

*Maxwell Sutherland*

## CASE HISTORY OF A SETTLEMENT

AMONG THE LOYALISTS AND DISBANDED TROOPS who thronged the environs of New York in 1783 was a small group of discharged soldiers and officers from the various German regiments hired by Great Britain during the American Revolution. These natives of Hesse, Anhalt-Zerbst, Brunswick, Waldeck, and Ansbach-Bayreuth shared little in common with the human tide that flooded into the last British stronghold except their ultimate destination. Some were to find their way into Canada by the overland route from New York, but the majority, caught up in the prevailing enthusiasm of the Loyalists, intended to take passage to Nova Scotia, where they were to settle at Halifax, Shelburne, and near Annapolis Royal.

In so doing they had a good deal of encouragement. The British offer of lands and provisions had originally been intended as a reimbursement for services rendered, a reward for loyalty to the cause; but as the hope arose of salvaging something from the seven years' chaos, the offer was tacitly broadened to include British regulars and ancillary troops. This generous interpretation was mainly the work of the Commander-in-chief, Sir Guy Carleton, one of that growing group of officials who looked upon the northern provinces as the New Canaan wherein the wreckage of the Revolution would be rebuilt into another empire for Britain. All was to be grist that came to the new imperial mill in the north. While nearly all petitions for land and transportation were accepted by him, he was particularly receptive to tradesmen and farmers whose experience would benefit their adopted homeland. When these same men were disbanded soldiers wishing to settle together, they received his interest as well as his support. In July he charged Governor Parr of Nova Scotia to find lands for twenty-six soldiers of the 3rd Waldeck Regiment who were embarking on July 30 from New York.<sup>1</sup> On August 6, an Ansbach Captain named Christian de Molitor, representing a motley collection of privates and officers from various German regiments, applied for passage to Annapolis Royal and permission to settle

with the Waldeckers.<sup>2</sup> Carleton forwarded a detailed list to Parr, noting that many of the petitioners were "valuable tradesmen and . . . farmers."<sup>3</sup>

Many of the privates in both groups were, as a matter of fact, tradesmen and farmers who had been forcibly removed from their fields and shops by princes who, in Burke's contemptuous phrase, "snuffed the cadaverous taint of lucrative war". A good proportion were farmers, carpenters, and shoemakers; some were woodcutters and gamekeepers; and a sprinkling had come from the mill and the smithy. Most of the officers and a few of the men had families, brought over from Germany or acquired during the inevitable fraternization of war.

Because of their own initiative, good fortune, and the efforts of officialdom on their behalf, the hundred-odd Germans who arrived at Annapolis in the summer and fall of 1783 were soon at least as well off as their new Loyalist neighbours. On September 20 Governor Parr, staggering under an administrative responsibility that his conscientious but mediocre mentality had never envisaged, complained to Carleton of his troubles and mentioned incidentally that Captain de Molitor's men were without tools and their Waldeck neighbours "without Clothing".<sup>4</sup> Carleton apparently perceived Parr's helplessness, for he came to the aid of the Germans through Brigadier-General Henry Fox, commander of the army forces at Halifax:

Governor Parr mentions that twenty-three Waldeckers fixed near Annapolis are destitute of clothing; if you find them in distress, and likely to suffer from the severity of the winter, you will order a suit of provincial clothing to be given to each of them. . . . I have (further) directed that such corps as settle in a body should be considered as entitled to the same utensils and necessaries as the British American corps placed on the River St. John's.<sup>5</sup>

Unlike the Loyalists, most of whom had to wait until spring for their lots to be laid out by a harassed Surveyor-General's office, the Germans appear to have been located on their grants by late fall. They had brought their own surveyor with them, Lieutenant Johann de Greben, a gangling martinet with some knowledge of military engineering.<sup>6</sup> He was authorized by Parr to lay out a settlement block of 11,050 acres in the projected Township of Clements, on the eastern side of the Bear River.<sup>7</sup> The block was then trisected, the northern line being occupied by the Waldeckers, the southern by de Molitor's collection of Hessians, Brunswickers, Ansbachers and Bayreuthians, and the much smaller middle line by a group that had filtered into the province individually and had wished to join their regimental comrades.

