

Irish Migration to Kings County, N.B. “Why Did They Come?” “The Big Chill”

Historians called 1816, “The Year Without A Summer”! Almost 200 years ago it all began with a series of volcanic eruptions in the Caribbean, the Philippines and the Dutch East Indies. One estimate claims that Mt. Timboro alone in the East Indies spewed a million and a half metres of dust into the stratosphere. The resultant diminished sunshine in 1816 caused a catastrophic and unexpected chain reaction throughout northern Europe, Nfld., the Canadian Maritimes and the American northeast. Frosts in May destroyed the crops, causing food shortages and riots. Throughout the entire year brown snow fell in Hungary, and red snow in Italy. Almost a foot of snow blanketed Quebec. In June and July, as far south as Pennsylvania; lakes and rivers chilled beneath layers of ice. Within a few hours temperatures would swing from 9-95 degrees to below freezing. In N.B. snow was general all over the province in June of that year, and such a cold summer followed that no crops would grow. These unusual climatic conditions saw wholesale crop failures in NB., NS., UK. and part of Western Europe. This coincided with the close of the War with France and the Battle of Waterloo. With many soldiers coming home in 1816, along with the famine, there was untold unemployment and hardship on the people of England, Ireland, and Scotland. Their only hope was to immigrate to new lands, especially to America. Large numbers of Scots began coming to N.B. in late 1816-17 with an even larger number of Irish in 1819-1823.

There arrived no less than fifty vessels at the port of St. John alone with over 7000 immigrants of whom 4542 came from Londonderry and 1217 from Irish seaports. The average ocean voyage was 45 days, the best passage being that of the ship the Marcus Hill, which arrived from Londonderry May 5th after a passage of 27 days with 272 emigrants “all well”. A few years later the Marcus Hill brought over a most unwelcome importation, namely, smallpox! Her Captain was convicted of having wilfully concealed the disease and a fine of L 225 imposed. The disease spread over much of N.B. and N.S., destroying many lives.

The Irish Famine Migration- ‘The Potato Crop Failure’ 1845-1852

In the years following the Battle of Waterloo the population of Ireland expanded at an alarming rate. This represented a dilemma for a country staggering under an outdated system of land ownership. As a result the famine years of the mid to late 1840s were a disaster. The potato staple gone, close to a million poor, uneducated Catholic Irish began to pour into America. Up until the mid-nineteenth century, most Irish immigrants were of the Protestant middle class. Saint John, New Brunswick, was what many of these Irish emigrants saw when stepping off the boat and into their lives. The city was one of the most important gateways for the Famine Irish in all of British North America.

The Irish Settle In! Kings County Irish Place Names

Perhaps the most noticeable legacy of the Irish population in Kings County is the number of communities settled by them. The Irish immigrants often used the names of their communities to remind them of their homeland. They also used it as an opportunity to make their mark on the new landscape. Some of these in Kings County are: Barnesville (Droylan and Erin Go Brah); Cassidy Lake; Chambers Settlement; Cheyne Settlement; Connersville; Dingleycooch; Donegal; Hampton (Woodpecker Hall); Irish Settlement (Thomond); Joliffe’s Brook; Lisson Settlement; Londonderry; Long Settlement; Lower Ridge (Havelock); Philmunro (Foster’s Croft); Ratter Corner; Smith’s Creek (Keohan and Ryan’s Corner); Urney; Vinegar Hill; Waterford; Waterloo Corner, White’s Mountain. All have stories to tell.

The Irish Celebrate St. Patrick's Day On March 17th

The Irish have observed the anniversary of St. Patrick's death with a religious feast day for thousands of years. Up until the mid-nineteenth century most Irish immigrants were members of the Protestant middle class. Due to their great numbers, the Irish progressed and annual St. Patrick's Day parades became a means to celebrate their heritage. St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, was born in Britain in the fourth century and died on March 17th, 461 AD at Sale, Ireland. Today, St. Patrick's Day is celebrated by people of all backgrounds all over the world. Parades, concerts, and the wearing of the 'green' are popular. The Irish culture is centered around a rich tradition of oral legend and myth. Legend has it that St. Patrick banished all the snakes from Ireland forever; however this possibly symbolizes the end of pagan religious practices. Irish culture has given us the Leprechaun (with his/her Pot of Gold), the Shamrock and the Blarney stone.

