev. Roger Viets.(20)

Nugent, Michael. Assigned lots in Town and Township. Gone.

O'Hara, Michael. Assigned lot in Town. Gone. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll with family of two, being wife and himself.

O'Reilly, Dennis. Assigned Lot in Township. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll.

Orvin, Frances. Assigned lot in Town. Gone.

Patterson, Alexander. Assigned lots in Town and Township. Gone.

Patterson, Joseph. Assigned lot in Township. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll.

Pinkston, Fleming. Assigned lot in Town. Gone. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll with family of two includes himself and one servant over 10 years of age.

Purcell, Pierce. Assigned lots in Town and Township. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll with family of two being wife and himself.

Purcell, Simon. Assigned lots in Town and Township. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll. Listed on 1795 Poll Tax Record for Digby, Digby County.

Ray, Robert. Assigned lots in Town and Township. Merchant. Also operated motel on Cruickshank Corner. (8) Member of Trinity Anglican Church. Previously resided in South Carolina. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll with wife. Son William Lutit christened on October 10, 1789 by Rev. Roger Viets at Digby. Son Frederick William christened at Digby on July 1, 1793 by Rev. Roger Viets. Son Thomas Gilbert christened at Digby on July 1, 1794. Daughter Rachel christened at Digby on June 24, 1796 by Rev. Roger Viets. (20) Robert Ray appears on 1795 Poll Tax Record for Digby, Digby County.

Reid, James. Assigned lots in Town and Township. Hotel Keeper. (21) A daughter Frances christened on November 25, 1787 at Digby by Rev. Roger Viets.. Son Bernard christened by Rev. Roger Viets at St. Marys Bay on July 21, 1790. Daughter Celia christened at Sissiboo on July 3, 1792 by Rev. Roger Viets. James Reid died Nov. 21, 1830, aged 85. (22)

Richards, James. Assigned lots in Town and Township.

Runyon, Peter. Assigned lot in Township. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll

Rutherford, Henry. Born January 31, 1751 in County Waterford. Emigrated to White Plains, Westchester County, New York about 1772. Formed mercantile partnership with George Nash, formerly of Scotland. Assigned lots in Town and Township. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll with family of six including wife, two children under 10 years of age and two servants over 10. A daughter Polly christened on May 18, 1788 by Rev. Edward Viets at Digby. Son Henry christened at Digby on February 16, 1794 by Rev. Roger Viets. Son George Nash christened at Digby on May 8, 1796 by Rev. Roger Viets. Elected member for Digby in Nova Scotia House of Assembly in 1793 then re-elected in 1800 and in 1806 elected to represent Annapolis County. Listed on 1795 Poll Tax Record for Digby, Digby County. Died March 26, 1795 infant of fits. Owned three negro servants in 1807 when with 26 others petitioned Nova Scotia House of Assembly. (23) Died February 23, 1808 at Digby of convulsion.(24)

Shea, William. Assigned lot in Township. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll with family of five.

Simpson, Alexander. Died July 31, 1798 of mortification.

Stewart, (Stuart) Matthew. Assigned lot in Town. Wife died April 11, 1799 of consumption. Died July 28, 1811 of old age at age 92.(25)

Thomas, Joseph. Assigned lot in Town. Gone. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll.



Headstone of Major Robert Timpany in Trinity Anglican Church Cemetery at Digby

Timpany, Major Robert. Born in Newtownards, Co. Down on Dec. 24, 1742. Attended university in Glasgow, Scotland. Came to America about 1760. Worked as teacher Served as Major in 4th Battalion, New Jersey Volunteers. Assigned lots in Town and Township. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll as Discharged Officer with family of nine including wife, two children over 10 years of age and five servants. Chair of Board for distribution of supplies to Loyalists in Digby. Appointed Justice of Peace and Deputy Land Surveyor. Daughter Jane christened by Rev. Edward Brudenell on September 14, 1787 at Digby. January 2, 1788 child died of consumption. Daughter Sarah christened at St. Mary's Bay on September 19, 1791 by Rev. Roger Viets. Daughter Marianne christened at Digby on February 6, 1793 by Rev. Roger Viets. Daughter Charlotte christened at Digby on February 18, 1795 by Rev. Roger Viets. (26) Major Timpany died February 16, 1844, aged 101, while visiting daughter in Yarmouth. His headstone in Digby's Trinity Anglican Church has inscription:

SACRED

To the Memory of

ROBERT TIMPANY

A native of Newtownards

Ireland

And Major of Her Majestys

Forces who died Feb. 16, 1844

In the 102 year of his age

Wear, Thomas. Assigned lots in Town and Township.

Wearagan, Patrick. Assigned lot in Town. Gone. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll with family of five with wife, one child under 10 and two servants over 10.

Wearington (Warrington), James. Assigned lot in Town. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll. Listed on 1795 Poll Tax Record for Digby, Digby County.

Welch, Maurice (Morris). Assigned lot in Township. Appears in 1784 Muster Roll as Morris with family of six. Listed in 1795 Poll Tax Record for Digby, Digby County.

NOTES:

* Article prepared by Brian McConnell on March 12, 2021. To contact email: brianm564@gmail.com

(1) Letter book of Reverend Edward Brudenell, 1785 – 1786, MS Can 48, Vol. 1, Houghton Library, Harvard, Mass.

Also <https://fromthepage.com/harvardlibrary/colonial-north-america-houghton-library/brudenell-edward-edward-brudenell-letterbook-on-loyalists-1785-1786-ms-can-48-volume-1-houghton-library-harvard-university-cambridge-mass/>

(2) Muster Roll of Digby taken on May 29, 1784

(3) 1795 Poll Tax Record, Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Commissioner of Public Records Nova Scotia Archives RG 1 vol. 444½ no. 61

Also <https://archives.novascotia.ca/census/Polltax/returns/?ID=18025>

(4) Baptisms & Burials, Trinity Parish, Digby, recorded by Reverend Roger Viets

(5) Robert P. Harvey, "The Charter Membership of the Charitable Irish Society," in *Nova Scotia Historical Review*, Vol. 6, No. 1(1986), pp. 11-15.

(6) Baptisms, op. cit.

(7) Ibid.

(8) Ibid.

(9) Memorial of John Hill, April 5, 1790, Great Britain, Public Record Office, Audit Office, Class 13, Volume 107 folio 72.

Also <http://www.royalprovincial.com/military/mems/ny/clmjhill.htm>

(9) Memorial on Behalf of Richard Hill of New York, February 23, 1784, Great Britain, Public Record Office, Audit Office, Class 13, Vol. 197. folio 77.

Also: <http://www.royalprovincial.com/military/mems/ny/clmrhill2.htm>

(10) Baptisms, op.cit.

(11) Ibid.

(12) Ibid.

(13) Wilson, Isaiah W. Wilson, "A Geography and History of the County of Digby, Nova Scotia", published by Holloway Bros., Halifax, 1900

(14) Ibid.

(15) Baptisms, op.cit.

(16) Ibid.

(17) Ibid.

(18) Ibid.

(19) Ibid.

(20) Ibid.

(21) Ibid.

(22) Ibid.

(23) One of 27 Owners of Negro Servants who Petitioned NS House of Assembly December 1807. Bill introduced seeking compensation in event of abolition of slavery; did not become law. Nova Scotia House of Assembly, Nova Scotia Archives RG 5 series A vol. 14 no. 49 (microfilm no. 15591). See:

<https://archives.novascotia.ca/africanns/archives/?ID=64>

(24) Baptisms, op. cit.

(25) Ibid.

(26) Ibid.