By the early summer of 1784 it appeared as if Carleton's estimate of the "tradesmen and farmers" was more than justified. "The Germans settled at Bear River"

noted an observer from the Muster Office, "have made great improvements, there is not one of them who has not planted a crop of some kind or other."<sup>8</sup>

During the spring and summer more officers and men, who had spent the winter in Halifax and Digby because of a late and haphazard arrival, drifted into the new German settlement and acquired whatever lots were still available. Despite the state of communications, which must have been uncertain at best, two of the seven non-commissioned officers in de Molitor's company sent for their wives and children in Germany. Stability in population was reached in the autumn, by which time there were twenty-four Waldeckers, fourteen Ansbachers and Bayreuthians, five Brunswickers, at least forty-eight Hessians, and six Germans whose origins are unknown. Completing the picture, and adding an extraneous touch, were two Salzburger from Georgia, that child of Oglethorpe's philanthropy. The overall result was a little Teutonic island amidst a sea of Loyalists, a babel of German provincial dialects surrounded by the loud murmur of colonial English, varied only by the anglicized Dutch of the Long Island exiles.

Four years after the influx there were only about thirty-five families left in the German district. By 1791 the number had been reduced to twenty-one.<sup>9</sup> The small middle settlement between the Waldeckers and de Molitor's company had been practically vacated and surrendered to the Loyalists, thus dividing what had hitherto been a unified German settlement and destroying its distinctive character. All of the commissioned officers were gone, having left their embryonic farms for some less strenuous occupation. With the exception of two carpenters, the tradesmen had disappeared.

Backwoods life, with its inexorable weeding-out process, had reduced the ranks to a small, stubborn coterie who would make their contributions as part of the larger community and gradually be absorbed by it. The auspicious start had been a flash in the pan, an outburst of transient enthusiasm that was killed by the withdrawal of government provisions in 1788. Even when they have experience in agriculture, soldiers constitute a class least likely to succeed as settlers, and the Germans in Clements Township were hardly more able to effect the change from camp life to farming than were the disbanded Peninsular veterans who came to Nova Scotia in 1815. Probably only half of the German soldiers had been farmers before the Revolution; the remainder had either been regulars or had come from the towns. Caught unprepared by the double catastrophe of crop failure and termination of provisions

in 1788, some joined their Loyalist neighbours in a mass return to the United States or tried their fortune in Canada, only to find that 1788 was a bad year for settlers everywhere. Some were more reluctant to leave, and remained long enough to petition for government assistance through their local Justice of the Peace:

These People are totally Germans, and have formed themselves into two Divisions . . . the Hessian and Waldeck Settlements. . . . They altogether and without distinction, are all real Objects of Charity, and not even one of them can be of any Assistance to another, and I have sufficient reason to fear, will fall under the unavoidable necessity to fly to some other Country for the relief of their distressed Families, and leaving their Farms behind them, on which they ever since with greatest Industry and almost Day and Nights' labour have already made considerable improvements, unless some relief might soon put them in a more Supportable Condition. . . .<sup>10</sup>

The results of this petition are not known, but at least fifteen families emigrated from Clements between 1788 and 1791.

The officers, who might have taken the initiative amongst a traditionally persevering and methodical people, were no asset to the settlement. Being professional soldiers of the lower German nobility, they were least suited to the rigours of frontier life and its essentially democratic society, and were the first to leave. Lieutenants Stephan de Molitor and Julius Klingsoehr "never settled on their Lots, but returned to the United States".<sup>11</sup> Lieutenant de Greben found an outlet for his talents at the Surveyor-General's office and in the Royal Corps of Engineers at Halifax, where the Duke of Kent was busily fortifying the Citadel. He eventually ended his days as Barracks-Master at Annapolis. At least one officer emigrated to Canada, two are known to have returned to Germany, and others simply disappeared. Captain Christian de Molitor stayed with his people until 1788, but in that year he too left the settlement and went to Shelburne; although, since he was still maintaining three servants, it is difficult to believe that poverty was his motive. If he was looking for the company of prosperous society, he was too late, for Shelburne was already a ghost town. He went on to Halifax, where he seems to have lived comfortably until his death in 1807. In retrospect, it seems unlikely that the officers who came to Clements in 1783 did so with any serious intentions of farming, or with any true realization that ownership of four hundred acres did not entitle them to the same prestige that it would have conferred on them in small German principalities. At least three of them came to Nova Scotia because they had no further prospects in the army or, to be blunt, because the army no longer wanted them. The German princes and margraves had ordered that officers and men with bad records were to be left behind in America.<sup>12</sup> De Molitor had been forced to resign his commission for marrying an

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American woman without his colonel's consent.<sup>13</sup> Jacob Calnek, a Quartermaster with the Ansbach regiment, had been accused of selling regimental supplies to civilians,<sup>14</sup> while de Greben, by his own admission, was too fond of his own comfort to carry out dangerous missions when he could find an excuse to avoid them.<sup>15</sup> Necessity, rather than ambition, had brought these men to Nova Scotia.