Around the County With The Irish Contributions of the Irish to the Growth and Culture of Kings County N.B.

Interviews with Irish Descendents:

Bustard, Everett: Irish Settlement- Everett, a son of Charles Murray and Hazel E. (Price) Bustard, lives alone on the Bustard farm on the Bustard Road. George Kirk first farmed this 200 acre property upon arriving from Ireland in 1819. Everett's grandfather, Arthur Welsford Bustard, worked for Dr. Murray in English Settlement, living at his farm in 1896. Arthur named Everett's father after the doctor. Everett has a great recollection of the history of Irish Settlement, and the old cemetery there. There were in the early days no less than 17 farms with family names of McBrarity, Smith, Rutledge, Wilson, Ritchie, Muir, Gallagher, Hickson. The Ritchie road connected to Annidale, and met the Watson road at the Rutledge place. John Hickson's story is a very colourful one that Everett likes to relate.

Holder, Jean (Henderson) Millstream- Jean (Henderson) Holder was born in Holderville, Kings Co., N.B. Her g.g. grand-father, David H. Henderson, was born in 1768 in Enniskillen, County Fermanagh, Ireland and arrived in Kingston in 1818. There is a legend that David brought with him three chests of gold coin.



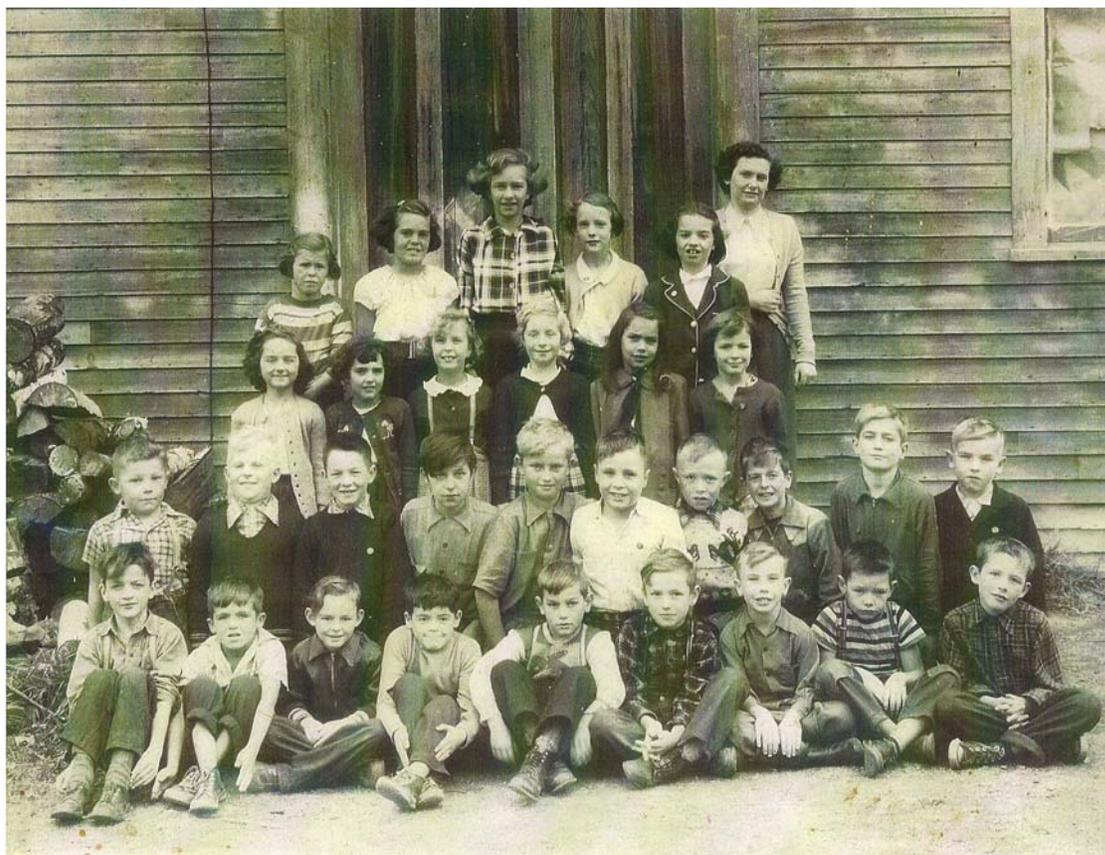
Amelia Holder

However, none of the descendents have seen this gold. Jean's grandfather, Ben Henderson married Susan Amelia Holder, who wrote her Diary of sea voyages with her father, Captain Edwin J. Holder. (**Sea Going Days Of The Holder Family 1851-1878** by Beth Quigley)



Susan Holder

Byrne, Paul: Southfield- Paul and Patricia (Cogger) Byrne live on the Byrne Road, by the Moosehorn Brook. John Byrne Sr. arrived from Strebane, Tyrone, Ireland in 1846 after 6 weeks on the ship, the Lydia McConkell. With him was one son, John Byrne, age 9, and six daughters. John Byrne Jr. married Rose Hogan, lived on Bloomfield Ridge, then purchased the property on the Moosehorn for \$400 from a Mr. Wilcox. Home at first was a log cabin. It took John Jr. 40 years to pay for the farm. Thomas M. Byrne was born in 1886, married MaryAnn McGinnis, a daughter of Patrick McGinnis, from the McGinnis Road in Bloomfield. To Thomas and Mary were born Angela, Paul, Fred, and Marie. John Byrne Sr. and wife, Mary Ann rest in the old R.C. Cemetery in Bloomfield. The Cogger family arrived from County Mayo, Ireland, in 1846. Patricia and her mother, Alice (Mahoney) Cogger, were teachers in Kings County for many years.



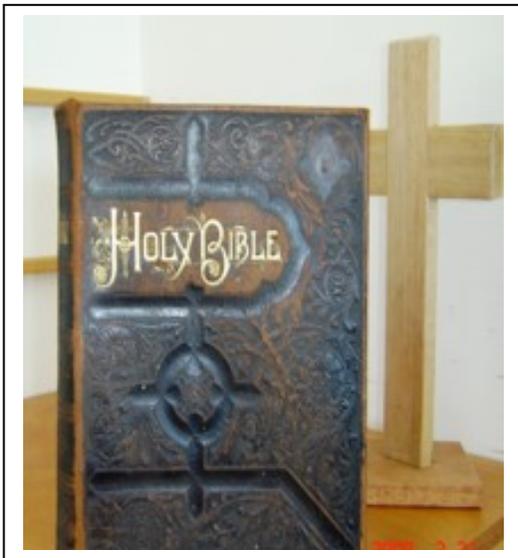
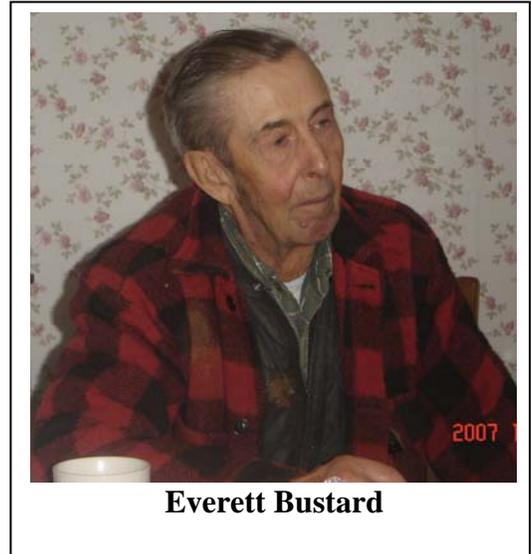
Pat (Gogger) Byrne and her mother Alice (Mahoney) Cogger, both taught school in Norton, Kings Co., NB

In 1952 Pat taught her Gr. 5 class in the old Community Hall in Norton while the school was being repaired.

Pat is on the right at the top of the class. Pat and her husband Paul Byrne farm the 200 year old Byrne farm on the Moosehorn Road between Norton and Southfield (renamed from Campbell Settlement.)