Similarly the tradesmen had little to keep them in Clements, although Halifax and the towns offered income rather than social standing. It is doubtful if Johann Rabe, a silversmith before the Revolution, ever settled on his land. The blacksmiths, carpenters, and shoemakers moved into the urban areas, selling their lots and buildings for as little as two pounds sterling. While the deeds of sale usually expressed a sentimental attachment for "that Tract of Land granted the German settlers who came to this Province at the cession of the late War", the consignors never became nostalgic enough to return.

A word might be said about the less obvious reason for this dispersal. A sense of nationality induced the Germans to settle together and was responsible for the few years of unity that the district enjoyed; but the weakness of that national awareness contributed to the early exodus. That it was weak is not surprising when one considers the heterogenous structure of Germany, a collection of several hundred minute states and principalities. The Waldeck settlement prospered longer than the so-called Hessian Line, partly because the soil was more congenial to farming, but partly because its inhabitants were from the same state. This was not the case with the Hessian Line. Contemporary English tacked the name "Hessian" on any miscellaneous collection of German soldiers, and in this sense de Molitor's settlement was aptly named. The mixture of dialects in such a group can only be imagined. Even as early as the eighteenth century the German people were very conscious of their geographical origins. The contempt which a German regiment had for an American counterpart was no stronger than its contempt for another German unit, an attitude that cannot be laid solely at the door of regimental pride. It was so distinct that in 1783 a Hessian lieutenant could write of "arranging the discharge of two foreigners to go to Nova Scotia", although the privates in question were merely conscripts from a neighbouring state. The "High German" and "Low German" attitude was strong, and at Clements an aging Ansbach mother is said to have lamented, "Two troubles never come single. First John went away, and now Katie's married a Waldecker."

The exodus had its effects on the land, forcing many lots to remain wooded and others to degenerate in second growth. A German who elected to stay in

Clements usually bought his departing neighbours' lands, but until 1800 there was little to be gained in reselling them. Ten pounds for a hundred acres was a good price, and usually included any number of buildings and improvements. As a result, the diehard German clung tenaciously to more lots than he could improve, thus retarding the development of the Township for as much as twenty years. Either that, or he sold them for the same pittance to English-speaking settlers, frequently pre-Loyalists who, with characteristic energy, turned them into thriving farms; or he married off his numerous daughters to practical young Loyalists who solemnly consummated their marriages by accepting the spare lots of their father-in-law.

In any event, the history of the Hessian and Waldeck lines as distinctly German settlements comes abruptly to an end by 1788, and becomes instead a history of some forty men, women, and children struggling to maintain their identity in the face of inevitable submersion by their English-speaking neighbours. In view of the fact that ethnic groups struggle for existence only when they are threatened by superior numbers, it is not surprising that the Germans became more aware of their nationality after the rigours of backwoods life had reduced their original ranks by two-thirds. In 1783 there had been no conscious attempt to build a little Teutonic Utopia, safe from the inroads of an aggressive Loyalist population, but only a human desire to settle with their own kind. "Your Memorialist", wrote de Molitor to Carleton, "begs leave to settle amongst those that formerly did belong to our Troops, as we are assured it is their greatest wish and desire. . . ."16 Captain Alberti of the Waldeck regiment was "desirous of settling in Nova Scotia with a number of German families. . . ."17 While the settlement in Clements was chock-a-block with Germans from front line to base line, its settlers took it more or less for granted, as they would have viewed one of the many regimental camps they had pitched during the Revolution. Now that their numbers were reduced and their remaining compatriots separated from them by Loyalist-owned lots, the Germans suddenly became acutely conscious of their origins and isolation. They attended the church at nearby Clementsport in a body, named their children after each other, planted poplar seedlings imported from Germany, and bedecked their homes with austere portraits of the Margrave of Ansbach or the Prince Hereditary of Hesse-Cassel. They became nostalgic to the point of forgetting that the strictness of life in their tax-stifled, regulation-ridden homeland had influenced their decision not to return to it. In short, it was this small coterie, the stolid, industrious, and pious residue of the original complement, who made the Hessian and Waldeck lines for many years a source of

German tradition and ghost-ridden anecdote for future generations in the Township, an influence out of proportion to their numbers.