Everett Bustard: I interviewed Everett in my kitchen. He lived on his farm Bustard Road in Irish Settlement, Kings County, NB. Everett gave me a tour of the old Irish Settlement Cemetery which is just down the road from the corner of the Bustard Road and the Irish Settlement Road. There are a few stones remaining for the 20 families buried there.

There were four churches on that corner, an Anglican church in the center of the cemetery, with just the rock foundation remaining. The other three churches, the Methodist, the Presbyterian and the Roman Catholic Churches surrounded it. Those living in the surrounding area were of the different faiths.



The old Bible from the original Methodist Church was rescued from a sale and is on display in Kings Kirk Church in the Belleisle.

Profiles of Early Irish Settlers:

O’Connell, James D.-James was born in 1860 to Irish immigrants at Thorn Brook near Havelock. He attended Lower Ridge School, a one-room school which still stands on this site. His family was very poor, and James would bring cold pancakes for lunch, and eat them behind the school so the other children wouldn’t notice. When James finished his schooling, he lived at White’s Mountain for a time where he raised sheep. There were several Irish families here, and they erected a Catholic Church with a cemetery. Jimmy O’Connell moved on to the U.S.A. and then to Cuba where he made his fortune in the sugar industry. He suffered the loss of his wife and child in childbirth, and erected a memorial to their memory in Cuba. He returned to Kings County in later years, a wealthy philanthropist, giving generously of his fortune. O’Connell Park and O’Connell Avenue in Sussex are named in his honour. One of the new murals in Sussex is a tribute to Jimmy. A large monument with only the inscription ‘O’Connell’ stands in White’s Mountain cemetery. (James’ story was told to Clinton Steeves by his grandfather, Arthur Keith, who attended Lower Ridge School with him in the 1880’s). “Threads of Time”, a history of Lower Ridge gives a detailed story of James O’Connell’s life. (KC Museum)

Wilson, Dr. Christopher- Dr. Wilson arrived from Ireland in 1821 to settle with his wife Susanna on Lot # 6 in Irish Settlement, known as Thomond at the time. He had served in the Royal Navy as a Surgeon's mate. He built the first school on his farm for all the children of the area. They came from the Back Irish Settlement Road, the Collina Road, and English Settlement. In 1844 there were 63 pupils enrolled from 6 to 25 years old. The school lasted until 1873 when a new one was built down at the corner of the Williams Road. The Wilson Road was built by the doctor. He later moved to Springfield. He and his family had supported the Church of England, but changed over to the Methodist. Rebecca Wilson, their eldest, married Rev.C Beals, the Wesleyan Minister at Petitcodiac in 1839. Rev. Beals portrait is in the Wesleyan Church at Berwick. Rebecca and Rev. Beals rest there. Dr.Wilson was the medical officer of the Kings County Militia for many years.

Beavan, Emily E. (Shaw) Author and teacher, Emily was born in 1818, Belfast, Ireland, a daughter of Samuel and Isabella (Pringle) Shaw. Emily, her parents and siblings; Frances, Matilda, Samuel and Pringle, arrived in N.B. in 1836. Emily's first teacher's license was granted on 18th Sept. 1837 in Kings County after she had been teaching some time in the parish of Norton. On 19th June 1838 at Sussex Vale, Emily married Dr. Frederick W.C. Beavan, surgeon and teacher. The couple took up residence at Long Creek, N.B. before moving to Mount Auburn, English Settlement. While farming at Long Creek, Emily found time to follow literary pursuits and contributed at least ten tales and five poems to the **Amaranth**, the first magazine in N.B. to publish literary materials. Emily wrote with a wild goose quill pen and ink made from white maple bark. On Oct. 4th, 1842, Emily sent a petition requesting to have a teacher's license granted, enabling her to teach in Queens County. She wished to set up a "**Model School**" to be used for training teachers. However, in 1843, Emily and her children returned with her husband to England as he took up the position of his recently deceased father as Surgeon at the Derwent Mines in Blanchland, Northumberland. In 1845 George Routledge of London published Emily's book, titled," *Sketches and tales illustrative of life in the backwoods of New Brunswick*". This book is about life in English Settlement, gleaned from actual observation and experience during a residence of seven years in that interesting colony in the very early years. A treasure!

By Barbara Pearson UE