The Germans were surprisingly successful in preserving their own way of life, but failed utterly in passing that way of life on to their offspring. The Anglican church, responsible as it was for both formal religion and education in the province, was a major factor in the submersion of the German language, traditions, and denominational faith. With little money at their disposal, the Germans were unable to support a Lutheran parish and were forced into the arms of the Church of England. They had, however, made a determined effort to follow their faith, and in conjunction with the Long Island Dutch settlers had built Old St. Edward's Church at Clementsport. The Reverend Christopher Wagner, an ex-chaplain in the Ansbach regiment, had been the intended Lutheran pastor, but apparently thinking that his living would be insecure, he took a precipitate passage to Europe and was never heard of again. The way was now open for the Anglican church, and when St. Edward's was finished in 1795 the consecration ceremony was conducted by Bishop Inglis. In a last attempt to preserve something of their own form of worship, the Dutch and German settlers obtained a guarantee that all services would be opened with a hymn sung in Dutch and closed with one sung in German.<sup>18</sup> The custom continued until the death of the last German settler in 1839. Otherwise the Anglican form of worship was accepted without resistance, and the first generation of Germans became faithful Anglicans. "The inhabitants of Clements", wrote Inglis with prelatial starchiness, "have no connection with any enthusiasts, and therefore deserve encouragement."<sup>19</sup>

In matters of education the Germans offered greater but equally useless resistance. In 1788 a school had been founded in the village of Clementsport under the auspices of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. Using the excuse that the school was too distant, a spokesman for the Waldeckers caught the ear of the Bishop when the latter was visiting Digby and requested that classes be held in the German district. When this was granted, the Germans demanded that the schoolmaster devote part of his time to a class consisting of German children only. Inglis again consented, with the proviso that the people of the Hessian and Waldeck lines build their own schoolhouse. The Hessians and Waldeckers were now in an advantageous position, and having built the school refused to send their children to it, meanwhile assailing the S.P.G. with petitions for a German schoolteacher. At this point Inglis intervened and, in a letter to the S.P.G., settled the issue on education once and for all:

The number of Germans at Clements is not very considerable; an English school-master is fully as necessary for them as for the British settlers, if not more so. I never was able to see the good of sending Foreign missionaries or school-masters to the colonies. They only serve to keep a separation, and preserve a foreign language among the people who emigrate from other countries, where our business, I conceive is to teach them English as soon as possible, and abolish every distinction of the sort. . . .<sup>20</sup>

This policy, consistently followed, hastened the inevitable extinction of the German language in Clements. By 1875 no peculiarities of speech existed to distinguish the German descendants from the other inhabitants of the Township.<sup>21</sup>

As a distinctly German settlement, separated from its English counterparts by a wall of ethnic customs and distinctions, the community at Clements was a failure from the beginning. The obvious social and economic reasons for this have been discussed, but certain general conclusions may be offered. The establishment of a foreign community within a larger one of different nationality requires, in addition to mere resolve, a self-sufficiency that is adequate to exclude outside influence. Neither of these qualifications was possessed by the disbanded German soldiers in Clements Township. The inherent harshness of what was, to all intents and purposes, a frontier, imposed on all settlers, English and German alike, a common burden of necessity that took priority over artificial distinctions. National characteristics, including the refined tastes of officers belonging to the lower German nobility, had virtually no place in a wilderness where every settler was preoccupied with improving land and was dependent on the government for food and such elementary capital as tools. Not until two decades had passed, and the settlers had attained some degree of prosperity and economic stability, did the Germans stand out from their English-speaking neighbours by their nationality, and by that time so few were left, and so many of their offspring had married English settlers, that the early extinction of the Teutonic community was a foregone conclusion.<sup>21</sup>

#### NOTES

1. Provincial Archives of Nova Scotia, *Military Correspondence of Sir Guy Carleton, 1776-1784* (transcripts), 2 vols., Vol. II, p. 346.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 333. De Molitor to Carleton, August 10, 1783.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 330. Carleton to Parr, August 20, 1783.
4. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 441. Parr to Carleton, September 20, 1783.
5. *Report on American Manuscripts in the Royal Institution* (London, 1907), Vol. IV, p. 433. Carleton to Fox, October 28, 1783.



6. T. C. Haliburton, *The Old Judge; or, Life in a Colony* (Paris, 1839), pp. 206-207. Haliburton, who remembered de Greben at Annapolis, left an interesting description of the lieutenant.
7. Provincial Archives of Nova Scotia, *Letter Book of the Hon. Charles Morris, 1783-1785*, p. 78.
8. Public Archives of Canada, "Chipman Papers" in the *Raymond Collection* (manuscripts). John Robinson to Edward Winslow, August 2, 1784.
9. "List of Tax-paying Residents, 1791", reproduced in W. A. Calnek, *History of the County of Annapolis* (Halifax, 1897), pp. 251-252.
10. Provincial Archives of Nova Scotia, *Manuscript Documents of the House of Assembly*, Vol. 308, No. 58.
11. Provincial Archives of Nova Scotia, "Petition of Benjamin Le Cain and Jacob Weiland", *Land Papers* (indexed).
12. E. J. Lowell, *The Hessians in the American Revolution* (New York, 1884), p. 291.
13. "Tagebuch des Johann Conrad Dohla", quoted in E. Stadler, *Die Ansbach-Bayerische Truppen* (Nurnberg, 1955), p. 151: "Kam ich auf die Offizierswacht, welche auf Befehl des Obrist Seybothen Arrest hatten, namlich Grenadierhauptmann von Molithor und Premierleutnant von Altenstein wegen Verheiratung mit amerikanischen Frauenzimmern, welches ihnen nicht erlaubt worden war."
14. *Ibid.*, p. 75.
15. Haliburton, *op. cit.*, pp. 206-207.
16. *Carleton Correspondence*, Vol. II, pp. 332. De Molitor to Carleton, August 10, 1783.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 340.
18. "The Story of Old St. Edward's Church" (Digby, N. S., 1937), p. 12 (pamphlet).
19. Provincial Archives of Nova Scotia, *Bishop Inglis' Journal of Occurrences*, "Book for 1792", p. 8 (manuscript).
20. Provincial Archives of Nova Scotia, *Letters of Bishop Inglis, 1787-1791* (manuscript), p. 142. Inglis to Secretary of S.P.G., 1790. Date unknown.
21. The following is a list of the major sources consulted:  
 Manuscripts: in the Provincial Archives of Nova Scotia, *Land Papers*, *Poll Tax Lists, 1791-1796* (Vol. 444), *Records of the Royal Nova Scotia Regiment* (2 vols.), and *Statistical Returns of the Township of Clements* (Vol. 446); in the Annapolis County Probate Court, *Annapolis Township Books* and *General Sessions of the Peace, 1829-1841* (2 vols.); in Fort Anne Museum, Annapolis Royal, *Letter book of the Rev. Jacob Bailey, 1784-1785*, baptismal and burial records of St. Luke's parish; various documents in the Digby County Probate Court, the Halifax County Probate Court, and the Annapolis County Registry of Deeds.  
 Printed sources: "The Diary of Stephan Popp, 1777-1783" (privately printed, 1953); *Loyalists and Land Settlement in Nova Scotia* (Publication #4, Public Archives of Nova Scotia, 1937); *Report on Canadian Archives for 1894* (Ottawa: King's Printer); *Winslow Papers*, ed. W. O. Raymond (Saint John: Sun Printing Co., 1901); N

Macdonald, *Canada 1763 - 1891: Immigration and Settlement* (London: Longmans, Green, 1939); J. Marsden, *Narrative of a Mission* (London, 1816); W. Moorsom, *Letters from Nova Scotia* (London, 1830); P. A. Stribel, *The Salzburgers and their Descendants* (Athens, Georgia, 1853); J. Young, *The Letters of Agricola* (Halifax, 1822).

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## MEDITATION FOR ADVENT

*Richard E. Du Wors*

Cassandra counted stars  
 In light rock dazzle noon;  
 Foretold the fates of men  
 And died that fire black night.

The young Christ saw the tree  
 In sour smell oaken dust;  
 Foretold the fate of God  
 And died that sun dark day.

For old men could not see  
 The white stars shine at noon;  
 Nor learned men of law  
 The death bud blooming tree.